

Waiting for a Ministry

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It was John Wesley who said, "Don't seek for a ministry, but seek for the fruit of a disciplined life." In other words, pining away for a ministry is a waste of precious time. Rather, go deeper and God will use you in ways you haven't imagined.

I have known many who feel they are marginalized in their context. No-one has an interest in allowing them to exercise the gifts they have been given by God. So, they fret and wait and sometimes weep and complain. Let me give you some guiding principles for good ministry, no matter what your gifts.

Wesley's advice is principle one: Bring new and better disciplines into your life and then see what God will do with that. In other words, be a leader by living the Christian life the best possible way. Let your life be your ministry.

The second principle is this: Do the hidden things that no-one else may wish to do. For instance, you may be an exceptional leader that no-one recognizes, but in the meantime, choose to minister in the forgotten places, such as the retirement home, or the prison, or among the poor. If you cannot teach thousands, teach one or two who will grow. Maybe one day they will teach the thousands. If you are not asked to coordinate the big meals for the church, then show hospitality every week to church families in your home. In other words, seek to "fall into the ground and die" like a grain of wheat, then see what God will do with it.

The third principle: Do what does not take a title, a group, or the church's money. What I mean is that you can do a lot of ministry if you



don't care about people "knighting" you before you do it. Don't expect everyone to want to do what you are doing, and don't ask for money from the church to do it. It's perfectly OK to use your own money outside your regular giving fund. If you follow this plan, doors open all over the place. Who will hinder you if start writing missionaries and praying for them daily? Who will mind if you spend your own funds to take short term missions trips? Who will feel it necessary to restrain you if you voluntarily clean the building or take care of the widow's car problems? Everyone will not have the same passion you have about this or that ministry, but you don't need *their* passion, but *yours*.

The fourth and most important principle: Make love the priority.

I once was confronted by a woman in a church I had just begun to shepherd. In the first year of my work there, I had not given her any notable job to do. She had a long history of leading, but I did not feel she was right for any of our positions at the time. She came to me tearfully. She was quite negative about it all. God gave me the wisdom to ask her to do this simple thing. "Go home and prayerfully write down the names of ten people with needs of any sort. Then, set out to meet those needs at a cost to yourself. Do it diligently." The results? Within about a week, the woman was beaming and full of hope. She said, "I just can't get everything done that this list requires," which, being interpreted, meant, "I love helping others and find that there are a lot of people who really need my care." Meeting needs out of love helped her find her stride ministry-wise. She hasn't slowed down since.

These principles all considered, should lead us to say, "Nobody actually has to wait for a ministry." As the slogan states: *Just Do It!*

"Through love, serve one another." Galatians 5:13

"Do not look out for your own personal interests, but for the interests of others." Philippians 2:4