

# **Christian Ministry**

## **Lesson Four: A Targeted Advance**

A significant, highly fruitful Christian ministry requires that we have an attitude of finding a clear target and advancing toward it. It's in the advance forward that the obstacles and limiting feelings are defeated and made powerless. In every situation in ministry, we make one of these choices:

- The first choice would be to give up and give in to the situation, accepting what it brings, no matter how unacceptable it should be.
- The second choice would be an emotionally charged retreat – a flight away from the barriers your success faces. This comes from the temptations that your flesh finds so attractive. It reflects a losing attitude and a retreat into a place of defeat. It's a confidence killer. Often, this comes from how you were raised and the cultural norms you grew up with and now carry.
- The third choice is to select a set of goals that will bring specific, positive outcomes, and move forward toward them. I call this a "targeted advance." It's your sure path to freedom. It will become your advance to becoming all God has given you to be. It's an advance toward being more like Jesus. It's your path to success, satisfaction and significance.

Depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you from your present circumstances into a new season of victory. He will provide you with a series of successive targets to aim for. Then, you can advance through them, one by one, to make a difference in many lives. Let empowering others to reach their dreams be your dream.

As you advance toward your ministry targets, the Holy Spirit's presence, coupled with your faith and obedience, guarantee you will enjoy success. This will require your determination to hit what you aim for. Remember, nothing is too difficult for God. With Him, all things are possible. Your way to success, day-by-day, therefore, can be described as a God-enabled targeted advance.

### **Ambush**

(Testimony of Dr. Abramson)

When I was young, I joined the United States Marine Corp, during the time of the Vietnam War in Indochina. Among the many things we were trained to was to always have an attitude of winners and champions. We were taught never to remain stuck in a vulnerable position or retreat when under attack.

It's normal human nature to react to an ambush by immediately cowering in the face of the hostile attack. Human nature – our flesh – tells us instinctively to run away. As Marines, we were taught exactly the opposite. We were to refuse to remain the target. We were to react by making what ambushed us our target. We were to charge the ambush in a targeted advance until we destroyed what wanted to destroy us. This required us to think differently than our natural instincts for self-preservation.

Targeted advance is a classic military doctrine or pattern. It has proved successful for United States Marines for hundreds of years. My experience with ambush training as a Marine has stayed with me far beyond my service. I understand that, when caught in an undesirable situation from which I need to gain a victory, targeted advance is the answer. In today's ministry issues, it means trading instinctive self-protection (or protection of "self") for Spirit-led power projection.

We are to be victors, not victims. Jesus already won the battle for us at the cross. He is still Commander of the Army of God. We are His soldiers. Ministers of the Gospel are ordained to be winners. David had this attitude when he charged at Goliath. David never hesitated for a moment. He advanced right into the face of the giant's threats. The Bible says, "*David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.*" He would conquer a giant threat that day. It was David's targeted advance toward His victory and a deliberate, aggressive step toward his destiny.

#### *1 Samuel 17:45-48*

*"Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. **But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. {46} This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. {47} Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands. So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine."***

A successful targeted advance requires a giant-killer's attitude! When difficulties, setbacks and temptations come, move forward into your personal

valley of decision. Stick your spiritual finger in that giant target's face and tell it what you are going to do. Speak to it. Knock it down. Cut off its head. Then, climb out of the valley and advance toward your spoils. What tries to kill your ministry needs to become your target.

Goliath was hard to miss; but for those watching, the giant must have seemed impossible to bring down. Without the Holy Spirit's anointing in the moment, they would have been correct. The stones would have been useless and it would have been futile to advance toward Goliath. But with David's dependence upon God, he could confidently say, *"Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."*

### **Pick Your Ministry Target Wisely Before You Advance.**

It's wise to pick your ministry targets with specific goals in mind. Your choices must be deliberate and well thought out, so they align with God's purpose for that moment. If you settle for randomly selecting your targets, you're admitting your willingness to live with whatever might happen, instead of what is supposed to happen. If you want to reap the rewards of a winning ministry, there must be nothing random about your target selection. Be sure your aim is focused and purposeful. If it needs to be warfare, expect victory. If it needs to be someone with a need you can help, do what's necessary to deliver grace. Here are some suggestions about what you should aim for, as you advance toward your victory.

