

“The Supremacy of Christ in our Ministry”
Colossians 4:7-18

The Point: Go hard for God by serving and investing your life into the lives of others.

There is one common denominator in 4:7-18: All of these people were in the race and had partnered together with Paul for the sake of the gospel in ministry.

When we talk about ministry, we mean our service in the gospel for the sake of others. I believe we can glean twelve lessons on ministry from this passage: #1

I. Ministry is for Everyone.

- a. Of course we mean everyone who belongs to the church, the people of God. We see this in the text in the way that Tychicus is describe as one who belongs to God’s spiritual family: “beloved brother,” and is a “fellow servant *in the Lord*”
- b. If you don’t have a true relationship with God, it will be impossible for you to pour out that which you’ve never received.
- c. Colossians 4:7-18 refers to 11 different people connected to the work of ministry. That does not even include all those gathered as the church in Colossae who received the letter.
- d. Let’s look at the diversity of this group:
 - i. Ethnicity: Jews & Greeks
 - ii. Gender: Male & Female
 - iii. Social Class: a doctor and a slave
 - iv. Background: Tychicus was from the province of Asia. Aristarchus was from Thessalonica. John Mark was from Jerusalem. Onesimus and Epaphras were from Colossae.
 - v. App: This is our prayer for Redemption Hill. We want people from Medford... and Malden and Somerville and Boston and the Midwest and the Southeast and the Northwest and from China and Kenya and Germany and do you get the point? So let’s pray for this and let’s pursue this. This church is for the young and old, black and white, people with little education and those who have more degrees than a thermometer.
 - vi. The gospel is for all people, and so is the work of ministry.
- e. Do you believe that God can use you to accomplish his purposes in the world?
- f. Look, Jesus chose regular dudes to be his followers. They were fisherman, tax collectors. And he still does this today. Why?
- g. 2 Cor 4:7: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”
- h. There’s someone here today that thinks you have blown with it God or you’ve blown it in ministry and you are too far gone to be able to be used by God. God is writing a story on each of our lives, and the final chapter is yet to be written, which leads us to our second point:

II. Ministry involves extending a second chance.

- a. Just look at the lives of two people in this text:
 - i. Oneismus was a slave who had runaway from his master (Philemon) He was a regular guy whose life was transformed by the gospel.
 - ii. And then we come to Mark in verse 10. Acts 15...

III. Ministry is about serving.

- a. Tychicus “fellow servant in the Lord”
- b. Epaphras “a servant of Jesus Christ”
- c. Ministry is not about having your name in lights. Ministry is about putting others before yourself. Real ministry happens when we take the posture of John the Baptist when he spoke of Jesus saying, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
- d. In light of how Jesus has served us in the gospel, how could we not take the posture of a servant and say, “I will gladly serve others.”
- e. App: Are you finding outlets to serve others inside and outside of the church? Plug in with our serve teams: First Impressions, Children’s Ministry, Music & Media. Get involved in our efforts to serve the community. Hook up some help for our upcoming Serve Opportunities with the Boys & Girls Club on Dec. 21st Community Groups

IV. Ministry is about encouragement (8).

- a. Paul says Tychichus was going back “that he may encourage their hearts.” We also see these theme in verse 11, when Paul says the brothers “have been a comfort to me.”
- b. People need encouragement. We need to stir one another up. Lift up the hurting. Comfort the brokenhearted.
- c. Can you imagine a world void of encouragement? At your workplace, in your studies, in your home, you’re putting it in every single day, giving maximum effort, doing a solid job, and after every project is complete, every assignment turned in, every meal cooked and dish washed, you receive absolutely no response?
- d. God knows we need encouragement in our spiritual lives as well: “I’m praying for you.” “Man, God really used you in that person’s life.” “You really exemplified Christ in your actions.” “I know it’s tough, but persevere. Look to the cross. God is with you, and I am in your corner.” We need that.
- e. Hebrews 3:13 says, “But let us encourage one another daily as long as it’s called today, so that we will not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”
- f. Go out and encourage someone today. You will lift their spirits and yours.

V. Ministry is a Group Project.

- a. Paul had a group of people that were *with* him in ministry.
- b. How was Paul going to preach the gospel to every person in the city? How was Paul going to mentor and disciple these new followers of Christ? How was Paul going to check up on the churches he had already started?
- c. Paul surrounded himself with men and women who shared one heart & one mind, so that they, together, could minister to people more effectively.
- d. When we work together, we can do so much more than when we go at it alone.
 - i. Story: Cleaning out GeoSchmucks... Straight up Nasty... One truck load after another...

VI. Ministry may include suffering (10).

- a. Where is Paul writing this letter? From prison.
 - i. He was familiar with suffering for Jesus. So much so that he lists his credentials in 2 Cor. 11:22-29 as a way to validate his ministry before the Corinthians. (rework?)
 - ii. “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own

people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (2 Corinthians 11:22-29 ESV)

- b. Are you willing to pay a price?
- c. Have you given your life to this? This is the call of discipleship. Ministry may include suffering, and then #7...

