

GOD, CAREER, MINISTRY, MONEY

Someone recently sent me an email and included this statement...

"I don't know what you do for a living, one of the comments suggested you might be in computer work. Ask Him if that is what He has in mind for your income, energy, and time for the rest of your work career, or might He have something of a more eternal importance in mind, like making His Word known in a bigger way. (either together with me or on your own) I am aware how scary that sounds. We perfectionists like everything under our control. Predictable, no surprises. Unfortunately, faith is the only thing that pleases Him, not our ability to control our situations. (Hebrews 11:6)"

I've decided to post my reply...

Dear Brother in Jesus,

Hello! Thank you for writing and touching base! :-) I'm so glad to hear that you are also speaking to one another in Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs! Thank You Father in Jesus' Name!

I hope you won't mind if I ramble for bit. There are a few things burning in my heart which I'd like to share with you. These may or may not all directly address things you shared in your email, but they are things that I think God is at least speaking to me at this point. :-) If nothing else, this will give you a sense for who I am and where I am coming from. So here goes, keep or toss...

The idea about perfectionism is interesting. I think there is some of that in me, that is, in my flesh. However, I don't think of natural perfectionism as the driving force in my life and I try to enjoy a full life and not be a burden or offense to others. I hope and pray that what is motivating me is God, His leading, likeness and nature in me.

I have come to realize that there is "Truth" and there are "truths", and that a series of "truths" do not equal the Truth. Just trying to be right all the time, or living in intellectual "truths", is of no value to God and leaves one's heart devoid and empty of Jesus Himself. Jesus is the Truth and He Himself, alive and interactive, is all I desire for me and for others. :-) While it is true that I may engage in or withdraw from certain activities for the sake of Christ, I cannot require that from others if it is not in their hearts. The deepest yearning and hope and delight of my heart is a "Person", not "rightness".

Even so, no one on earth has a right to bend the Scriptures for the sake of making it easier for others to come to know God.

In the end no one is going to stand before God and say, "What You said and wanted was too hard for us, so I re-worded things a bit and made a few allowances for and additions of small things that might not exactly be in Your will -- but I only did it to help

You out, get more done for You, 'reach more people' and make you seem a little more attractive."

If "NOT adding to God's words" is possibly perceived as perfectionism and off-putting to others, then as lonely as I may be as a result, I've resolved to take sides with God. Not coldly without caring, but sadly and grieving for lost companionship that might have been and praying/groaning for repentance; even for myself so my flesh does not become an obstacle to others.

"that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him Who died for them and rose again."

As for me, by God's grace I cannot go down the path of what is commonly known as "ministry". I cannot become a paid professional Christian. The Greek word that is translated "ministry" simply means to serve others. But, unfortunately, that word has taken on a life of its own; like the word *ekklesia*! A church building or an incorporated organization is no more *ekklesia* than the man in the moon. And people who are anointed by God do not have to "go into full time ministry" to serve others. The whole "ministry" concept, as we have come to know it from history, is a perversion. Who is not called to serve without ceasing? And who is not called to work and provide for his own family so as not to be a burden to others? And if a man will not work, he will not eat. I am already a full-time Christian, even as I work full time in my current job. :-)

Now, I know that people can be called aside for a time for some special purpose, joining together with the body of Christ to be resourced for a time via a larger common pool of resources (not always money). But to become a "career" Christian? A professional Christian? To live off of and siphon from other hard working people? That's the kind of "ten shekels and a shirt" thing that gives Christ a bad reputation. As I say, I'm already a full-time Christian, and I'm already living for God and being led by Him. I don't know what more I should be longing for. Perhaps I have missed the boat. If so, I sincerely ask in Jesus' Name that God would open my eyes and wake me up.

Sometimes I hear a little voice whispering in the back of my mind that says, "If you keep on like this, small and practically unknown, unprofessional and fiscally unprofitable, you'll waste your talents and never amount to anything and miss the opportunity that God could have had with your life. Think of all the people you could have reached but didn't because you didn't grow into something more than a weak and small operation. Think of the souls that could have been won with more money and better organization. How disappointed and grieved God will be as you lie on your deathbed barren and fruitless."

