

The Father's House and His Business

Luke 2:49 ... Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

We should be in the Father's house and about the Father's business. Church is called "Ecclesia". It is the will of God to gather people together in a local congregation, called the Father's House. A lot of Christians left the church because they were hurt or offended. There is no such thing as having a relationship just between God and us, because Jesus gave us two commandments: **Love the Lord your God with all your mind, soul, heart and strength, and, Love your neighbour as yourself.** If you cannot love your brothers and sisters in the Lord, or even your pastor, there is something wrong in you. You need to allow God to perform a spiritual surgery to remove what is malignant to you. The Bible tells us not to avoid the sword of the Spirit which can remove what is not profitable from you.

The desire to serve is a seed in your heart

The desire to serve has been planted in the hearts of all the Christians. Christians have been told to work together with others and not to retreat to "self".

Service unto God is the corresponding action of faith

James 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Faith apart from works is useless and ineffective.

V26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Faith without works of obedience is dead. You cannot just say that you love God without serving God. Faith must have corresponding action. There should be actions which prove that you love God. Therefore not only do we have the desire to serve God but we also need to serve God. The more you serve Him, the more your faith will grow. The more you put faith into action, the more it grows. Faith and service works with each other. The Apostle Paul said to love in deed. Our love must be expressed in words and in deeds.

It's Foolish not to serve God

1 Corinthians 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

If I do not serve God in obedience, woe is me- sorrows will come to me. It does not cost to serve God; it costs when you do not serve God. Not serving God is costly. Not obeying Him is costly. It pays to serve and obey Him. The devil lies to you and says that if you serve God, He will send you far, far away from family and friends, to

sufferings and wilderness! God does not force you. He is a gentleman. He knows us better than we know ourselves. It is best to surrender our lives to God. Trust God more than trusting yourself. Serving God is the desire of our hearts and it is a necessity to us too.

The Kingdom needs labourers

Matthew 9:37 Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

The Kingdom of God has a need- a need for workers. So when we know that there is a need in the Kingdom of God, we need to rise up!

What are some of the factors that hinder people from serving God?

Too absorbed in natural things; lack of time; too many personal matters to serve God; lack of "spare" resources such as money; feelings of inadequacies; family obligations; fear of failure; offence; unbelief; carnality; laziness; pride; negative mentality; selfishness; ignorance

Are these excuses justifiable?

Too absorbed in personal matters- Serving God is not an option. It should be your priority. When you put that the first priority and **seek thee first the Kingdom of God**, He will make the way for you. Those who water others will be watered. God will bless those who put others' needs before mine. When there is a calling, RESPOND. When Jesus called His disciples, they dropped their fishing nets and followed Him. There are full-time ministry as well as support ministries- both are equally important. At the same time, God will not call you and ruin your family. God is very faithful. The key point is your knowledge and understanding of God, trusting Him and knowing His personality, character and ways of doing things.

When God called me, I made an important decision to quit my job. Then I had a chance to return to HK and I met all my University friends who had achieved so much, I looked at myself and thought that I had achieved nothing. Right then the Holy Spirit rebuked me and I repented straight away. Don't allow the spirit of worldliness to affect you.

Too busy, not enough time: Practically, multi-tasking can help you to save time. The Bible tells us that time is for us, and not to enslave us. You need to plan the day with the fellowship time with God as the top priority. Listen to sermon and drive, listen to worship songs while doing housework etc. God will help us to be more efficient and fruitful then.

Lack of money or too busy making money to serve God- *Money is our servant, never our master.* **You cannot serve God and mammon.** Mammon is the world's system which is atheistic, self-absorbed and self-dependent. It runs primarily by money and covetousness. With the calling comes the provision. God is not a harsh and stingy boss. Learn how to tap into God's provision and blessing. The Bible also instructs us to provide for our own household. It is not right to say that you will just ignore your family duties to serve God. The bottom line is the condition of your heart and your fellowship with God. If you cannot serve God when you are working, you cannot serve Him when you are not. The Calling to serve God is a progressive revelation. All we have to do is to choose to obey. The foundation is to hear the voice of God. It is God calling you and you respond and follow. It is not "I" serving God. If so, you are after popularity and people's applause. Yet it is "God" leading me to serve.

Fear of failure- **Our service is not based on personal success or failure.** When you pray for someone and they are not healed, it is not your fault. If they are, it is not to your glory either. When I was in China, I saw that the local churches welcomed ministers from other nations. When I was preaching in China, the Lord spoke to me to tell those ministers that they should not come with a condescending attitude. Serve with the right heart and the right attitude. Just having good intention is not good enough, we must grow in knowledge and spiritual strength. Our hearts must be like that of a child, without complications to do all unto the Lord!

