

If God Calls You to Ministry, Expect to Pay a Price

I served the Lord as a journalist long before God called me into the ministry. I ran from that call for a while, mostly because of my fears. It didn't help when I studied the lives of the ministers I knew. It was obvious they paid a high price.

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Ministry is far from glamorous, in spite of what you may see on some Instagram accounts. When you answer God's call, you put your life on the line. As the apostle Paul told the Galatians, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17, MEV). The Greek word for "marks" is *stigma*, and it refers to the marks burned into the flesh of a slave to show who owned him. Paul was saying, "I have the scars to prove I serve Jesus."

Ministry carries with it a long list of occupational hazards, and I do an injustice to any young leader if I don't warn them of what might happen on the job. I'm not sharing this to scare anyone. But if you know you are called to any ministry position—full-time, part-time or volunteer—you should at least read the fine print before you enlist. Out of love, I offer these warnings to anyone enlisting in this war:

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– **The devil will attack you and those you love.** I don't focus on the devil or his demons, but it's foolish to ignore the schemes of hell. Satan hates those in ministry. The devil plays dirty. Paul spoke to the Ephesians about "our struggle"

with demonic forces (Eph. 6:12). Welcome to the conflict! You must learn to fight both defensively and offensively, using the spiritual weapons God gives us.

– **People will hurt you.** The New Testament calls Christians “saints,” but you will be tempted to call them other names when you are on the receiving end of their criticism, complaints and cruelty. Christians are redeemed sinners. The Holy Spirit lives inside them, but they are still sinners. Don’t let resentment grow in your heart if you are attacked, rejected or slandered. Develop a thick skin, and learn to love and forgive—knowing you are just as capable of this behavior.

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