

## The Call to Serve Colossians 4:17

### Introduction

Today we celebrate our nation's freedom from what the early settlers viewed as tyranny and oppression of a government seeking to enslave its people. The first pilgrims came to America seeking the freedom to worship God and live in peace. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is a well-known phrase in the United States Declaration of Independence. It presents three examples of what the founding fathers called unalienable rights given to us by our Creator and which God binds governments to protect. These rights can only survive as each person respects those rights in every other person. Without this mutual respect for one another, freedom begins to break down. Our nation is in crisis at this very moment for this exact reason. Freedom is not the mantra of America; it is the message of the Bible.

While in Nazareth, Jesus said, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; HE HAS SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET AT LIBERTY THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED; TO PROCLAIM THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (Luke 4:18-19 NKJV)

At the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem, Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:34-36 NKJV)

Whom the Son sets free is free indeed! Christians are the true freedom fighters. We have a specific calling and mission. Jesus gave us a great commission in Mark 16:15, which tells us to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16 NKJV)

Jesus issues the call to serve to every believer. Ephesians 4 calls believers ministers and our commission, ministry. The goal of the church and the goal of Crossroads Chapel is to serve as a minister of Christ. It is what makes every member in the body of Christ, a minister.

An authentic Christian takes the call to serve seriously. We live the Christ-life 24-7! In Colossians 4:17, the Apostle Paul writes these words to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (Colossians 4:17 NKJV)

Christ's call to serve is a call to ministry. It is a ministry that we must pursue and fulfill. God is raising up His church in these final moments of time to give a

dynamic witness to the redeeming love and hope. It is a hope we experience through a divine encounter and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Satan continues to do everything he can to hinder our progress of saturating our neighborhoods and businesses and even our local government with a message of good news! The church cannot fulfill its mission unless believers answer the call and make the extra effort to get involved in ministry. And, like the early church, there is a significant risk to consider.

Christ's call to serve is not a political one; it's a spiritual call. And believers will not begin to serve as ministers until they accept the call and see themselves as divinely commissioned ministers. The New Testament truth is, how you see yourself influences how you will act! If you see yourself as a silent, don't rock the boat kind of follower, you're more likely to be timid and apprehensive around others when it comes to sharing the good news about Jesus. But if you see yourself as an empowered and commissioned minister sent out to change your world, you're going to be a bold and confident change agent ready to make your world a better place.

If you believe you can make a difference, you can! And if you act in faith and obedience to the Call of Christ to serve, you will make a difference.

## **I. You Can Make a Difference**

The Devil has done an excellent job in deceiving many Christians into believing that only a handful of specially called and equipped people can minister. But, according to the scriptures, every one of us is called to get involved in ministry. It's simply just not biblical to sit back and allow professionally trained clergy to do all the ministering. Jesus invites "whosoever will" to come and be a part of His ministry. That means every believer is issued the call to minister. And those whom God calls, He also qualifies. Christ gives every believer spiritual gifts to minister for Him. It's imperative that we discover our gifts and use them to glorify God!

However, authentic ministry for Christ doesn't start in the mind; it begins in the heart! As your experience in the love and fellowship of God deepens, the more you want to know Him. And the more you get to know Him, the greater your desire becomes for others to know Him too!

I really doubt that God intended the church to become a corporation of regularly scheduled programs. The first church was simply a community of related believers committed to sharing the truth about Jesus Christ with their world. The church's mission and the mission of Crossroads Chapel rely upon our commitment to Jesus, our commitment to other Christians, and our commitment to reach out to our world.

The church exists for Worship, Instruction, Fellowship, and Evangelism. We call it the WIFE principle. In the body of Christ, every believer is important and needed.

The church always functions best in concert rather than in solos! What you do in ministry is always related to what others are doing because the church is a body of related believers!

As a follower of Christ, you are here, in the will of God. As the Holy Spirit inspires you, develop and use your God-given gifts for His glory! The call of Christ presents you with the opportunity to get involved in ministry.

## **II. You Can Minister for Christ**

If you choose to answer the call to serve, you need to develop a Christ-like character. You can make a difference in your world when you allow the character of Christ to flow through your words and actions. Let me challenge you with a few of the character qualities needed to minister for Christ effectively.