1. Aim for a full understanding what the circumstances require of you.
  - What's the true nature of the task?
  - Seek the Lord's help to discern both the natural and spiritual barriers to the task.
  - Be willing to ask seasoned, godly counsel from mature, balanced leaders whom you trust.
  - Don't hurry to make decisions. Wait until you have a grasp of the implications of where you're at and what your next step will bring. Respect the value of God's timing, but do not make excuses when He says, "Go!"
2. Aim for the big picture of what your God-given assignment will bring. This requires you to define what God desires it to look like. What's the ultimate target of your advance? Put together a rough mental outline of the steps you will take to get to this target. Check the inner witness you have, concerning this. Does your outline of the steps you will take bring you peace, or is it filled with uncertainty or confusion. If it's from the Holy Spirit, you will sense the peace that gives you message to go ahead.

3. Once you have defined what your target is, firmly set your resolve and look ahead. This can be a target for a moment, a day, and a week or any season you find yourself in. Aim for success by moving forward with the first step in your targeted advance. Then, take the next step and then the ones that will follow. The first step, even if it's just a very small step, is the proper way to begin your advance into and beyond what God has prepared for you.
4. Check your progress from time to time. Keep praying about it. Be watchful of any adjustments you discover that affect your plan. Double check from time to time to be sure your actions are in line with your goals for the future. If you find anything has taken you off target, make any necessary adjustments to get back on track.
5. Make part of each targeted advance a hunger to increase your closeness to God. Keep your eyes on Jesus and your spiritual ears tuned to the Holy Spirit. Do not neglect the Holy Spirit's presence or guidance along the way to your destiny. Neglecting His guidance will guarantee failure and you will become a vulnerable target for Satan's schemes. Celebrate God's continuing goodness and grace as you advance in faith and the devil will be under your feet. God is with you. Celebrate Him as you move ahead!

Expect that accomplishing your aim will become an extraordinary place of significance. You can become a fine leader who will do extraordinary things. God will be pleased and you will make an impact for eternity. As you advance toward your target, you may find yourself with more than one option.

- People who are trying to help usually will have plenty of advice for you. If you follow their advice impulsively without having the peace of God, it could be a futile attempt at ministry. You may discover that what you thought was a targeted advance was actually a case of being sidetracked toward another target that will not fulfill your purpose.
- It's often as important to reject a potential target, as it is to select one to advance toward. You may also need to re-assess your path to the target in mid-journey and make adjustments. Once you have determined your path is the right one, be willing to say "no" to some of the advice and invitations you will receive.
- "If you tell someone "no" and they react in anger, they have confirmed you made the right decision.
- If you tell someone "no" and they try to shame you into following their advice, it also confirms you made the right decision to say, "no."
- If you tell someone "no" and they say hurtful things, they have again clearly confirmed that your decision was a great one.

- If you tell someone “no” and they try to tempt you with something that seems appealing, but is not from God, look elsewhere for counsel. Thank them for caring and move on.”
- Say “yes” when you have peace to know it’s right to say so.

### **Beware of Having a Stubborn Attitude.**

Having a stubborn attitude and not listening to others is like inventing your own truth. It is especially dangerous. This happens when you allow self-serving ambitions to lie to you. The lie may seem like a convenient truth. You may use it to justify your actions... or inactions. This is no different than justifying rebellion because you turned from God. His Word, and wise godly advice will keep you from making selfish choices. If you choose to give into stubbornness, you will be a servant to your own captivity... and likely will take others into it with you. You will deny yourself the freedom to minister the truths of the Bible. Stubbornly selfish attitudes and actions will be a rejection of the Lord. Their outcomes are predictably and inevitably troubling.