The appropriate response to that seems to be, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."
Matthew 16.22,23

God does not need us or our talents and is not served by the hands of men. All of our best efforts are useless to bring about His eternal purposes and plans for ourselves or

others. Jesus alone can and will accomplish His Father's will -- in us, through us, with us, without us. Even through death and weakness and seeming obscurity.

I have received some letters over the years from desperate and hurting people who have written in deep sincerity thanking me -- thanking God -- for my stewardship of the meager recordings and writings on the website. They often thank me specifically for not allowing "money" to be a focus, because everywhere they go they encounter Christian "ministers" pleading for and twisting the Scriptures to guilt them out of money, money, money. I cherish some of these encouragements, and receive them from God Himself. And some of their stories are heart breaking. One person, who I still pray for, was a sister in Christ whose abusive husband abandoned her and whose young son later died as she sat husbandless by the boy's bedside in the hospital. I sensed such weeping in her heart, yet she also had a stubborn joy in the Lordship of Jesus. She thanked me for some of the songs that God used to help her in her suffering. I feel so low and unworthy to have been used by God that way. Yet I rejoice to be a steward and I don't know what more I could possibly want from this life and the work God has called me to. Perhaps my faith is weak and my spiritual vision is dull and I'm just not getting it. I admit that it could be so, and I pray that God will help me to see what I am missing and let me not be deceived.

I will admit that doing more "live" music has been on my heart and sounds appealing (and a bit scary). But I cannot join in anything resembling a business that sells the gospel of Jesus Christ, OR receives money for conveying the message of the Holy Spirit, or PAYS people to "minister" the love of God to this dying and disappointed world. Jesus is not adware and I don't want to engage with the music "industry". At the moment, God has provided resources for me to do the works that He has called me to. I can pay my own way (and others can pay their own way) using God's resources so that this does not become about money. As David said, I do not want to make a sacrifice that costs me nothing. I often tell people, "Money is not what is happening here".

If, when people hear the message of Jesus and hear our music, people are eager to "donate" or part with money, I will never stop or discourage them from giving. I will never take away an opportunity. People should have an opportunity to give! It is more blessed to give than to receive. No wonder God's children are givers! :-)

But I also do not want to become a financial clearing house or money focal point on behalf of others. I have no qualifications for reallocating other people's money or being their "surrogate giver". People need to rise up and personally and directly serve those who are in need and shed the idea that others can do this better than they can. No wonder so many are spiritually weak and sick in the body of Christ! They aren't getting enough exercise! They aren't seeing that they themselves are members of Jesus and can serve and love and touch others directly, as Christ in them reaches out through their own hands to directly touch the needy. I encourage people to give/donate directly to those in need-- to people they know, locally, in person, face-to-face, loving-heart-to-needy-heart, as first-generation children of God and servants of Jesus. Ultimately, people have to unlearn the false idea that money is the natural response to God's people encouraging one another. I hate the idea that the anointing of the Holy Spirit and money have any relationship to one another.

If people want to join with me in sharing Scripture songs, they can make CDs and give them away to family, friends, neighbors, etc. And if they don't know how to do that, they can recruit a tech savvy teenager (who probably needs to hear some Scriptures) to help them out with all that. There are plenty of delicious, juicy, fruity opportunities hanging on the tree if people find it in their hearts to get up and move.

I hope some of this makes sense and is food for thought. Your email was good food for thought for me!!!!!!! :-)

Please don't take offense at anything I've said here. These are just things that burn in my heart all the time. I am a work in progress and I mean well. I wish for you only the goodness and joy and blessings of God's Precious and Anointed One: Jesus!!! :-)

May we decrease and may Jesus increase!

By the way, my good friend and brother in Christ, Alan Bunning, has written a book entitled, "The Church". You may find it interesting reading. It can be found here as a free PDF:

<http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/the-church/3837139>

Love in Jesus,
Bob