

I am honored and humbled to be with you at this year's Ministers Conference. I have both heard and read about the great work God is doing through the KwaSizabantu Mission. All of which has made me very anxious to meet you and see for myself what God is doing through you. I look forward to our fellowship.

Nothing intrigues me and excites me more than the work of the ministry. I am certainly no expert but I have given almost 40 years of my life to some form of Christian Ministry and the last 18 to training young men and women who wish to devote their lives to that same pursuit.

I grew up in a devoutly religious family. I faithfully attended church and was always involved in its activities. But I was not a Christian until my mid-teens. At 17 years of age I had a remarkable encounter with God. I became deeply convicted of my sins, thoroughly repented of them, and was wonderfully converted. I came to know Christ in a vital and victorious way! That experience changed my life in four significant ways:

First, Christ stepped out of history and out of religious institutionalism and became a living Person to me – a person with whom I began to build a remarkable relationship.

Second, The Word of God became alive to me. I wanted to understand it, believe it, obey it and share it. As I claimed its promises my faith grew.

Third, I began to pray. And in those prayer times God would meet with me and teach me many things from His Word. God answered some wonderful prayers for me in those developing years of my life.

Fourth, I began to learn how to discern and follow the voice of the Holy Spirit. He began to teach me and guide me in this new life I was living.

These four things became pillars upon which my Christian life and ministry began.

Now, the reason I tell you this is that the things that happen in a Ministers personal life have a great deal to do with how he sees and carries out the ministry that God has given to him. He cannot preach effectively out of anyone else's experience; he preaches and teaches and works out of his own.

This is one reason why the Scriptures give us biographical data about the men that God has used rather than lectures on the "nut and bolts of ministry." To learn about faith he gave us the story of Abraham; to learn about leadership he gave us the story of Moses; to learn about listening to God he gives us the story of Samuel; and to learn about Kingdom expansion he gave the story of Paul. . . . Their stories of encountering God, learning to listen to Him and walking with him are remarkably like our own. The point being:

In every case our work for God flows out of our walk with God- or the relationship we have with Him.

This brings us to the topic of this conference and to my topic for this session:

"The Essential Relationship"

John 14:1-27, Text Verse 6

Setting

The gospel of John is a remarkable book. Chapters 13-17 make up a significant part of the book (25%) yet they comprise only one evening in the life of Jesus and His Disciples. That "upper room" or Passover meal as we call it was an intentional evening for Jesus to continue instructing his disciple on things they still had not understood – even after 3 years of being with Jesus.

Jesus mood was solemn even troubled. His hour had come. The shadow of the cross was already falling upon Him. There was still something very important to tell this disciples!

The Disciples, however, were in a very jocular mood. Laughing –talking about the coming Kingdom and who would be regarded as the greatest. Possibly bringing back the old discussion of who would sit on right hand on who would sit on left hand. They still had visions of a great Kingdom on earth and them being rulers in that Kingdom – Power – Glory . . .

The first lesson Jesus gives them is an object lesson. He slips off his outer garment and takes the towel and basin and begins to wash their feet. Here, is says in action, is what real power looks like in my Kingdom. The one who stoops and serves is the one who has power!

He has their attention – so he tells them again that He is going away and what is coming is not what they think. Betrayal DenialPersecution Trouble

You are leaving us –you are sending us out alone to preach your Kingdom - we will be left like orphans – trouble is coming- How can we make it and do what you have asked us to do?

He has their attention. As a matter of fact they are “troubled” – agitations like the waves of the sea. He launches into the discourse found in Chapter 14.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” **6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” 8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. **13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.** 15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.**18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Fathers who sent me. 25 “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. **Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**

He gives them three wonderful – gifts-truths-resources !

1. The power of faith 2. The privilege of prayer 3.The person of the Holy Spirit.

I. Through Faith you will have my presence – v. 1 “Believe in God; believe also in me” v.6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except **through** me.**Chapter 15**

II. Through Prayer you will have my resources – v.13 “whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything **in my name**, I will do it.” **Chapter 17**

III. Through the Holy Spirit you will have my power – v. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **Chapter 16**

These will be adequate for whatever you face!

I. Through Faith you will have my presence

“The essential priority of your ministry is to nurture your relationship to Christ so that you may live in His presence!”

Luke 10: 41-42 - But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but **(only) one thing is necessary**.. .

All ministry flows out of our personal walk with Jesus. The call of the disciples is found in Mark 3:13-15 “ he appointed twelve . . . that he might be with them”

Jesus said in John 5:19 -20,30a “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself . . . By myself I can do nothing”. If the eternal Son cannot do the work of God except in intimate relationship to and dependence upon the Father, it is certain that our only significant fruit will come as we walk with and lean Jesus.

John 15 “ I am the Vine – you are the branches”

We are not self-originating; we are not self-sustaining; we are not self-fulfilling!

