

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-5 Basic Skill: Minister

Your last two lessons have discussed the roles of adviser and counselor. This lesson will help you see more clearly how Jesus prepared his disciples for service as a minister. As you accept the role of a minister of the gospel, you have a distinct purpose in the work of God. You may serve in several roles in the same day with the same person or group of people.

The minister receives direction from the Holy Spirit as has been promised. The minister then passes on the scriptural message to a group or individual, helping them find direction and encouragement. This often occurs through the teaching and preaching of God's Word.

Paul referred to preaching as foolishness: "Since ... the world in its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.... For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom" (1Cor 1:21-25). This passage emphasizes that it is not the preacher, the sermon, or speaking skills that accomplish the objectives of God. Rather, God uses a person who is willing to be seen as simple and 'foolish.' They are being obedient to preach or teach what God has directed them to say.

Teaching and preaching are disciplines of sowing spiritual seed and waiting patiently. It may be necessary for a farmer to water, pull weeds, maybe even sow seed again. He waits for the seeds to sprout and grow. The minister sows the seed of the Word, then waits for understanding, salvation, and direction to emerge. In the natural world, the matter of making things grow is set in motion by God. The farmer does not control the chemical process for plant growth. Nor does the minister control the spiritual process for humans to accept Christ and mature in the Lord.

Your behavior, rightly or wrongly, can impact your effectiveness as a minister. Often the community watches you and your family carefully. People may criticize or disapprove of some details of your life. As a minister, you must try to be a good steward, who is as upright and righteous as possible. You balance that with being a fallible human being who is ready to apologize.

In the following story, Jesus is modeling for the disciples how to serve others. They do not understand that Jesus is preparing them for their lives after he is gone. He knows he will die on a cross, be raised from the dead, and will ascend into heaven.

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. ... He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ...

Jesus said, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. He completed his teaching by saying, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:1-15).

This example was to teach his disciples a life lesson. It was not about cleaning dirty feet, but about being humble enough to take the position of a servant in their life and ministry. Jesus showed by his actions how the disciples were to treat each other—with humility and an attitude of service. Note that Jesus elevated the act of service to the highest place. This is contrary to the way society views servants. What is more humbling than kneeling before someone with dirty dusty feet, and washing them clean? This is not the picture we usually have in our minds about Jesus. He went on to say, “No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:16).

There is another way to think of this attitude of service that Jesus demonstrated. A minister of the gospel must refuse to take offense when he or she is slighted or not respected. We have the chance to let go of resentment and anger, choosing instead the attitude of a servant. Perhaps someone overlooks or ignores your contribution to a project, the time you spent making something a success. Maybe they ask someone else to sit in a place of honor. You are human. You will feel insulted and ignored. But take heart. Feel the freedom that comes when you wholeheartedly take the role of the servant, as Jesus demonstrated. You are liberated from the weight of resentment that can interrupt each day of your life.

Being asked to do the “dirty work” or less honored tasks is not an insult. Greeting visitors, staying late to put away chairs or wash dishes, taking care of young children—these honor God. They are just as important in God’s sight as preaching the sermon. In your years of ministry this will be a challenge to remember. It will require frequent, even daily, reminders of Jesus’ example of service, washing his disciples’ dirty, smelly feet. Sometimes an object can be helpful as a memory aid. Consider placing a small rag or worn-out towel near where you pray and study the Bible. Let it be a reminder of your commitment to service and your refusal to take offense.

Jesus went on to instruct the disciples in the following ways to prepare them for service:

- 1. *Love without competition:*** “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).
- 2. *Believe God is your partner:*** “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things” (John 14:12).
- 3. *Welcome the Holy Spirit:*** “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).
- 4. *Do not fear or worry:*** “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).
- 5. *Expect adversity:*** “Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20).

This lesson is **important** because it reminds us of specific promises and the example Jesus gave to those in the ministry. We are called to love and to serve one another, even during trials.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that as ministers, we should demonstrate the attitudes of humility and service to both unbelievers and believers.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. What real-life example of service did Jesus give to his disciples? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered that Jesus washed the feet of each disciple, you answered correctly.
2. What did Jesus promise that the Holy Spirit would do for you? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will teach you and remind you of all Jesus’ words,” you are right.
3. A minister was criticized by a wealthy church member for how he dressed. How should that minister respond? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “When criticized, a minister should not take offense, nor be angry, but instead take the attitude of a servant and continue to serve that member,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story until you can tell it to others. Share with your workers the meaning of the story of the washing of the disciples’ feet. Discuss ways you can serve others in your ministries.