



Marketing your Ministry

Is our calling a ministry from God or a learned marketing skill from the world?

As ministers around the world exit the organizational/institutional model of Church for the organic and simple model they also exit their cushy salaries. So, what are we to do? How do we continue to nurture the call of God upon our lives and minister the message He has put into our hearts? In the desire to honor our call many have been lured (in my opinion) into a Madison Avenue worldly solution to obtaining the finances necessary to continue ministering. It is through marketing their ministry. By this I mean writing books, creating Booklets, offering DVDs, CDs, Tapes, doing Seminars, and whatever other methods they can procure for developing the cash necessary to avoid secular employment and continuing what they believe God has called them to. But is this God's way? Are we slipping into an approach that dishonors God, dishonors the message, and encourages the body of Christ to ignore their call to financially support those called to minister the Gospel?

Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:

1Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that **those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.**

The verse above is from Paul's most detailed teaching of ministry support. Sooo, how far can we take this? Many in the ministry are supporting their ministry through the sales of their teaching DVDs, CDs, Books, Tapes, Seminars and Literature. Is this a proper application of Jesus' Word through Paul in this passage? Are these examples of self promotion disguised as resourcing the ministry, or perhaps acquiescence before a conditioned Church that is trained to take rather than give, and thus force their ministers to become hucksters? Do we best serve the Church by feeding this error or correcting it?

Do we find any insight on this question from the teaching of Christ that Paul references?

Luke 9:1 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. 3 And he said to them, "**Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money;** and do not have two tunics. 4 And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

This is clearly the passage Paul had in mind, when discussing this matter of ministry support. Whatever we may think of the temporary or isolated approach Jesus first used with His disciples, it is clear Paul saw something in Jesus' words that he framed his entire concept of ministry support from. So what is Jesus saying here? Does it square with the purity, purpose, and plan of ministry that Jesus sent His disciples out to do, to imagine them taking along parchments and writing sermons on them, rolling them up and wrapping a nice gold rope around the parchment and selling it to those they are going to minister to, so they will have sufficient resources to continue their ministry? Just doesn't feel appropriate to the original purity and simplicity by which they ministered does it.

Are we right in imagining that Jesus, when inspiring Paul to write this verse, envisioned a day when men would hawk spiritual wares so as to have sufficient resources to minister to the body of Christ? What is wrong with this picture? I'll tell you what I believe is wrong with this picture, it is two fold:

1. Ministry is being funded by worldly practices of business that mirrors the world's approach to secular occupations.
2. It is a compromise to the Church's failure to properly care for His servants and fulfill Jesus' teaching to His disciples.

Rather than shake off the dust from our feet, and refuse to return to such places that receive spiritual food but fail to show honor to God and His servants by making provision for them, we've relieved the body of Christ from their divine calling to honor the Lord in this manner and resource those called to move among the body in Church planting, teaching, and prophetic ministry. Indirectly we enable them to continue in an approach to ministry that dishonors the privilege of receiving the message and blessing the messenger.

We've allowed and thus encouraged the body of Christ to resist the Spirit's call to support men and women in ministry activities and force those ministers to take up worldly approaches to gain enough resources so as to continue to spiritually support the self centeredness of the ones receiving ministry. It strikes me rather like one holding out bread to the hungry and then transforming it into rotten potatoes as it leaves their hands and enters the mouths of the so called hungry. We tell them we have a great message from God, but then rather than honor the strength of that message we dilute it by compromising the Lord's means of provisioning His servants and end up teaching the body of Christ to dishonor the Lord, His message, and His messengers. In the end this does great harm to the Church and the servants of God.

We've taught ministers to do a song and a dance, to bring and hawk their wares, and if they sing and dance well enough, and package and promote their wares well enough, the body will throw a few bucks their way so they can continue on down the road to the next house that similarly will dishonor them and the Lord Who sent them.

In saying this I'm not saying I think the creating of all Books, Booklets, DVDs, CDs, Tapes, Seminars and Literature is wrong or not led of the Spirit, when attended with the singular purpose of providing spiritual resources for the body of Christ, but when these things are done so as to create sufficient resources for the ministers to be able to continue to minister, then I believe something is seriously wrong, and those who continue to feed this error only perpetuate something that needs to die in the body of Christ. It's one thing to provide every possible means of feeding the hungry, but it is quite another to do so with mixed motives and errant methods.

Utilizing the modern marvels of technology, so as to get the Word out, seems to me to be a good thing, but as with everything good often becomes the enemy of what is best, like politicians who attach pork to their bills, and teaches the servants of God to attach carnal methodologies to divine approaches because of a fear of calling the body to their highest calling, or worse yet, because of the fear that now they no longer have a guaranteed staff salary they will have insufficient resources to continue the ministry they love and want to continue. Where is the faith in this? The compromise should awaken within us an awareness that all too often we are more attached to "our ministry" than to the Lord of ministry. If we use methods to provide for our ministry that violate His highest approaches, then we need to look within ourselves at the source of such approaches, and discover that it is fear that motivates us rather than faith, and an addiction to ministry that exceeds confidence in His call and His provision.