Moses prayed “ Lord if your presence doesn’t go up with us then I am not going”

Alexander Whyte – Preached as if just came from the presence of Jesus

Alexander MacLaren– Conversion of a great atheist

John Jaspar-I get on my knees til God give me a text. Then I go down to the James river and I walk it in. then I go to my pulpit and preach it out.

You can’t give what you don’t have.

Abraham is the model for this kind of relationship. Why? He lived long before Jewish institutional religion and long before the law was given. He demonstrated a faith that was not law-related, church-related, or lifestyle-related. Yet in his life we see what God really wants from a man! What is it? Not primarily obedience to the law, nor liturgical ceremony, nor a peculiar lifestyle. He wants to – he walk and talk with us– a friendship of personal intimacy and trust. That is what builds great faith and lasting ministry.

How?



II. Through Prayer you will have my resources

“The essential discipline of your ministry is the exercise of prayer”

A doctoral student at Princeton University asked his Professor, “What is there left in the world for original dissertation research?” His professor, Albert Einstein replied, “Find out about prayer. Somebody must find out about prayer.”

Why? One of the best ways to answer this is to look at the life and ministry of Jesus

Mark 1 gives an overview of a day in the life of Jesus. It was an unusually busy day of important activity. He taught in the synagogue with great power and authority; He confronted evil and cast out demons; He sought rest and refreshment in Peter’s house only to be confronted by a sick mother-in-law (which he healed). And as soon as the sun was down the whole city showed up at his door bringing their loved ones for him to heal. He healed and cast out demons. No doubt it was very late when he finally got to bed.

As the God man he needed rest! He needed to eat! He needed emotional renewal! He needed everything you and I need after a long hard day. So what did he do?

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed

A pattern seen in Jesus, Moses (took tent outside camp) and David (Ziglag)

Why did Jesus Pray?

A. In the solitude of prayer Jesus found Spiritual Direction and so do we.

How do we stay tuned in to the Father’s will? How do we keep our spiritual balance? v. 37c “everyone is looking on you”

Jesus found that in prayer – He walked away saying, ““Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” 39 And he went . . .

Illustrations of :Tom Gallum, David Yucadi, Harmon Smelzenbach

B. In prayer Jesus found the spiritual enablement to do what was His to do – and so do we.

Prayer is a means of grace. Grace is given as we pray. Grace is the enabling power and strength of God given to us to do and be what we should do and be!

1. Power to be- “He was moved with compassion” “touched him”

2. Power to continue –keep on keeping on-refuel in mid-flight

Divert Daily ; Withdraw Weekly ; Abandon Annually.

The story of Sherpa’s, Himalayan guides who help people climb Mt. Everest, will suddenly stop climbing and put down their equipment, as if they’re waiting for something or someone. When asked why they’ve stopped climbing, the Sherpa’s’ reply is “We are waiting for our souls to catch up with our bodies.”

The Chinese join two characters to form a single pictograph for busyness: heart and killing. That is stunningly incisive – it is true literally and spiritually. The heart is the place the busy life exacts its steepest toll.

C. In prayer Jesus was able to link arms with the Father in a Divine partnership and so are we.

Illustration: Amy Carmichael, British missionary to India, practice of Sati (Suh—tee)

III. Through the Holy Spirit you will have my power

“The essential need of your ministry is power of the Holy Spirit”

If the minister is to be a true messenger of God, he must have the Holy Spirit in his life.

The OT lays the groundwork for such an understanding. Every major office in the life of Israel was to be filled by someone anointed by the Holy Spirit. The NT picks up that same theme and the Holy Spirit is promised to the followers of Jesus. *“Tarry until you are endued with power”*

The life of the minister can be marked by such a sense of God’s presence and power that he is enabled to live and work in a way that is not easily attributable, if attributable at all, to merely natural or human ability. It is called living in the power of the Spirit!

From a biblical perspective, this is not something that merely *can* be but something that *should* be.

D. L. Moody lived such a life. He was a source of constant wonder because the results of his ministry were so totally incommensurable with his obvious personal qualities. He had a very ordinary appearance, was not ordained by any religious body and was uncultured and uneducated – even crude and uncouth to many. This was a constant bewilderment to many of Moody’s contemporaries including Dr. R.W. Dale, a leading clergyman in Great Britain. Dale attended Moody’s meeting in

Birmingham, England to see if he could discover the “secret” to Moody’s power in preaching and evangelism. After hearing Moody speak, he concluded that the work had to be of God as he could see “no relation between Moody personally and what he was accomplishing for God’s Kingdom.” Moody’s ministry was marked by something beyond himself!

He enlightens the mind - He enables the will - He energizes the soul

The alternative is to live and work in the energy of the flesh! Ill: Selma – Jon-Study