



Excellence in Ministry Measured in Loving Servanthood

There are many ways to approach excellence in ministry, and many different facets of ministerial excellence, but the material I will share with you today represents what the Lord put on my heart for you.

What is excellence in ministry?

Here are some questions I have for ministers who have seemed to imply they knew what excellence was:

Is it growing big Churches? Then if someone had a small Church for many years this would be the evidence of a lack of excellence in ministry. Find this in Scripture.

Is it having a beautiful building that everyone admires? Then if someone met in a home, like the early Church did for the first 300 years then that would be evidence of a lack of excellence in ministry. Find this in Scripture.

Is it having all kinds of degrees and titles? Too bad for Jesus, He didn't even want to be called Rabbi, and didn't want anyone else being impressed with other humans either. He didn't have any degrees or credentials for ministry, except perhaps the power and wisdom of the Spirit.

Is it being certain that everyone knows you are in charge and does it how you want it done? Then Jesus' words in Matthew 20, about not Lording it over the flock don't apply to you.

Is it people hailing you as being the ultimate speaker? If so then Paul was a failure because they said his speech wasn't very impressive.

This list could go on and on, and does go on and on, and over the years I have heard countless descriptions of what men have considered as excellence in Ministry, but Jesus says it very simply and very decisively:

Excellence in ministry can be defined as ministry that is first service to the Lord, in union with the Lord, by the power of the Lord, flowing out in service to His Church and the World.

Matthew 20:20-28

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask.

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."²³ So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father."²⁴ And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.²⁵ But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.²⁶ "Yet it shall not be so among you; but **whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.**²⁷ "And whoever desires to be first among you, **let him be your slave**—²⁸ "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

And Paul qualifies how this service should look.

1 Corinthians 12:31

31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

You know where Paul goes from there. He presents love as the gauge of true excellence in ministry. Men often look for very external and superficial things as evidence of excellence in ministry, but Jesus and Paul reduce it down to loving servanthood. Anything beyond that that doesn't compromise or diminish loving servanthood as the primary evidences of excellence in ministry is permissible, though perhaps not necessary.

Jesus shows us how it looked in His life:

John 5:19,20

19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do **nothing of Himself**, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.²⁰ "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

He goes on to say that as it is with Him, so it is with us:

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.³ "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.⁴ "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.⁵ "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for **without Me you can do nothing.**⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.⁸ "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Nothing short of a powerful prayer life, a deep prayer life, a set apartness to the secret place prayer life, will reveal the potential of an "abiding life."

Isaiah 50:4,5

John 6:63

63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; **the flesh profits nothing.** The words that I speak to you

are spirit, and *they* are life.

Jesus promised His disciples there was a “Place” they were to minister out of, where true excellence would proceed from:

John 14:1-2,23

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.² “In My Father’s house are many ***mansions***; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare ***a place*** for you.

23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our **home** with him.

It’s not about our best efforts. It’s about being led by His Spirit, doing what He’s calling for, doing it out of union with Him, in the power of His Spirit. This is what produces true excellence in ministry.