

Christian Ministry

Lesson Two: Committed to Reaching the Maximum Potential to Fulfilling Your Purpose

John 15:8 and 15:16

*“By this My Father is glorified, **that you bear much fruit**; so, you will be My disciples... {16} You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and **that your fruit should remain**, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”*

The dictionary defines “potential” as, “having or showing the capacity to become or develop into something in the future.” The dictionary also defines being “effective” as successful in producing the desired result. We can combine and modify these definitions to say, “To work toward your maximum potential in Christian ministry is to produce the results God desires and to bear fruit that remains. This only happens with commitment to your purpose. If this is to happen, your commitment must progress to a place that’s absolute. It must advance to where it becomes unshakeable. It will grow its capacity to speak out of strength against whatever tries to distract or deny you the fulfillment your God ordained purpose. Our task as ministers of the Gospel is to facilitate others in realizing their God-given dreams. You must strive for the place in which there can be no other plan in your life. As in the first lesson, there can be no “Plan B.”

The beautiful thing about potential is that it has no upper limits. God asks us to unpack and expand it as we learn and grow in our approach to ministry. This requires a commitment that cannot be compromised. It also requires a level of faith that anticipates we’re only one step from something deeper and more fulfilling in our ministry. We will experience increasing potential with each step of faith we take that is led by the Holy Spirit who has targeted for us even more influence and fruitfulness. Therefore, we could define the single most accurate and descriptive definition of ministry in this simple way:

Christian Ministry is the act of a called Christ-follower that brings “influence” into another’s life. This will bear fruit that remains in the life and heart of whomever it touches. It’s the clearest and most accurate measure of ministry success and fulfillment, and is characterized by its eternal nature.

As a leader in the church, you will have opportunities to grow daily toward your maximum potential in Christ. You can expect to progressively move beyond life’s obstacles to become fully capable of greater things for God. By studying

the Scriptures, you can discover principles to live by that will guide you to greater levels of potential, and ultimately, towards your maximum potential.

One of the best biblical examples of someone growing to his maximum potential in God is Joseph. His journey to achieving it began in an unlikely way. He found himself in a desert pit about to be sold as a slave into the house of Potiphar, a highly influential Egyptian military man. Though it seemed an impossible place to begin growing into his potential, Joseph's story illustrates it was exactly that. The same principles found in his refusal to consistently compromise or walk away from God-honoring living can become your step-by-step guide to absolute commitment to your call. They can define the path to your maximum potential, regardless of the apparent obstacles you may face.

Genesis, Chapters 37 and 39-50 cover Joseph's journey from that desert pit to a powerful position in the palace of Egypt's Pharaoh. He went from being in a seemingly hopeless position to second in authority to the king. He attained this powerful position by refusing to compromise his commitment to integrity for any personal advantage. He loyally served his first master, Potiphar, and wouldn't succumb to the temptation to do otherwise. When falsely accused and imprisoned, he then served the keeper of the prison just as faithfully. Eventually, his service to Pharaoh mirrored the uncompromising loyalty of his previously principled service. This took him to a place of great influence and reward. He maximized his potential and proved the value of his faithfulness. Here are two lessons we can learn from Joseph's story. (Genesis 39:7-12)

- First, there will be times when you have to say to yourself, "Don't just stand in the face of the temptation, say something." Joseph said, "*How can I sin against God?*" (There was a transforming, life-changing attitude manifested verbally when he refused to be disloyal to God.)
- Second, there also will be times when you have to say to yourself, "Don't just stand there, do something." Joseph's immediate reaction to Potiphar's wife's advances was to run from her. He never hesitated for a moment. He put feet to his faith. He ran! It was never about what might be easy, but always about absolute commitment to God and what was right.

Joseph remained a doer of what he said, and what he said came from his absolute commitment to God. It opened potential that went far beyond his expectations.

Here's an important truth about uncompromising, committed ministry. We will not find the idea of fairness in the Bible. Fairness is never a valid gauge to consider when challenges to our commitment present themselves. Judge your choices by obedience and love... and surround them with unbending faith.

Think about your responses to particularly unfair situations in the past. What lesson did you learn from them that might enhance and increase your future fruitfulness, commitment and faith?