Listen to what Jesus said: **"Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money..."** Now, if He said take nothing did He indeed mean "nothing" or did He mean take along with you Books, DVDs, CDs etc. to sell so you can afford to do what you've been called to do? I know someone will say, "Just because Jesus sent His disciples out on this ministry excursion and told them to take nothing with them, this doesn't mean He never permitted them to take additional items with them." That's true, but notice He later sent them out again with nearly the same words in Luke 10. But even if we were to allow that this would not be the only approach He would take to sending them out, consider the spirit of what He is saying. It comes down to this, Jesus is making a statement about the very nature of ministry and the message, and those who receive it. He is addressing the significance of the message brought and the manner of receiving it. He is telling us that because the message is so important it warrants the full and God honoring support of those who receive the message. Not because the ministers, in and of themselves are necessarily worthy of such honor, nor because of the eloquence of their words, but because of the majesty of the message they bring, proclaiming Christ and Him crucified.

If we who are called to bring the message do not refuse to any longer be driven along by the many errors and pressures that have crept into the body of Christ then who will help the body deliver itself from so great an error and such disrespect to the Lord of the message, the Word Himself? If the body suffers from any one thing, perhaps more than others, it seems to me it is a failure to acknowledge the greatness of God's revelatory message and its power to transform their lives. Believers hardly read the Word, have little tolerance for serious bible study, demand pablum in the messages taught to them, and quickly grow weary of the meat of the Word. This brethren is

something ministering leaders must address, and they don't do it by compromising higher principles of provisioning their ministry.

Someone may well say, "So, if the body has so long been off course in these areas, and ministers have so long traded their truest calling to become hucksters and salesmen of heavenly wares, and slick manipulators of crowds for the wages of offerings, what will become of the ministry if they refuse to any longer go along with it? In many cases initially their ability to travel will be limited, their finances will be diminished, and in many cases will necessitate these ministers seek income outside their specific ministry. Isn't this exactly what Paul, and those who traveled with him did? Surely he could have chosen the methods of the modern minister, but he didn't. Did he not just because no one thought of it in his day? I don't believe so. The whole tenor of his ministry and the purity of his approach and heart leads me to conclude he would NEVER had chosen the route of the modern minister in funding his ministry. In our getting free from the religious baggage of past generations I believe we must address this mentality and let Jesus' words set us free from the approaches so many are leaning on.

For too long the Church has mirrored the world in its attitudes towards those who bring the Word to them, and demands of them an approach to funding their ministry that flies in the face of Jesus' methods with His disciples. If those called to bring the Gospel do not refuse to participate in any longer, and help the body to recognize its errors then this error will continue and the Church will continue its slide into worldliness and a lack of respect and appreciation for the Word of God.

Could it be that the Lord of the ministry would Himself call many of His ministers off the field and away from their truest calling, limiting the sphere of their influence until the body rises to its own calling of support for those called to bring them the Word of God? I think it may be so in some cases.

I realize that most ministers have fallen for this approach, and have learned the ways of rationalization, but something of Christ within me will not allow me to support this approach of dishonor. In travels I've had various ministers invite me into areas of ministry because they know the offerings are large there, or have encouraged me to print my teachings into booklets and sell them as I travel, or record my teachings on to CDs and bring them to sell to the Churches I visit, and my heart knows these are not the ways of my God, at least not when a part or better portion of the motive is to fund my ministry.

When Jesus addressed the issue of the "Hireling" spirit, in John 10, the principles of which He spoke there relate directly to the matter I am addressing here. We are not hired by anyone but Jesus. We do not sell anything, but rather freely give our lives and all we have received, without charge:

1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? That in my preaching **I may present the gospel free of charge**, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

The crafty approach of requesting donations for our materials, rather than a required set amount, as if it were not “charging” for our ministry, is nothing more than a ruse for what we are really doing. We are charging for the ministry, and the very nature of these things oppose the nature of our King and His ways. It shocks me how many men and women have allowed themselves to be drawn away by these things, and brought a reproach to their calling and the very nature of ministry. The world looks on at these things and mocks us behind our backs. They clearly see what we refuse to acknowledge...we are marketing in worldly ways...

We have not learned these things from Christ or His apostles, so they can only come from the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is time for cleansing to come to the ministry so they might once again provide a good example and a lifestyle worthy of imitation. Then perhaps the body of Christ will once again recognize the purity and value of the message.

Jesus desires the body of Christ to restore their priorities. They are called to provide for those who are called to minister to them. When the Church returns to this truth, apart from the motivations of the false teachings of the Tithe, or the charlatan methodologies of Madison Avenue marketing, ministers will have sufficient funds to fulfill their call to travel and minister, and the body of Christ will experience the joy of knowing they have honored the Lord and those sent to them.

The bible is clear, and no one makes it clearer than Paul, when he says the following:

Gal 6:6 One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.

If this was Paul’s only expression of this truth, in all his writings, it would be sufficiently clear, but of course it isn’t. He often addressed this matter, in the hopes of encouraging the body to honor the Lord. (See 1 Corinthians 9, 1 Timothy 5, 2 Corinthians 9)

None of this need be taken to authorize pressuring the body of Christ to commit to anything like a minister’s salary. If an amount sufficient to become a regular salary develops from it this is well and fine, but Paul is not expressing God’s desire for a body of believers to get together and come up with an amount they will regularly commit to a minister so he can have a set salary. Paul is simply encouraging Spirit led giving out of appreciation for the message, respect for the servant, and honor of the Word Himself.

Too many have compromised so as to serve the King. It is inconceivable that our King would require any of us to compromise anything to do His will. It is time for us to allow godly character to guide our choices in these areas and trust Him to provide for what He has called us to.