

The Key to Greatness

or

“Not to be Ministered Unto”

By Bill Scheidler

Text: Mark 10:35-45 (KJV)

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.”³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.”

*So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.”⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.⁴² But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.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.**”*

Note especially verse 45 as it is stated in the King James Version of the Bible.

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

These are the disciples of Jesus. The goal of a disciple is to be as his master. Jesus, the Master, makes it clear when He said, “I DID NOT COME TO BE MINISTERED UNTO...”

James and John, on the other hand, had; they had “COME TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.” The problem is that in the self-centeredness that characterizes our culture today, most people also “COME TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”

As a matter of fact, most of the problems that we have in the church and outside of the church come from this very mentality. Problems arise because we expect to be “ministered unto.”

- Disagreement in the nursery
- Fights in school
- Quarrels among friends
- Dissatisfaction at work
- Marital conflicts
- Even wars among nations are all possible when we “COME TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”

So often when our tastes, preferences or desires are not ministered unto. When that happens, we get...

UPSET...ANGRY...IRRITABLE...SNAPPY...HUFFY...MOODY...
QUARRELSOME...TOUCHY...CRANKY...EXASPERATED...
PROVOKED...RILED...AGGRAVATED...PEEVED...ANNOYED...
BOTHERED...CROSS...IRKED...ENRAGED...INFURIATED...
OFFENDED...AND INCENSED.

It is usually because we “CAME TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”

Sometimes we are able to skillfully conceal attitudes and yet on the inside we know what we are feeling. We are irritated because an expectation that we have is not being realized—the expectation “TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”

James and John had this problem, but the rest of the disciples had this problem as well.

The fact is, we all have this problem to a degree in that we all are usually wanting “TO BE MINISTERED UNTO” by the people around us (Employers, Spouses, Children, Parents, Church Leaders, Store Clerks, Service Attendants, Etc.), by circumstances, by the weather or something else.

1. Perhaps we have been slighted, ignored or brushed aside. Someone doesn't show you us consideration, someone doesn't give us the respect of our position. **We get bothered, upset, angry, snappy, etc.** Why? It is because they wouldn't let us serve or minister to someone in need? NO! It is because our feelings, our rights, our gifts, our position, our dignity, our importance were not recognized. In other words, we were not “MINISTERED UNTO.”
2. Perhaps we have some feelings of jealousy. Someone is praised or promoted ahead of us. Someone makes more points, get higher grades or receives honor, success, money or popularity. **We are bothered upset, angry, snappy, etc.** Why? Is it because they wouldn't let us serve or minister? NO! It is because we wanted those things for ourselves. In other words, we came “TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.”
3. Perhaps we are in a situation of service and we have not been praised or properly acknowledged. We have been kind to someone. It has cost some time or resources to do it. Naturally we thought our goodness would be appreciated. And it wasn't, at least not as much as we thought that it should have. We expected profuse thanks, and quite a little fuss to be made over it. Instead it was taken rather coolly. **We are disgusted.** We almost wish we had not helped out at all. We feel half inclined to say in haste that “we will never do that again!” Why? We have ministered to another person. We have helped someone in need. Yes, but **we** have “NOT BEEN MINISTERED UNTO.” We wanted to be thought of as exceedingly good and kind and generous. That is, we expected to be ministered to by thanks and praise and perhaps even a little flattery.

4. Perhaps we see ourselves as people of excellent taste, sound judgment and good common sense. Now we find that our advice has been ignored—perhaps it was not even asked for in the matter in which we consider ourselves to be somewhat of an authority. We cannot understand it. **We feel rubbed the wrong way.** Our spirit within us is ruffled. What is the trouble? Is it that we came wanting to minister to our friend, and by neglecting to take our advice he has got himself into a sad mess? Not at all! As it happens, he has managed quite well without our help. The trouble is, we have not been acknowledged. Our reputation as an authority in the matter of taste or judgment has “NOT BEEN MINISTERED UNTO.” We came not to minister but to be ministered unto. And we find ourselves disappointed.
5. Perhaps you are involved in some aspect of work here at the church. Perhaps you lead a cell group, you assist in worship, you teach a children’s class, work in the office or the nursery. Now you are thinking of giving up the work. Why? Has your health failed? Have you no longer the time for it? Are other duties more pressing? No, none of these are the reason. Then you are not wanted? Is there no longer the need for your services? Is the opportunity to minister being withdrawn from you? No, the need is as great as ever. The door of opportunity remains wide open. Then why are you giving it up? Well, you are tired of the work, so you think you will drop it. You expected it would be an interest to you. It would bring you into touch with others. It would give you a position in the church. In fact, you thought you would like it. And you did like it for a time, but now you are tired of it. Ah! We are beginning to understand. As long as it ministered unto you, you were willing to go on with it. Now that it no longer ministers unto you, you will give it up. But the Son of Man came, “NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO,” but to minister and to give His life.”

