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CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

"NO MAN THAT WARRETH ENTANGLETH HIMSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE, THAT HE MAY PLEASE HIM WHO HATH CHOSEN HIM TO BE A SOLDIER."
II TIMOTHY 2:4

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THE TRUE WORK OF MINISTRY

Eph 4:11-12

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

[NKJV]

Notice the phrase in verse 12: ...the work of ministry.... In this Christian Soldier, I'm going to help you see the true work of our ministry. But if you use

this passage to talk about the work of a Christian's ministry, many will say that this passage only applies to the 5-fold ministry gifts – as described in vs 11.

The answer to that is "yes" and "no!" Yes, in context, we're talking about the 5-fold ministry gifts of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher. But



notice carefully vs 12. What do these 5 gifts do? They equip the saints. For what? The work of ministry. What is the purpose of that work? To edify the body of Christ. I want you to see that vs 12 is progressive. Full-time ministry

gifts are here to equip saints so they can effectively work in ministry to edify and build up the body of Christ. Why? So the body of Christ can be as strong as possible, to go into all the world to fulfill the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20).

You can't be weak and attempt to go into all the world to preach the gospel to unsaved people! If you've ever been active in outreach and evangelism, you know that's true!

2 Cor 5:18

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. [NKJV]

If you're saved, you have a full-time ministry! Even if you're not called by Jesus to stand in one of the 5-fold gifts listed in Ephesians 4:12, you must realize you're still a full-time minister with a full-time ministry! What kind of ministry? The kind listed here in 2 Corinthians 5:18. The ministry of reconciliation. It's the job of every believer to obey the Great Commission and tell the world they've been reconciled to God by the work of Jesus

on the cross. That's the job of each and every Christian – you included! So when the Bible talks about the work of ministry, understand the fact that your ministry will be hard work – its not easy! Let me give you a dictionary definition for the word "work". 1) Exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something. 2) Productive activity. I like the second definition: productive activity! You see, many people think ministry is something easy; they just expect

everything to fall into their lap so to speak. Anyone involved in true ministry knows this is not true. But then again, many understand the fact that ministry is hard work, but their "ministry", is not productive. They're not fruitful with their efforts. They work hard, but see very little to show for it. Let's look at a verse which will give us an important key to working hard and achieving success for the glory of the Lord.

Col 1:29

To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. [NKJV]

If you want your ministry to be fruitful, you must learn to work according to His working, which is supposed to be working mightily in you! If you don't learn to do this, most, if not all, your efforts in ministry will prove to be

unfruitful and frustrating. I mean, if you're going to invest your time, talents, money and energies into whatever ministry you feel God has assigned to you, don't you want to see the fruits of your labors? Don't you want to see

people's lives tangibly changed by the power of God working through you? Of course you do! But many are frustrated because they work hard for God, but don't see the kind of results they're looking for. Many times, the problem is



found in their inability to work according to God's working within them. They're out there, trying to do so much for Jesus – but in the arm of their flesh. They're making what I call the "Martha mistake". If you read Luke 10:38-42, you'll find the classic story of two sisters named Mary and Martha. One day Jesus and His disciples showed up at their house – unannounced. So of course, Martha feels compelled to be the best hostess she can be – and proceeds to run back into the kitchen, barking orders and

running around making sure all is being prepared so that Jesus and His needs are met while He's a guest in her house. Now in the natural, that's exactly what most women would do, right? If you have any natural sense of pride about yourself, you're going to make sure that while Jesus is your house guest, His every need is met and He's made as comfortable as possible. But you see, Martha, even in her zeal for pleasing Jesus, is making the common mistake of substituting God's strength with her own.

What was the result? Fatigue. Frustration. Anger. Indignation. Why? Because Mary isn't back there in the kitchen helping, and Martha feels abandoned. So, what does she do? She interrupts the Bible Study, and asks Jesus to rebuke Mary, and tell her to go back into the kitchen to help with all the food and preparations. But to her amazement, instead of correcting Mary, Jesus corrects her! Listen to this:

Luke 10:40-42

But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Therefore tell her to help me."

And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." [NKJV]

Who had chosen the "good part"? Mary or Martha? It wasn't Martha, the one back in the kitchen, running around "distracted with much serving", was it? No, it was Mary, who just forgot about the kitchen, and realized the most important thing right then was to take advantage of the Lord's presence, and just sit and listen to Him teach the Word of God. So let's carry that over and see

how this applies to us today. Everyday, many ministers and Christian workers act and live like Martha. Running around doing all kinds of good things in the Name of Jesus, but never realizing the most important thing is to first sit and wait upon God, and make that the priority – not the outreach or evangelism or "ministry", whatever that may be. I have a plaque on my desk in my office

that I look at often. It says *The Top Priority is to keep the Top Priority the Top Priority!* What is the "Top Priority"? For us as Christians, its taking time to sit at Jesus' feet, just like Mary, and learn from the Master. That's how we begin to do Colossians 1:29. That's how we begin to let the Lord work within us mightily. And then, when we do go out in the Name of Jesus for the work of



our ministry, the work is fruitful, anointed and therefore, productive! Lives are changed. Bodies healed. Souls saved. Why? Because we realized that its not enough to work hard – you have to learn to work smart!

When I was in the corporate world as an Advertising Executive for Owens Corning Fiberglas ®, one of the first things they taught us up-and-coming yuppies was to learn to work smart, not hard. Little did

they know they were applying Biblical principles that have been in the Bible the whole time! If we will just learn, and keep reminding ourselves, that working according to His working is far more productive and rewarding, we'll avoid the "Martha mistake", and spend our time on earth in anointed, fruitful ministry that brings glory to God, and thousands of souls to Christ.

How exactly do we do this? I'm glad you

asked! In part 2 of this study, I'm going to give you a list of things the Bible identifies as the true "work" of true "ministry". Not only does God tell us that we all have a full-time ministry, but He also shows us what kinds of "labors" we're to involve ourselves in so that our efforts in His Name are fruitful and productive and effective.

1 Cor 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

[NKJV]

God says He wants our "labor" to be productive. He doesn't want our work or our ministries to be "vain in the Lord". What does that mean? It means He wants our work to bear lasting fruit for His glory. It means He wants our work to effectively change lives, and help keep them changed. It means He doesn't want us out there "spinning our wheels" so to speak, working hard but seeing nothing to show for it, eternally speaking. How do we protect ourselves from this

all-too-common mistake? By doing what Mary did – by sitting at the feet of our Jesus, and learning from Him. One of the best ways to do that is to go to God's Word, and find out what kinds of "labors" we're to be involved in. In part 2 of this study, I'm going to show you seven true "works" of our ministry, and why those seven are so important to master and become proficient in. Remember, you are a full-time minister. You have a full-time ministry. Your

ministry is not easy – it will always be hard work. But, if you know how to work smart in Jesus, you're hard work will be rewarded with many satisfying results, which change men's lives and bring them into a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Nothing can be more rewarding. Nothing is more important. Nothing can satisfy your soul more than this!



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