

You Are A Minister, Too  
John 17:13-18

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Dr. J. Howard Olds

My all time favorite story is the one about a minister who took a job at the local zoo. The gorilla died. Since the kids missed it so much, zoo officials decided to put someone in a gorilla costume until a real replacement could be found. It was the ministers job to don the costume, hop around the cage, and entertain the kids.

THE MINISTER LOVED IT. God more attention that he ever got in the pulpit. Could eat all he wanted, no stress, no complaints, no committees, no deadlines and no pressure. Even take a nap without an excuse.

FEELING SO FRISKY, he decided to try the trapeze. Soon swinging so high that he lost his grip and landed in the next cage. As he came to himself, the minister saw a FEROCIOUS LION CHARGING RIGHT AT HIM. Forgetting he was a gorilla, the minister jumped to his feet and yelled HELP, I'M A MINISTER. The Lion locked all fours and said "Hey buddy, be quiet, I'M A MINISTER TOO.

Ever since Martin Luther nailed his beliefs to the Wittenburg door back in 1517, protestants have affirmed the priesthood of all believers. At the core of our theology is the conviction that ALL BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS ARE MINISTERS TOO. As our many gifts are united in one spirit, let us put them to use in ministry.

## I. WHEN IT COMES TO WORSHIP, YOU ARE A MINISTER TOO.

A. Family went shopping around for a new church. On their way home, they debriefed their experience. FATHER, "I thought the sermon was dull", MOTHER—I felt the music was flat. TEENAGER—I wanted to stay home. Anyway. As the discussion heated up, Jimmy, the 5 year old said—I THOUGHT IS WAS A PRETTY GOOD SHOW FOR A QUARTER, the amount he'd placed in offering plate.

1. If worship were performance, we can take what we want, come when its convenient, leave as we like.

2. Worship is a work of the people in praise and thanksgiving to God. Your presence and participation makes all the difference. —Question is not so much "How did the preacher do?" –Did you do a good job creating a climate where the presence and power of God can be experienced.

B. Ro. 12:1—I urge you brothers and sisters to present your bodies as living sacrifices—this is your spiritual act of worship.

1. I admire those who worship with us in spirit. I APPRECIATE those who worship in body as well.

2. I am willing to create multiple times and days and types of worship, but I am calling on you to treat worship as something more than a second hand devotion.

3. Statistics you need to know. 86% of Americans attend Church the first time because somebody invites them. If you invite 10, an average of 6 will come. Number 1 reason people give for not attending church is “nobody invited me.

## II. WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING DISCIPLES, YOU ARE A MINISTER TOO.

A. It is the mission of the Church to produce Christian Disciples. A disciple is a faithful follower of the principles and practices of Jesus Christ. We are in the disciple making business.

1. Ro. 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

2. Transformed—Metamorphosed—talking about people going through a metamorphosis. Talking about tadpoles becoming frogs, caterpillars becoming butterflies. Religion alters the essence of our being.

3. New way of thinking about life.

a. What’s in it for me? –What’s best for all?

b. Get even— get over it.

c. See the least as lazy— opportunity to give Jesus a cup of cold water.

d. By what values will I run my business, do my job, relate to my family, spend my time, invest my money.

4. No time for mickey mouse, take it or leave, nice places for kids and great socials for adults. We are in the LIFE SHAPING, LIFE CHANGING, SPIRITUAL FORMATION business.

B. The best way to make disciples is to be one. All Jesus ever said to would be disciples was “follow me.” Do as I do.

1. Two reporters from a large city newspaper decided to test the honesty of Auto Mechanics in the area. Disconnected one spark plug wire from an engine that was in otherwise perfect shape, and drove around town trying to get it fixed. After being charged an average of \$175.00 for parts and labor from several mechanics they came upon one who “looked under the hood, replaced the wire, and

said no charge when they went to pay— Why? They asked. I am a Christian. He said. I try to do what's right.

