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Your Preparation for Ministry

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Right off the bat, there are going to be many Christians who look at the title of this article and think, "This is, obviously, something that doesn't apply to me. After all, I am not in Christian ministry and never plan to be.

And the biblical reply to that must immediately come back: **WRONG!**

Recently we explored the concept of "call" as we looked at Christian discipleship. In that exploration, we saw that the Bible uses the idea of Christian calling in three different ways: 1) the call to become a Christian, 2) the call to Christian ministry, and 3) the call to Christian leadership ministry. God issues the first call to every person in the world. The second call is for every person who answers the first call. And the final call is for people God wants to use in vocational Christian leadership (this is the one most think of when they hear this term used). So, if you are truly a Christian, you have been called into ministry. That ministry is very possibly not a vocational calling, but it is a call to do ministry in the world. You are a Christian missionary and need to prepare yourself for that work.

The biggest obstacle most Christians face regarding this calling relates to how they conceive of themselves. In spite of the fact that every believer is called by God to carry Christ to the world, most don't actually even recognize the calling. There is a very prominent mindset which views those called to vocational leadership ministry as the called ones, and everyone else's job is simply to support them. That is simply not a biblical idea. All

Christians are called to ministry and need to discern their calling and prepare themselves for the work.

But understanding that concept is not the only problem. There are many who acknowledge the truth of this teaching but don't know how to implement it in life. For many, this means teaching a Sunday School class or serving in some kind of ministry in the church. Of course, there are ways that our calling to ministry can be expressed in the church, but that is not the only place. In fact, for most people that should not even be the main place. The people who need Christ are mostly out in the world, not in the church. For that reason, the focus of our ministry should also mostly be out in the world. It should be expressed in one's profession, recreational activities and just generally in life circumstances. The truth is, the calling of most Christians must be fulfilled in the context of everyday life. Your Christian ministry is not separate from this, but is expressed in it.

There is one other problem most Christians run into as they consider how to serve God out in the world. This problem is that not only are they clueless about what to do, but also don't know how to go about moving forward in the right direction. This brings us to the topic of our preparation for ministry. This preparation has two parts – a knowledge part and an action part. Both must be engaged. And to do that, preparation must be made in both arenas.

Knowledge

Regarding knowledge, there are some basics that everyone needs to master. Without these basics, it is difficult to be consistent in sharing our faith appropriately in every situation.

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Worldview Resources

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Worldview

The first knowledge base people need to have is an understanding of worldview. This is not a topic that needed to be grasped even as recently as a couple of generations ago. Before that, America was very homogenous when it came to basic beliefs. While there certainly were exceptions, the vast majority of people held a theistic worldview. Nearly everyone, at the very least, believed that God existed, even if they were not faithful in following him. In an environment like that, there are simply no worldview bridges that need to be crossed, so the topic of worldview was not a great concern.

That is simply not true in today's world. We are just as likely to run into people who don't believe in God or are New Agers or Buddhists, or who hold to any of a number of other religions, as we are to meet people who believe in God. And even many who believe in God do not believe in the God of the Bible. Because of that, an understanding of worldview has become necessary. We need to understand the beliefs of the people we wish to interact with so that we can present our message in a way that makes sense to them. For instance, we can't simply assume that a person believes in God when we begin our witness – as has mostly been done in the past. If we do and they don't, our message simply will not make sense to them. Sharing Christ with a Naturalist (or a person from any other worldview, for that matter) requires a different starting point than when we share with a Theist.

Christian Worldview

The second knowledge base Christians need to have relates to our own Christian worldview. Biblical worldview essentials define the Christian faith. It is impossible to compare our faith with any other

faith if we do not understand the standard other belief systems must be compared to.

A Christian worldview answers the three essential worldview questions based on the teachings of the Bible – What is the nature of ultimate reality? What is a human being? and What is the ultimate people can gain from this life (What is salvation)? With this knowledge in hand, it becomes possible to compare and contrast our faith with every other faith system and to probe for truth.

Gospel Message

The third knowledge base Christians need to master is the content of the gospel message. Essentially, all this involves is the ability to share with a person how Christians answer the three essential worldview questions, then offer them an opportunity to invite Christ into their lives.

Of course, doing this effectively and sensitively will most likely involve some other things, as well. It is almost always helpful to develop an actual personal relationship with the person you want to share with. People are much more willing to listen to those they consider friends. It may also be important to give a broader context to the message so they will understand why you are dealing with these particular questions in the first place. And in many cases, it is important to have a grasp of the other person's beliefs so you can avoid making unwarranted assumptions about what the person already knows or believes.

Action

Sharing the gospel is not a "one size fits all" proposition. People come from different theological backgrounds and they need to hear the gospel message in terms that make sense to them. So, once we have our knowledge base in place, we need to begin interacting with them in ways which get us into their lives so we can ultimately share

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the gospel. We need to intentionally make a plan regarding the people we want to reach. We need to actually make the needed relationships. And we need to take advantage of the opportunities that open up as a result of our efforts. God has commissioned us to make disciples, and we need to take action to get it done.

Finishing Up

Regardless of your particular situation, you can be assured of one thing;

If you are a Christian, God has called you into Christian ministry. Your calling will be unique to your particular situation. No two people are exactly the same. So, in order to do what God has called you to, you must master the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill your ministry, then get out and do it. If you do this, you will be in a position to fulfill God's calling in your life. If you don't, your calling will go unfulfilled.

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