When leaders try to create their own truths, their ministry loses its validity. These leaders then become messengers of emptiness or worse. They will unwittingly preach Satan’s message. Then, people will do one of two things. They will [1] soon stop trusting you, or [2] they will blindly follow you and there will be damage to your ministry and their lives. Only biblical truth sets people free and keeps them there. Ministers who are tempted by selfishness, greed or a failure to genuinely love the people God trusts them with is a self-deceptive carnal invitation to disaster... and it comes straight from the devil. Stay focused on the truth that will *“make you free.”* Then, you will help others to be free. Being stubborn and going the wrong way in ministry and life is never the right way. It will not make anyone happy, including you.

*John 8:32*

*“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

Christian leaders can become entrapped by deliberately counterfeiting the truth for their own selfish aims, comfort or fame. These people try to convince others of falsehoods and deceptions by calling them truths. They’re actually practicing nothing but *“doctrines of demons.”* This is Satan’s bait. It’s filled with evil intent. It lures a minister with false promises. It’s there to trap, steal, kill and destroy. It’s easy to be hooked by it if you allow your pride to convince you that you are strong enough to control the outcomes this kind of sin brings. Pride will sear your conscience and kill your ministry. Thinking you are anyone but God’s servant will flatten your dreams and destroy your ministry future.

## 1 Timothy 4:1-2

*“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, {2} speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,”*

Demons can be deviously convincing. Many leaders, and especially pastors, who live in a culture in which they are the chief or big man in a church without accountability, are easily persuaded by pride to foolishly follow their own carnal desires. It's demonic. It's rebellious. It's dangerous. Resist the temptation to follow anything that does not match up to biblical truth and humbly honors Christ. Remember, you are His servant. Don't ever try to make Him serve you!

To succumb to the temptation that something is true because it makes you feel good is bait from the enemy. It's like swallowing poison! It will slowly kill you, but first it will cage you in a place of extreme limitations. What you think is a targeted advance will merely be deception. It's actually a devil's ambush. You will discover one day that the wrong way is a dead end, literally!

## Proverbs 14:12

*“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”*

## **The Right Way is Always God's Way.**

Let's leave the discussion of the wrong way and move on to the always dependable, God-directed right way for a Gospel minister.

## Isaiah 30:21

*“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,  
“This is the way, walk in it,  
Whenever you turn to the right hand  
Or whenever you turn to the left.””*

Paraphrase of Isaiah 30:21 (God speaking)

Listen carefully. I'm right behind you, saying, “This is the right way to go. Just walk with Me. Whenever you take a different direction, this way or that, be sure you do so because of what you hear from Me - only Me! Remember, I'm right there with you. I'm close, backing your every step.”

Christ's words are truth and they bring life to you. He's absolutely truthful, infinite in His power, completely faithful... and He loves you beyond what words

can describe! Follow Him and let your light shine for Him. It's the right way. It's the way of faith. It's the way of truth and life. It's the way that's guaranteed by God's own words in Isaiah 30:21. He says, "*This is the way, walk in it.*" As my paraphrase says, He's right there with you. He's backing your every step.

God never promised that serving Him in leadership would be easy or without cost. The Bible illustrates this point with examples of people who served God faithfully. For many of them, it quickly became apparent that answering God's call included times of weariness, discouragement, pain, and yes, even failure. This holds true for today. However, in the end you can look back, as they did, and see the faithfulness of the Lord. You will know He was with you every step of the way. Recalling God's presence, especially through the most difficult moments of your leadership, is a good start to understanding that walking with Him is the only way to navigate the challenges you will face. Your memories will confirm that it's absolutely the right way to a successful targeted advance into God's will for your next season.

Amen

Dr. Bob Abramson

END OF LESSON FOUR