VII. Ministry is work.

- a. Ministry is a commitment. Ministry takes time and effort. Remember, ministry is an investment of our lives into the lives of others.
- b. It may mean sacrificing good things in our lives so that we are more free to serve others. We are all incredibly busy. Perhaps we need to simplify our schedule a bit, but here's another encouragement: just like we looked at last week with mission, we need to engage in ministry where we are. There are opportunities all around us. People who've never seen the love of Christ on display in real, tangible ways or heard the gospel. What can you free up in life, so that you will be more free to minister to others?
- c. Look at how our passage teaches us that ministry is work: In verse 11, he calls Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus, "fellow workers for the kingdom of God" (11)
- d. In verses 12 and 13, he says that Ephapras has worked hard for the Colossians, and one of the primary ways he does that brings us to our eighth principle.

VIII. Ministry should be covered in prayer.

- a. In Colossians 1:9-14, Paul summarizes the content of how he prays for the Colossians.
- b. In Colossians 4:2, Paul just instructed them to "Continue steadfastly in prayer." Now we see an example of prayer and another request for prayer.
- c. Paul describes Epaphras in verse 12, saying that he "always struggles on their behalf in his prayers" (12)
- d. Then, notably, Paul asks the Colossians to "remember my chains." Such a pointed request. (18) Prayer should be the air we breathe as believers.

IX. Ministry aims for maturity. (12)

- a. "standing firm in all the will of God."
 - i. To have a strong adherence to
 - ii. Stay here. Stick with this.
 - iii. "Mature and fully assured..."
- b. We encourage. We work. We pray. We invest time. We We struggle, so that people will grow in the walk with God and live lives that honor and glorify him.
- c. Are you growing in your walk with God?
- d. Do you long to see growth in others?
- e. We want wide growth and deep growth. Can I say that again? We want more and more and more and more people connecting with Redemption Hill Church. In short, we want our church to grow wider as in more people. [Bring Sunday] But, we also want more and more and more and more spiritual growth among those who are here. [Community Groups]
- f. If the work of ministry is to make disciples, then we would be wise to ask when a disciple is made.
 - i. Conversion
 - ii. Growth
 - iii. Multiplying

- g. Why is it so important to continuing growing in our walk with God? Because, #10
- X. Ministry is filled with temptation.**
- a. You say, “Where do you see that in this passage?” I see it beside the name of the man named Demas in verse 14
 - b. Roughly four years later, when Paul, nearing the end of his life, writes his second letter to Timothy, we find these words: “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus” (2 Timothy 4:9-12).
 - c. What is more important than starting well in ministry, in marriage, in life? Finishing well. God is looking for faithful men and women who will go the distance for him.
- XI. Ministry is about fulfilling what God puts before us (17)**
- a. Another translation says, “complete the work you have received in the Lord.”
 - b. The word “work” here could refer to service of any kind. There’s no way to know exactly what Archippus had to do.
 - c. But what a great word from Paul! Can you imagine how invigorating it must have been for Archippus to hear this: “Hey Paul has a message for you. Fulfill. Complete. Do your work. Handle your business.”...
 - d. You think that’s significant? What if I told you that you had a greater word from someone more significant than Paul?
 - e. Are you a follower of Jesus? Then Jesus has a word for you... “make disciples.” This is the mission of the church. We all have people in front of us everyday who need Jesus.
 - f. We all have an obligation to display and declare the gospel through service.
- XII. Ministry is about People**
- a. Do you love people?
 - b. You might say, “I’m not a people person.” But that doesn’t work. You may not be an extrovert, but that doesn’t exclude you from being in the people business.
 - c. Listen: God loves people. This is one reason I wanted to come and spend my life in ministry in a major city, because there are roughly 6 million people in Greater Boston, most of whom desperately need the gospel.
 - d. We see this idea of relationship in ministry all throughout, and sometimes in the most simple ways. In verses 10-15, we find seven different people extended greetings.
 - e. App: Let me provide one simple application here: People will often come back to a church based on the welcome they receive from us:
 - i. Man, the sermon and music was banging, but those people didn’t even recognize I was there. Or, the sermon and music was pathetic, but those people really care. They have a sense of true community about them.
 1. Are we a welcoming church?
 2. Get here early. Stay late.
 - f. There is one more expression of opening your life to people, and we see that in verse 15. “Nympha and the church in her house...”
 - i. She used the resources God had blessed her with and put them to work for the kingdom.
 - ii. App: Practice hospitality. Have people in your home. It’s okay and fun to go out to eat, but it’s important to share a meal and meet together in our homes.

Conclusion:

So where are you? Are you convinced that ministry is for you? If so, do you lack motivation to spend your life for the sake of others? Look to Jesus. You might say, “I get this, but how am I ever going to find the strength to spend my life like this?” Here’s the good news: Jesus sends his Spirit to dwell in the heart of every believer, and he equips us and strengthens for every task God sets before us. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:15:

“I will most gladly spend and be spent for the sake of your souls” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Let’s spend our lives for the sake of others!