Six Principles to Take You a Place of Absolute Commitment

1. Maximizing the commitment to your call will depend on your principled refusal to offend God. He has said, "...*Be holy for I am holy.*" (1 Peter 1:16b) That has no compromise in it! It's the gate to your blessings and fruitfulness.
2. When you do what's right, God sees, God hears, and God responds. He will take you through the difficulties of ministry up to the next level. Joseph wouldn't compromise, because he was fully committed to what was right. God saw and was fully committed to taking him to the next level. It was a firm stepping stone to his destiny.

Your attitude will affect your choices. Your choices will affect your destiny.
Make this your attitude: It's never wrong for me to do what's right.

[?] What defines "wrong"? It's actually not difficult. If it offends God and contradicts His Word, it's wrong.

3. Be committed to be who God says you are. Commitment brings increase in your sense of who you are and shows you how to reach your potential.
4. Continue to behave like the winner and champion God says you are. Make it your own confession of faith! Mirror your words with God-honoring actions.
5. Be more concerned about your character than your reputation... because your character is who and what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others might think you are. Take care of your character and it will take care of your reputation. It will open the gates to your potential and you will be amazed and grateful at what's beyond them.

[?] Can you recall a specific situation when you chose to do what was right and it cost you? Explain why and how it cost you.

6. Temptation kills potential. God makes a way of escape, but you must be ready to use it without hesitation. The LORD never abandons a person who resists temptation. Insist on doing what's right. Honor Him. He'll be with you and take you through to your potential. He'll take you to the next level. When I need to press through and beyond the temptations in life and ministry that would kill my potential, I remind myself to press into God... to press into God and let Him take me through.

Joseph's uncompromising integrity seemed to be anything but a reward. He was thrown into prison. (Genesis 39:20-23)

Genesis 39:23

*“The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, **because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.**”*

Even in this dark moment, the Bible says, *“The Lord was with Joseph and... whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”* It’s a lesson for us. There are times when it seems like you’re going from a pit to a prison. You may have to ask yourself, “Where is this palace I’ve been dreaming about?” We may go through difficult seasons of ministry, but God will go through them with us. He is faithful! He will reward you if you diligently seek Him in every circumstance you find yourself. Press into Him. He will take you through to your potential.

[?] When were you surprised at God’s faithfulness, when you didn’t really expect it? What did this teach you (if anything)?

The principle is timeless. Be faithful and fully committed. You’ll find God’s plan for the next season of your life is at a higher level than you ever dreamed. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Dream Weaver. He’s woven a dream for you. So how do you get there? How do you make the Lord’s dream for you come true? It’s a simple exercise in faithfulness and a refusal to compromise or surrender your commitment. Do what’s right that honors the Lord, regardless of what the circumstances are and how tempting it can be to do otherwise.

Let’s look at some additional principles to take you to the next level.

7. Give your call to ministry a high priority! You will experience the powerful presence and favor of God. Like Joseph, it will move you progressively toward your maximum potential. Sadly, too many of us do not see this, or lose sight of it because of either our successes or failures. If God is in it, failure is just a stepping-stone to maximizing your potential.
8. Joseph applied absolute commitment to God in every task he was given, regardless his circumstances. Never determine your efforts by how difficult or how nice your situation may be... or what you think you can gain or lose from it. Just do your best to be your best. God will do the rest.

9. Growing towards your maximum potential and maturing to a place of absolute commitment is a process that involves experiencing difficulties and even hardships along the way. Sorry, that's just the way it is.
10. God's champions focus on doing the right thing. Losers focus on what they're going through. Don't be a loser. You are a champion. You are *"more than a conqueror!"*

Romans 8:31, 35-37

*"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ...{35} Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? {36} As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." {37} **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**"*

[?] Why do you think the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to express Verse 37 the way he did, knowing we will face certain trials, tribulations, even persecution and perils in our ministries?

When the price you pay for fulfilling your call to ministry seems overwhelming, consider the cost with a sense of joy. We can never count all the loving thoughts God has toward us. There are no limits to His grace. He won't waste your disappointment, discouragement or pain. He'll invest it in your future potential for His glory. He'll never abandon you in your decision to serve Him faithfully. He'll take you through to your destiny.

