

When You Feel Like Quitting the Ministry

“Why am I doing this anyway?” I muttered under my breath while moving about my day. I was irritated. Not just a little, but a lot. Some days in ministry, serving other people is not really appealing. I have days like that less often now, but every now and then, I find myself asking this question again.

On the surface, it’s a sarcastic question. But as I pondered it, I realized the power of this flippant question. In this case, other ministry people had disappointed me. Their action scraped an old wound of mistrust that I have struggled to keep cleansed and submitted to the Lord.

People hurt us in ministry, even other ministry people. I am at the place where it no longer surprises me. Yet something about people close to us being hurtful is still an irritant.

So, why am I doing this anyway? The Lord seemed to burn that question deep into my heart today. “Are you doing it for yourself? For them?” I fought back a bit. Of course I’m doing it for Him—or so I think—until my heart gets this ugly.

Paul struggled with hurt from those close to him in what was one of the darkest times in his ministry. Read his final book, 2 Timothy, and find him sitting in a dark, dank dungeon awaiting execution by the crazy emperor, Nero. He had been deserted by everyone in that part of Asia. His fellow worker, Demas, had left him. Perhaps the danger of association with Paul was more than Demas was willing to risk. Or maybe he simply got sidetracked with the things of this world. Nevertheless, Paul was left, after over 30 years of ministry, feeling abandoned. I imagine that this question raced through his mind.

But in Galatians 1:10, we see that Paul had covered this

before: "Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ" (ESV). Ouch. If our motives are to please people, including ourselves, it disqualifies us from being a true servant of Christ? These are tough words.

We cannot stop people from hurting us. But we can realize that our primary goal in serving is to please God. This makes the next step easier. After listing the people who had deserted him, Paul concludes his disappointment with this statement: "May it not be charged against them!" (2 Tim. 4:16). Can we do the same?

It is hard to forgive when treated unfairly. But forgiveness frees our hearts to rise and love again, no longer held captive under the power of the person who has hurt us. Forgiveness is not saying that what was done to us was right but that we want to be free. We can take them off of our hook and give them to God. We'll find His shoulders were made to carry the burden of hurt much better than ours.

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