

The Adventure of Ministry

2 Tim. 4:1-8

Introduction – Story of My Call to Ministry

EX. In 1978, I was a Jr. in high school. I was as cocky as a kid in high school could be. I was at the top of my class academically. I was competing on the state level in public speaking contests. I was the NYI president and choir director in my local church. I thought I had the world by the tail.

I had my life planned out. I wanted to do something important that would provide me with financial security. I wanted excitement and fun. I wanted to be where the action is.

Then God started talking to me about full-time ministry and I said, “Oh NO!” God, this doesn't fit in with my plans. [Does that sound familiar to anybody?]

But when I chose to go God's way, I discovered that there is nothing more exciting, more fulfilling, more challenging and more adventure packed than living in the center of God's will doing the ministry He has called you to do.

EX When Jan and I went to our first church, Jackie was the SSS. She was a strong, Xian leader. You could count on her for anything you needed. But her husband Roger was not a Xian and not interested in having anything to do with the church. We began to pray with Jackie for Roger. We fasted for Roger. We built a relationship with Roger. Gradually he began coming to church regularly. One Sunday, he came to the altar and gave his heart to the Lord. Today, Roger is a Nazarene pastor. Christian ministry is the greatest adventure in the world.

EX. Sean was a sharp hi school student who began coming to church with his friend Todd. His parents were divorced and his home was dysfunctional. I started developing a friendship with him. He started coming over just to hang out and talk. One night he came over pretty late. He had just come from his girlfriend's house. They were getting ready to have sex when he said, “I can't.” He got into his car, came to our apartment, gave his heart to Christ and now he has a graduate degree from a Christian college and he is serving Christ faithfully. Christian ministry is the greatest adventure in the world.

EX. Julie was a grad student who started coming to church with her friend Steve. She had just gotten divorced and her life at 23 was pretty tough. I took an evangelism team and called on her and shared with her how to become a Christian. She accepted Christ, got involved in our college group. She married a fine Christian man and is serving Christ in Tennessee. Christian ministry is the greatest adventure in the world.

When God called me to be a pastor I had no idea what I was getting into. I was afraid. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to feed my family. I was afraid I'd be bored to death with my job (ha!). I was afraid I'd become like many of the preachers I had known and for whom I limited respect. But I discovered I didn't need to be afraid. I needed to trust God and say "yes" to the most challenging, most wonderful, most exciting life of adventure I could ever have imagined.

READ TEXT: 2 Tim. 4:1-8

*2 Tim. 4: 1*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.* 3*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.* 4*They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.* 5*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

*6**For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.* *7**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* *8**Now there is store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

1. You Have Been Called and Commissioned by God

*2 Tim. 4: 1*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: In Acts 16, Paul stopped where Timothy lived and recruited Timothy to travel with him as part of his ministry team. The rest of the book of Acts shows Timothy traveling with Paul and being sent by Paul to do the work of ministry. Ten more letters of the NT mention Timothy. Six of Paul's letters mention Timothy as a co-author and 2 of them, 1 & 2 Timothy are written to Timothy. What's your point Alan? My point is Timothy is not new to ministry. By the time Paul is at the end of his life and is writing this letter to Timothy, Timothy has been doing ministry together with Paul or as Paul's representative or at his instructions for years.

So why is Paul talking like this to Timothy? This guy has been a minister, a pastor, an evangelist for years. Because Timothy, just like us, needed to be reminded from time to time that the reason he was doing what he was doing was because he had been called and commissioned by God. Paul was speaking God's words to Timothy. Paul was speaking God's words to us.

You are here tonight because somewhere "back home", God started to talk to you or your spouse and He called you [or your spouse] to serve Him in full-time ministry. So you quit jobs and you sold precious possessions and you said good-bye to loving families and loving church families and wonderful friends and you loaded up the truck and moved to Colorado. Tonight I'm here to remind you that you are not here by accident. You being here is not a mistake. You are here because you have been called and commissioned by God. God has called you to the adventure of Christian ministry and there is nothing more exciting, more fulfilling, more challenging and more adventure packed than living in the center of God's will doing the ministry He has called you to do.

2. God Has Called You to Preach and Teach the Word

2Preach the Word; ... correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

In other words, correct, rebuke, and encourage by preaching and teaching the Word. Paul says there are two reasons our ministry must center on the Word and both have to do with ears. First, people don't want the truth, they want their ears tickled. They want truth-lite. They want truth that is fun and makes you feel good all over. They don't want truth that talks about cost or commitment or challenge.

The second reason our ministry must center on the word is because when they don't like the word they will turn completely away to alternative truths. You must preach/teach the Word or everyone will be misled.

3. You Must Be Prepared

That is why in the center of what he says about the Word in vs. 2, he says you've got to be prepared. We must be prepared for ministry and that begins with getting prepared for ministry. That is what you are doing right now. There are many aspects of preparation that continue throughout our lives and there are many aspects of preparation that can occur while we are doing ministry but it is absolutely essential that we lay a strong foundation if we are going to be effective ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Can I tell you the truth? This season of preparation is probably some of the hardest ministry you will face.