11. Keep your eyes on the dream God has called you to. It's a door to something far more significant than anything you might gain outside of His will. It's the realization of potential you never thought your ministry held.
12. God may ask you to compromise (or even kill) your own ambitions so you can serve others. You may have to accept that it's part of serving the will of God. This is the pathway to your maximum potential. It will require you to commit to it, knowing God's ways and His thoughts are higher than ours... and always infinitely better for us.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NKJV)

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. {9} "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, **So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.**"*

Jesus gave up what He certainly was entitled to as the divine Son of God, by going to the cross to save us from the judgment we all deserve! His actions took Him to the highest level. He's seated "*at the right hand of God.*" **He never really left that level of infinite potential, but voluntarily put it on hold until the plan of God was fulfilled.** His death, burial, resurrection and ascension are the substance and proof of what God offered us at the cross.

Don't give any room for an alternative plan for your life and ministry outside the will of God. Stand firm. Don't give in to temporary gratification apart from God's will.

Hebrews 10:12-14

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, {13} from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. {14} For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

"All In" - No Other Choice

"There's a story told of a lighthouse keeper and his son who lived on the rocky shores of an island. One night there was a terrible storm. The waves were crashing violently on the rocks beneath the lighthouse. The winds were treacherous and unpredictable. Suddenly, they received a radio message, asking for help from a boat floating off shore with its engines out. The father gathered his equipment, put on his rain gear and motioned to his son to follow him to their rescue boat. "But father," said the son, "It's too dangerous. The storm is very violent and we might not make it back!" The father put his arm around his son, looked at the storm outside, and said, "Son, we have to go out. We don't have to come back."¹

It was not about personal outcomes. Their ministry in that storm was entirely about serving others. To arrive at a place of absolute commitment, you have to understand the value of imitating Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1), who though He was God, did not consider it beneath Himself to die on the cross to serve others.

Compromise or Turning Back

¹ The story's origin is unknown to me.

² Pastor Jan David Hettinga, [Follow Me](#), Dallas Ward, General Editor, ©1966 NavPress Publishing Group,

The difference between being fully committed to the ministry, being “all in,” and just going along for the ride for a while is like the story of ham and eggs. The chicken is just involved; but the pig is fully committed, it is “all in.”

- When you’re just involved, you’re merely taking part in something until something better shows up.
- When you’re “all in” you’re fully and absolutely committed far beyond merely participating at some level of your own choosing. You serve, without holding back or retaining the choice to turn away. You are willing to pay the price.

Eight Excuses for Just Going Along for the Ride

Here are eight typical excuses why we justify going along for the ride, instead of being absolutely committed. We say things like the following:

1. “I need to keep enough room in my life to have a way of escape. If I don’t like continuing with what I’ve committed to, or when I feel offended, or maybe if I just get tired of it, I want a way out. I need to keep my “Plan B’ in reserve.”
2. “I don’t want to miss an opportunity to find something better. Therefore, I will reserve a part of my commitment (a part of my heart), just in case something more appealing comes along.”
3. “I deserve more than this. I want to be noticed.”
4. “If it doesn’t feel good or I don’t like it and really don’t want to do it, I just won’t do it anymore.” (In many years of pastoral counseling, I have found most people justify their actions with the words, “I just feel like...”)
5. “I agreed to be part of this, but I won’t make an absolute commitment with God. After all, it’s my life. I have free will to do or not do what I feel like.”
6. “There’s always someone else who can do it. This isn’t as exciting as I thought it would be. I don’t want to be bothered anymore.”
7. “It’s not fair.”
8. “I’m afraid I may be stuck here. I might miss an opportunity I don’t want to pass up.”

You are destined to be a champion for Jesus. Don’t settle for less. Decide to be absolutely committed to your call. Be “all in” for God. Demonstrate this by your words and deeds. Then, you will surely hear the Lord say, “I’m ‘all in’ with you!”

Reaching your full potential will depend on having a maximum commitment to Christ and the plan He has for you. There is no substitute for this that will bring you the success, significance and satisfaction you long for.

“No one has arrived at sinless perfection. But when we think of excuses, we create room for our sinful habits and patterns. This is a situation begging to be used and abused by human beings who are prone to seek the lowest levels of *commitment* to anything while still claiming *membership*.”

Pastor Jan David Hettinger²

END OF LESSON TWO

² Pastor Jan David Hettinga, [Follow Me](#), Dallas Ward, General Editor, ©1966 NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, P.67.