Feelings of inadequacies or insufficiency- **None of us are adequate.** If you have to wait till you are adequate to serve God, you will never obey the Spirit. God never calls us to do what we can do, He'll always call us to do what we cannot do. Yet you also have to be wise to recognize where your talent is and serve God with it. If you cook a meal which no one wants to eat, you should improve your cooking skills!! Inferiority and superiority come from the same root- SELF. You care too much about yourself; you can't let go of yourself. But when it comes to God, we are dead in Christ. Hence it is a training that when you are serving God, let go of the self-consciousness. Serve God in Christ. Lose sight of yourself. The Apostle Paul said that he did not even judge himself. He lived in selflessness. He was not self-opinionated. He just served God in selflessness in Christ. That will take care of your shyness and inadequacies.

Another way is to confess the Word of God over yourself continually. Confess **I am sufficient in Christ's sufficiency. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. If God is for me, who can be against me.**

Giving testimonies is not to glorify yourself but to glorify God. Another purpose is to build up the faith of the brotherhood in Christ. We need to get rid of the shyness and inadequacies. Our testimonies will inspire others. Use your talents to bless others.

Another way is to start small. Start with doing something, such as setting up tables , cooking or greeting people. As you serve, you lose the self-consciousness. The more you do it, the better you get.

Too many family obligations- **There are no contradictions between serving God and taking care of your family.** The more you serve God, the more your family will be blessed. See Psalm 37. **God delights in the prosperity of His servants.** In the book of Revelations, we can see that the fore heads of the servants are sealed. I was not released into full-time ministry until my youngest was 2 years old. There is no rule to this. You need to be led by the Holy Spirit. If you are continually being led by the people around you, how can you be a leader for the Lord? Don't think that you need to compromise to please your spouse and your children. Don't be ruled by your critics. Your only critic is the devil himself. There are no contradictions when it comes to serving God and your family.

The fear of conflicts and hurts while serving God- **The more conflicts we have with others in church, the better it is for our character training.** It is good for us to be challenged. Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. It is good to overcome the trials and the temptations that come our way. Good friendship will always overcome the storms. Mature friendships stay strong even in tough times. The same applies for marriages. You cannot afford to stay in "puppy love". Friendship has to be tested, refined, and strengthened. We need to mature, to be stretched and enlarged so that we are not petty and shallow!

When there are hurts and rejections in our hearts, we simply have to CHOOSE to forgive. Once we are saved, we are empowered to forgive. You can not forgive if you cannot forget. Cast all hurts and offences into the sea of forgetfulness and remember them no more. If you still feel the sting in your heart, you have not fully forgiven. So, speak to yourself and to God that you choose His way of forgiveness over vindictiveness. The love of Jesus is stronger than the power of sin. When you rehearse sin, you focus only on the sinful nature of a person. The Bible admonishes us to pray for those who persecute you. By so doing, you lift up the cross and the power of the blood of Jesus which is much stronger than sin and death.

A lot of times we focus on others. Yet we cannot change others but ourselves. Picture the blood of Jesus coming all over you to cancel our sins. Not only that, He has also taken from us the desire to sin. None of us sin maliciously but due to weakness and a lack of knowledge. Jesus has broken the power of sin over you. Then you can believe in the purity of the Holy Spirit in you. Believe in your redemption and holiness. Start seeing the good in yourself. Confess your holiness. Confess the fact that you are a child of God; magnify what is good, and the evil will leave. As you meditate on what is good, the devil cannot hold onto you anymore. As you are lost in Him and yielding to Him all the time, the devil can have no mastery over you. This is the heart of Christianity. Don't believe in the power of bad habits. Believe in the good in you. Love believes in the best of every person. Your love walk will always be challenged, just hold on to it and when you do not change, everything around you will change for good!

One of the biggest challenges as a pastor is to believe in the best of every person. I used to cry nearly every day! Yet God told me to love the unlovely. The more you yield to God's thoughts, the more you grow in Christ likeness. Don't believe in the devil's hold on you. Believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you believe in good, good will rise up and overwhelm you. Believe in what is good in you as well as in others.

But why do we fail over and over? The key is, we must sincerely believe in and confess the Word of God over ourselves. Let the Word of God heal build you up and give you confidence. Your good intention is not good enough. None of us have the power to be and do good. The power to be and do good comes from God. Don't keep ignoring the sins and staying in remorse. Saint Augustine had a problem with sexual lust and he was exceedingly tormented. He was so sick of himself but he couldn't get rid of it. So when he started the Catholic Church, he instituted "celibacy". He couldn't do it in the spirit so he did it in the flesh. He set it as a rule. Our power is in releasing the power of God into our lives. We need to pluck the roots of evil out of our hearts via the power of the Holy Spirit. Don't run from the problem or imprison yourself. Suppression is the way of God, redemption is. Redemption is genuine and it works, otherwise, all you have is just a religion with rules and rituals that clean only the outside! Let the Word of God do a spiritual operation on you to prune you to produce more fruit.

Heb:4:12: For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Amen!