C. With one hand disciples reach out to Jesus, with the other, they bring a friend.

1. Keith Anderson says “What I liked most about Church was Mr. Witoff. I was only 4 or 5. In devious ways I would slip away from my parents into the seat with Mr. Witoff. He was decades older, We had nothing in common, not even sports. Mr. Witoff offered me what I needed — a gracious and welcome invitation to “come sit with me in Church”

### III. WHEN IT COMES TO CARING FOR OTHERS, YOU ARE A MINISTER TOO.

A. V. 9 Let your love be sincere. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

1. People do not care how much you know and until they know how much you care.

B. On January 1, 1997 I slept late, watched football games, and took my family to dinner. The next morning I get up early, to get a fresh start on a new year. I stepped out of the shower and discovered a large lump under my right arm. In less than 30 days I had undergone surgery and started intensive treatment for aggressive Non hodsgen Lymphoma. Yes I am a cancer survivor.

1. Cancer is a troubling trip and if you can stay off the train, by all means avoid it. Cancer changed my life for the better. Among the things I learned over the next 9 months was “how to lean and not be afraid.”

a. Lived first 50 years lived like a the lone ranger.

b. If you want something done, do it yourself.

c. Work hard, try hard to please, maybe someone will like you.

d. Cancer taught me that I was lovable, even bloated from Chemo like a summa wrestler, without a hair on my body. Cancer taught me there are more important things in life than getting to the top. Cancer taught me that people really do care.

e. One reason I find this transition difficult is that the people I left behind carried me through that illness. They filled the sanctuary with special prayer services. They sent me tons of cards every day for months. The greatest single year attendance growth in that church came the year I was sick. I was their minister. But they ministered to me.

2. You do the same. I know you do. Through Sunday School, Stephen Ministries, and intercessory prayer groups. Even more, without any program at all, you care for one another. You are ministers too.

#### IV. WHEN IT COMES TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT, YOU ARE A MINISTER TOO.

A. I said to Staff Parish Relations committee this week—It is unrealistic and unfair to expect a Senior pastor on the job for 30 days, to raise a 4 million dollar operating budget which represents a 18% increase over last year.

1. I didn't build this budget but I know it represents a 15% increase in our Denominational support, a 54% increase in buildings and grounds, and a projected 4% increase in salaries for staff. I've been here long enough to trust the judgement of those who developed it.

2. Thoreau— It is one thing to build castles in the air.

It is another thing to put foundations under them.

4. I enjoyed the 30 day honeymoon as your pastor. I now ask you do pray hard and dig deep that we may establish together a solid foundation for a new era of ministry through Brentwood UMC>

B. At the tender age of 10, I went into the Rabbit Raising business. It proved to be a promising enterprise—the rabbits were cute, they multiplied rapidly, and when the population became too plentiful to handle they made good meals when fried with my Mother's milk gravy. Before long I had a thriving business supplying Rabbits to our end of the county. When my piggy bank overflowed and a real bank account was opened, my mother presented me with a tiny notebook. I guess you could call it a primitive spread sheet. On it were these three columns.

Rabbits sold, Money collected, Tithe paid.

1. My mother was rigid about tithing.

2. As a 10 year old kid I felt like a minister in ministry around the world. Never gotten away from that, even when I had to borrow money to make it happen. If you want to know what I plan to do about this 4 million dollar budget. I plan to make a pledge, that represents 1/10 of my published salary, before taxes.

3. If you will do something similar. We can quit worrying about money, and get on with ministry.

A new minister was wandering around in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Sunday School class when he ran into a plastic church that served as an offering plate for the class. Nostalgia sat in. The preacher stood there in a trance remembering how he used to come to

Sunday School and put his offering in a similar church. That's when a student came through the door. The kid didn't recognize the preacher. So without hesitation the youngster said "Be Careful sir, You got our Church in your Hands"

YOU GOT OUR CHURCH IN YOUR HANDS, FOR YOU ARE A MINISTER TOO.