

The Empty, Front-row...

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many, I sat towards the back of the church. I listened very intently and learned very much. Attending church was like sitting at a table and eating a steak dinner. I was fed spiritually, and I did not want to miss a meal.

However, something happened to change where I sat. One Sunday, as the preacher began to preach, the woman sitting next to me reached down under the pew and pulled out a good-sized paper bag. She opened the distracting, noisy sack and proceeded to pull out her lunch. She even opened a Thermos and poured herself a hot cup of coffee. Between the eating of her sandwich, loudly slurping her java, and crunching on a crispy apple, I was very distracted and got little from the much-wanted message from God. I was determined that I would not be robbed from hearing the message God had for me again, so after that service, I changed where I sat. Whenever the seat was available, I sat on the first row. I did not want to miss a word God had given the preacher to deliver to me.

While sitting in the first row, I observed something very encouraging. Many others, mostly new converts, would also get serious about wanting to hear God's message, and they soon sat on the front row. Many sat next to me. I got friendly with many of them and even went on Thursday night, church-wide visitation with

some of them. They also fervently wanted to obey and do something for the Lord.

However, their love for the service and hearing God's Word changed. They no longer commented on how it was an excellent service and how God spoke to their heart about a matter in their life. Soon they had all kinds of excuses for not wanting to join me in the visitation ministry. It was not long before they started missing services, and soon they stopped coming to church. I would visit them at their houses to encourage them to come back again, but ultimately their seat next to me on the front row remained empty.

I miss those friends, but most of all I miss seeing others get excited about their salvation and being eager to serve the Lord. Paul, in II Tim. 4, experienced the same feelings when Demas, and possibly others, no longer "sat in the front row" with him, so to speak. I am sure he was grieved to see that the temporary things of this world had a greater meaning to Demas than obeying and serving the Lord. Although forsaken by Demas and others, Paul continued and was much used by God.

Have you been discouraged that another Christian is not serving the Lord as he used to? Do not be. Encourage them if you can. Pray for them, but continue to "sit in the front row." I'm still there, and I saved you a seat.

The Bible View



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Minister to Others: God Wants to Use You

Bill Brinkworth

When God provided the ten commandments and the instructions for the tabernacle, He also had a plan for workers.

One man was chosen to minister in the building of the tent-like place of worship. God used an ordinary man, Bezaleel, to build an important work.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. 6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of

Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;"

Exodus 31:1-6

Like building the tabernacle, there are jobs to be done that God needs to be accomplished. He wants ordinary men and women to fulfill those needs and minister to others. Believers are tools in God's tool chest.

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The Empty, Front-row Seat

Bill Brinkworth

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved s present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescents to Galatia, Titus unto Dalamatia. 11 Only Luke is with me..." II Timothy 4:10-11

After I was saved in 1979, I was excited about going to church, especially after finding the church I felt God wanted me to join. I was very shy, so like

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Minister to Others ...

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Bezaleel was a tool that God could use, as are pastors, Sunday school teachers, choir members, and soul winners. Each is different and has a different ability that God can use to help others.

The seven gifts for this church age are found in *Romans 12:6-8*: “*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

Every saved person has at least one of the gifts found in *Romans 12*. Perhaps you have not yet found what your gift from God is. While you are praying and searching the Scriptures for God to show you, all can minister to the needs of others. Not all may have God’s special gift of ministering, but all can help meet the needs of others. There is much to be done. We can all find a ministry.

After I was first saved, my preacher preached the previous verses about gifts in *Romans*. I asked the Lord to show me what he had for me to do. I told Him I would do the first thing He showed me. He did show me.

That Sunday from the pulpit,

the pastor announced a need of an older, disabled man to have his yard cleaned up. No, it was not glamorous, nor was it easy, but it was a ministry I could do to serve God. God usually does not use a person for the big jobs that will not do the little ones. “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*”

Ecclesiastes 9: 10
“*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”

I Corinthians 10:30
One can use what skills and interests he or she has to bring other people to learn about the Lord and further the cause and message of Christ. A ministry is not to bring glory to oneself. It is not a way to earn salvation because that is not possible. It is a tool to allow others, that may not usually listen to the message God has for them, to hear it and see it in action and to be helped by God’s people.

I have seen others with: a puppet ministry, grass mowing ministry (he mowed people’s grass for free if they let him witness to them), a sharp-shooting ministry (he would put on a demonstration, and later preach the Gospel), a strong-man ministry (people would come to see his feats of strength, afterwards he would preach to them), a karate ministry, a Gospel magic ministry, etc. People used their ability and in-

terests to present the Gospel and be a witness for the Lord. Use what you can do for the glory of God, then God may trust you with another ministry.

Some other ministry ideas are:

- ◆ visit the sick,
- ◆ write letters,
- ◆ encourage,
- ◆ “adopt” a friend (make a friend of someone you think needs one),
- ◆ mentor a younger Christian,
- ◆ help the elderly,
- ◆ read to others,
- ◆ help mother,
- ◆ do something another cannot do,
- ◆ bring a friend to Sunday School,
- ◆ witness,
- ◆ sing,
- ◆ give of yourself, (tithing your time), and
- ◆ visit someone.

Pray and ask the Lord for a ministry. Look for the first opportunity. After you have prayed, ask your pastor, parent, Sunday school teacher, or bus captain “What can I do to serve the Lord?”

Others!

Barbara Brinkworth

Jesus always attracted a crowd. Most of the people wanted something from Him for themselves. In *Mark 2:1-12*, we see four that were more concerned about their friend’s need than they were of their own.

I am sure that these men had other things they could have been doing. Somehow, they realized that they were able to take their friend afflicted with palsy to someone who could help him, Jesus. They also knew the window of opportunity was limited, so they put aside their own needs to meet those of their friend.

They were determined to get the job done. “And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press...” (*Mark 2:4*) they found another way to get into the house: “... they uncovered the roof where he was....” They then let the man down through the roof. They were men on a mission. Their work and time were not in vain. *Mark 2:11* says, “[Jesus] say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” Mission accomplished.

There are many times that the Lord speaks to us about meeting the needs of others. It may be sitting by the sick, praying with the fearful, or taking a meal to a family that recently lost their loved one. It is easy to think we do not have the time or ability. Perhaps, we think someone else will meet the need.

When God speaks to us, often by putting a concern or urgency about another in our heart, He intends for us to do it. Yes, there will be effort involved, time, and sometimes even our own money. Remember that anything done as unto the Lord is never forgotten (*I Cor. 15:58*).