These are only a few illustrations. They may not be applicable to you. But think about it for a moment and you will most likely find that whatever our walk in life or the relationships that we have, our greatest difficulties arise from this cause—THE DESIRE TO BE MINISTERED UNTO instead of coming to minister.

In the Home

You and your spouse are living together. Your mutual happiness is interrupted by little jars. You are quick, and your spouse is slow. You are economical, and your spouse is extravagant. You are punctual, and your spouse is tardy. You are a very tidy person, and your spouse is untidy. You like everything done in your own particular way, and your spouse does them any old way. So there is constant friction. But why? Is it because you cannot minister to your spouse? No, indeed! It is because your love of tidiness or whatever it may be—your liking to have things your own way is not ministered unto.

Or, perhaps you are the free and easy person, and you are annoyed because your happy-go-lucky way is not ministered unto!

Suppose you both try desiring NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, but to minister and to give?

Illustration: Pre-marriage Counseling, “Why do you want to marry this person?” Because I want to serve or minister unto them for the rest of my life.

It is astounding the number of little things that disturb us. Our plan for the afternoon is upset. We desire a sunny day; it persists in raining. A visitor calls just when we want to go out. We are asked to sing and our voice is raspy and does not do us credit. The answer to our email has not come. Our request has not been granted. We are interrupted in the middle of an interesting book. The pen won't write. The dress doesn't fit. The fire won't burn. That driver cut me off. Something is wrong with the dinner. The children are noisy!

Sometimes everything seems wrong. It is not necessarily something big, nothing that we can put our finger on. But we are always coming into the world with our likes and dislikes, our whims and fancies, our wishes and our hobbies. And if we are not ministered unto in these little things, we are apt to be distressed with everyone else.

The More Excellent Way—The Happy Way

I am persuaded that the happiness of our lives depends enormously on the spirit in which we come afresh into the world each day. If we come to be ministered unto, we will soon be fretting and inwardly fuming. But if we come NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, but to minister, it will be very different. Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is happier to minister than to be ministered unto. And it is far nobler.

The Challenge of Luke 17:7-10

And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ ”

In order for this to happen, the self (pride, ambition) must die and the life of Christ must be released in us. A life of true service is a rewarding life and God will ultimately reward it.

Six Ways to Serve

1. Anonymously (Matt. 6:3-4)

But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Jesus said that we should not let our left and know what our right hand is doing. In other words, don't think too much about it. You may talk yourself out of it. We are to let our charitable deeds

be a spontaneous reaction to the need before us. And don't feel like you must blow a trumpet to get everyone's attention first. God sees in secret and He keeps all of the books.

2. Lavishly (Mark 14:3-9)

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. ⁴ But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? ⁵ For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. ⁷ For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. ⁸ She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. ⁹ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

The woman with the alabaster box gave the best away (first fruits). Judas did not understand this mentality.

3. Faithfully (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 16:10-12)

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ *"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' ²¹ His lord said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**' ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' ²³ His lord said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**'*

²⁴ *"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'*

²⁶ *"But his lord answered and said to him, '**You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.***

²⁹ *‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

The Three Tests of Faithfulness

In Luke 16:10-12 Jesus give us “The Three Tests of Faithfulness”—faithful with that which is little (the least), faithful with natural riches (money), faithful with another man’s goods (that which belongs to another).

¹⁰ *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. ¹¹ Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?*

4. Selflessly (Luke 14:12-14)

Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Jesus encouraged us to serve seeking nothing in return. In fact, He indicated that we should focus on those who can give us nothing in return. These are totally selfless acts done before the Lord as an offering to Him.

5. Cheerfully (Deut. 28:47-48)

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you.

We are to serve the Lord with gladness (Sure mom, I’d be happy to do that). Serving with joy is one of the ways that the world knows that we are Jesus’ disciples.

6. Redemptively (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.”

That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage.” Message

This involves using the servant spirit to open the doors of salvation to others. A true servant spirit is hard to resist. Servant power will conquer Satan and the forces of darkness.

The Six Ways to Serve

- 1. Anonymously**
- 2. Lavishly**
- 3. Faithfully**
- 4. Selflessly**
- 5. Cheerfully**
- 6. Redemptively**

It is through this kind of serving that we will fulfill our commission.

Note: A considerable amount of this sermon was drawn from an old article in the Restoration magazine. The author was J.H. Horsburgh.