### **#1 A believer called to ministry can be identified by their Love.**

Jesus set the standard in John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another."  
(John 13:34-35 NKJV)

Paul writes about it in Romans 13:8 "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8 NKJV)

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22 NKJV)

And John warns us, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also." (1 John 4:20-21 NKJV)

So the first quality for authentic, genuine ministry is a love for others.

### **#2 A believer called to ministry can be identified by their service for others.**

Jesus sets the standard in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45 NKJV)

David wrote in Psalm 100:2, "Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing." (Psalms 100:2 NKJV)

In 1 Corinthians 7:35, Paul says: "And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord

without distraction." (1 Corinthians 7:35 NKJV)

To the Colossians, he writes, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV)

So the question is, "What service are you providing that will bring people closer to Christ? What ministry are you involved in that is making a difference in meeting the needs of others?"

### **#3 A believer called to ministry is willing to embrace new ideas.**

Authentic followers of Jesus are teachable disciples. God does not call us to be Lone Rangers. What you think may be nice and might even be helpful, but what Christ thinks is essential! Jesus is the teacher, and we are his disciples. He didn't call us to be His brain trust; He calls us to be His followers!

The definition of a disciple is "A learner under discipline!" As ministers for Christ, we listen, we learn, and we follow in the direction Christ is leading. Followers of Jesus can accept instruction and share it with others!

In Job 6:24, Job said: "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred." (Job 6:24 NKJV)

In Chapter 34, he says, "Teach me *what* I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more?" (Job 34:32 NKJV)

David said, "Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You *are* the God of my salvation; On You, I wait all the day." (Psalms 25:4-5 NKJV)

Are you learning the lessons that Christ is trying to teach you? Are you listening to the Holy Spirit as he illuminates the Word of God to your heart? Are you able to share with others what you learned about the Christ-life? Are you sharing fresh experiences of your life in Christ, or do you refer to the same old things you've been talking about for years? Is your Christian walk stuck in a rut, or are you on an incredible journey, ever-learning and discovering the awesome and inexhaustible presence and power of the living Christ.

Are you teachable? What have you recently experienced that has caused you to grow in faith?

### **#4 A believer called to ministry is submissive to the authority of Christ.**

Submissive disciples respond even when they don't completely understand or even enjoy what they are asked to do.

Our permissive society encourages us to question authority and refuse to follow the rules if we don't personally agree with them. It's very regrettable that so many leaders have given us plenty of reasons to question their leadership in recent years. But, a true disciple recognizes authentic authority and leadership and does not demand his own way.

As leaders in Christian love, we must learn to build trust and confidence in those who follow Christ. Paul said, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." Paul writes to the Corinthians in Chapter 16: "I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints— that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men." (1 Corinthians 16:15-18 NKJV)

James writes in Chapter 4, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7 NKJV)

Submission is a difficult quality to learn, but it's absolutely necessary to effective ministry for Christ.

#### **#5 A believer called to ministry is forgiving.**

Finally, a person who knows how to forgive will develop strong and enduring relationships in every area. Unforgiveness paralyzes you, and the longer you let it go, the more difficult it becomes to deal with. The good news is – Jesus can help you!

The breath of God – the Holy Spirit – can breathe upon you and thoroughly cleanse, renew and re-create you. He helps us to let go of the past and embrace a whole new life and destiny in Christ.

The key to learning how to forgive others is to realize how much God has forgiven you! When we can receive God's love and forgiveness, it becomes easier for us to extend forgiveness to others. David writes in Psalm 103, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, *So* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalms 103:10-12 NKJV)

Jesus adds action to forgiveness in Matthew 5:23. He said, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24 NKJV)

He also says, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also

forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15 NKJV)

Paul tells the Ephesians in Chapter 4:32 to "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32 NKJV)

Learning to forgive is one of the most essential qualities a person can acquire in life. Christians who are called to ministry must be able to forgive others.

### **Conclusion**

This list is by no means exhaustive. I'm sure you can think of more things to add to this list of Christian character traits. It's important to grow and make some spiritual progress on our faith journey.

What about you? Are you progressively becoming the person God wants you to be? Are you still following Jesus? Is your spiritual progress challenging you to share your faith with others? Can the most important people in your life rely upon your witness to guide them to Christ?

If you can say yes to those questions, then you are answering the call, and your life and witness are definitely impacting those around you.