

Addicted to the Ministry

(1 Corinthians 16:15-18)

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Here, the Apostle Paul is closing his letter to the church at Corinth and he takes the time to mention a specific family. He says, “*ye know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia*”. Achaia refers to the region where the city of Corinth was located. By calling Stephanas’ household the firstfruits, Paul was saying that they were the first people that had been saved in that region.

What an honor that must have been! To be known as the first people that heard the gospel preached and stepped out by faith and trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. And, yet, there is an even greater honor that Paul bestowed on them in this verse. He said that they had “*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*”.

They had not stopped at salvation as so many do today— content to be saved, but never to serve the Lord. They had not become satisfied to simply be known as the first fruits of Achaia. They had grown as believers in Jesus Christ. They had begun to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. They had gotten involved and even addicted to the ministry.

Paul lifted the household of Stephanas up as an example to all other believers in Corinth and I believe we would do well to learn from them today. May we no longer be satisfied to coast through the Christian life! Maybe we no longer be satisfied to sit on the sidelines while others do the work of the ministry! God help us to become “Addicted to the Ministry”. Lord willing, that is what I want to encourage you to be today. I want each and ever Christian under the sound of my voice to be “Addicted to the Ministry”.

Now, maybe there is someone sitting here this morning who does not know what we mean when we speak about “the ministry”. Well, to put it simply, the ministry is the basic term for the work of the Lord. But the work of the Lord falls into several different tasks.

In Acts 6, the Apostle Paul spoke of those who were engaged in the “ministry of the word”. This had to do with the reading, studying, memorizing, preaching, and teaching of the Bible. Now, maybe you’re not called to preach or teach, but everyone in this room ought to read, study, and memorize the word of God everyday, at the very least.

Later, we are told that Paul’s journeys to carry the gospel to foreign lands are called his “ministry”. I believe that represents the ministry of missions. It is a blessing that we are able to support several missionaries here at Ball Road Baptist Church and, by faith and the Lord’s help, I hope we can support several more. That is one of the greatest parts of the ministry!

Then, in Acts 20:24, Paul speaks of “*the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*”. In another place this is known as the “ministry of reconciliation”. This has to do with carrying the gospel to our neighbors, coworkers, family, and all others who the Lord brings across our path. And the Bible says we have ALL been given this ministry!

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But, I don't just want to show you what the ministry is today; I want to encourage each and every one of you to become addicted to the ministry. And I believe that we can become addicted to the ministry in the very same way that a man becomes addicted to anything else...

The so-called experts say that the first step a person takes toward addiction is Repetition

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "Man take drink, drink take drink, drink take man"... How true that statement is! That old, homeless drunk that you see sitting beneath the overpass didn't start that way. There was surely a time in his life where he was a clean young man with a bright future ahead of him. But, one day, some one gave him a drink of beer. He hated the awful taste of it at first, but in an attempt to be "cool" and popular he continued to force it down. Eventually he acquired a taste for the junk and he began to drink it more regularly. After a while, it wasn't quite strong enough to give him a "buzz" so he had to move on to harder liquor. And, before he even knew what had happened, he found that he couldn't seem to live without alcohol in his life.

How true the words of the Bible ring out— "*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*".

Any man who has given himself over to addiction, began by repeating some action time and time again, till it became a habit. As a matter of fact, the very definition of the word Addiction is "to apply one's self to something habitually".

Well, if we are going to be addicted to the ministry, I believe it's going to come from repeatedly exposing ourselves to the work of the ministry.

I remember as a teenager, there was a time where I could not stand to go to church unless it was to see my friends. And yet I was still made to go anyway. You know what happened? At a certain point I began to enjoy the old hymns that I had once thought so dull. I began to enjoy and even hunger for the preaching that I had previously paid little attention to. I began to get a burden to pray for and involve myself with the ministries of my local church.

Why? Because I was repeatedly exposed to a place where God's work was being done. I was consistently around believers who were doing the work of the Lord. And before too long I developed an appetite for the ministry.

Mom and Dad, keep those children in church, keep them around Christians who are faithful. Have them here Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. Consistently expose them to the work of the Lord and you my soon find them addicted to the ministry!

Christian, read your Bible and pray every day! Come to church every time the doors are open! Come to visitation and simply get around what the Lord is doing and eventually the habit will form and you may become addicted to the ministry!

But there is a second part to addiction and that is Reward.

In order for something to be addicting, they say it must give a reward to the pleasure centers of the brain. I think this ought to make sense to everyone in here. People do not become addicted to things that make them feel awful— at least not at first.

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A man begins taking drugs because they give him a sense of euphoria. Those same drugs will surely lead him down a path to destruction, but that does not change the fact that he began taking them in order to feel good. Some of you are addicted to your phone. Why?! Why do you see people walking down the street, driving in their car, sitting in the waiting room glued to their smartphone? Because they're hooked!! They're addicted! All the little apps and games on that phone reward you for the longer you play them and watch them and you love that reward.

If reward is what causes a man to become addicted to something, then how much more ought we as believers become addicted to the ministry! I was told by so many that to answer God's calling into the ministry was "career suicide". "You'll never make a lot of money", they said. I had friends who said I would have my live a life like a monk in a monastery if I continued to preach the gospel.

Some of you think that way too! You think of how boring it must be to serve the Lord. You only think of what you would have to give up to be a part of the ministry (and, by the way, there are some things that must be given up). But you fail to realize that the reward far outweighs the sacrifice!

I've had more joy, more excitement, and more fulfillment serving Jesus for the last 15 years than I had living for the world in all the years before. It is rewarding!

It's rewarding to see the look of joy and relief on the face of someone you have just led to Christ for salvation! It is rewarding to see people grow in the Lord after having prayed for them! It is rewarding to hear of the fruits of a missionary's labor when you've invested in their ministry!... If you could just realize the great reward that comes with involving yourself in the ministry, I believe you'd become addicted to it!

But last of all, if you are going to become addicted to something, it must become a Requirement.

This is the last step in addiction. It goes from simply being a fun, rewarding little habit to being a NEED—to being something you cannot live without! With most addictions in this world, this is a horrible place to come to. This is the place where the addict will cast aside nearly everything in his or her life in order to have more of the object of their addiction.

Let me ask you a simple question—Are you ADDICTED to the ministry?... When Paul spoke here of Stephanas and his household, I believe he was saying that they seemed to need the ministry. They could not seem to be pruned away from it! Could that be said of you?

When I was in Bible college, they used to repeat a certain phrase that said, "If you can take it or leave it, you'll always leave it"... That is a true statement if there ever was one and it applies even more to the work of the Lord. When it comes to the Lord's work... When it comes to being faithful to his work... If you can take it or leave it, YOU WILL LEAVE IT! It must become a requirement in our lives.