EX. I understand the stress of ministry preparation. When I was in college preparing for ministry, I was working, taking way to many classes trying to complete two degrees and traveling on the weekends doing ministry. I ended up flat on my back in the hospital getting a blood transfusion because I almost bled to death from an ulcer.

I understand another dimension of the stress of ministry preparation. One great teacher used to say that the devil goes to church every Sunday. I want to paraphrase and remind us that the enemy comes to NBC every day. If we are here preparing for the greatest work under heaven, and we are, snatching the souls of men and women out of the gates of hell and bringing them into the kingdom of God. Don't you think that the enemy is going to oppose us?

How often do we really acknowledge that some of the pain and the problems and the fears and the doubts and the discouragements and the uncertainties we experience here are driven by the enemy of our souls? Satan doesn't want you to graduate from Nazarene Bible College. Satan doesn't want you to become a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But God does!!

You say, "Alan, you don't understand, I've got problems." I may understand better than you think. That is where I hear the apostle speaking God's Word to us when he says, "Be prepared" ... get prepared. I am not diminishing the problems you face in life and ministry, I'm suggesting that part of your responsibility while you are at NBC is to focus on helping God deal with your problems. You have marital or family issues; begin to deal with them. You have money issues; begin to deal with it. You have personal or emotional or background issues; begin to deal with them. You have spiritual or sin issues; begin to deal with them. God has brought you to this place to help you to prepare because we have tremendous resources available to help you prepare in every way for ministry.

Ministry is the greatest adventure you could ever possibly embark upon. You are here because that is what God told you He wanted you to prepare to do with your life.

4. Do Your Duty

5But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

When I took my first pastoral ministry assignment, I'd spent 8 years in college and seminary. I had 2 bachelor's degrees and two master's degrees from fine Nazarene schools. I figured after everything I'd gone through to get prepared for ministry, they ought to just go ahead and make me a GS. Instead, Jan and I were assigned to a little home mission church.

Many have compared the relationship between a pastor and the church like marriage. Some of us are going to say, I went to NBC to get Rachel and instead I got Leah. Remember the biblical story? Jacob fell in love with beautiful Rachel and worked 7 long years in order to win her as his bride and then he was tricked into marrying Leah; the ugly sister they just couldn't marry off? How many of you know that District Superintendents are deceitful above all people? ☺

OK, some DSs are more straightforward than others. Some churches are the ugly stepsister like Leah. But remember the story: Leah gave Jacob six of his 12 sons and his daughter. Leah is the mother of Judah through whom Jesus came. Rachel had Joseph and she won Jacob's heart but eventually Jacob was buried with Leah.

Most of us are going to leave NBC and we're going to get assigned to a Leah church. Leah was desperate to be loved and when Jacob loved her just a little she built a tribe. If you go out there and love and lead those Leah churches, you can build the kingdom of God.

Paul was talking to Timothy about a lifetime of ministry among churches and every one of those churches had problems. All our churches have problems, but there is a perfect God who is incredibly good at calling and preparing and sending us out and empowering us in this great adventure of ministry.

Paul said something to Timothy that sounds a lot like Sophomores and Juniors at NBC to me. He said, Timothy you are kind-of in that no man's land in ministry – not quite at the beginning but the end looks a long way off. *Any of you feel that way about college right now? You aren't beginners anymore but the end feels a lot further away than you'd like? Paul says, "Timothy, I have good news. I'm at the end of the race and it's worth it. It's a great race and with God's help you can run successfully."

5. It is worth it

8Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Paul said, Timothy, I'm looking back over a lifetime of serving Christ and I wouldn't do it any other way. It's had its tough times but it has

been wonderful and it has been worth it. Why? Because Jesus is who He says He is and He does what He promises He will do. You can trust Him. Paul didn't have any doubts. He was in jail about to be beheaded for sharing Christ with Ceasar. Paul spent more time in jail than most of the convicted felons I know and he said, Timothy I wouldn't have had it any other way. You can trust Jesus.

Conclusions

God has said to you what he said to me 30 years ago, put aside your secular pursuits, put aside your other careers – as exciting as they can be. Commit your entire life to serve Me. God has called us to be a part of the greatest adventure we could ever experience.

EX. One man said: The great tragedy today is that you can live a trivial life and get away with it. But pastors – we can't get away with it. We have called and commissioned by God to take part in the great Adventure of Christian ministry. Jesus has a place of service for you and He has you here to prepare. Sure its tough and there will be a lot of tough days but nothing worthwhile is ever easy. And we have this promise that if we will endure the hardship, do our duty, and embrace the adventure with passion and joy and hope ... one day, we will receive a crown from Jesus Christ Himself.

Pastors, look up, trust God, keep moving; there is nothing like the adventure of ministry together with God.