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I AM A MINISTER



What's a chore you'd love to "outsource" to someone else?

QUESTION #1

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God works through us to make a difference.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I hate working in the yard! Maybe it's because when I was growing up I had to spend a portion of each weekend cutting grass, pulling weeds, trimming bushes, and blowing away the clippings—and all while my body was being cooked under the hot West Texas sun. Or maybe I dislike it because yard work is time-consuming and inconvenient, and I don't want to miss out on other things in my life.

The solution to my dilemma is simple: I don't do yard work! I now "outsource" this job to other people. A crew of five guys shows up, and with each of them doing different tasks, the yard work is completed in twenty minutes—and it looks great!

You and I love the idea of "outsourcing" the things in our life we don't want to do or may not be good at doing—whether it's cleaning the house, tutoring our kids in a particular subject, or doing our taxes. All of that can be helpful if it frees us up to concentrate on other areas of life.

But one aspect of life we can't outsource is ministry. God has called every believer to be a minister.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

⁴ Such is the confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ It is not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God. ⁶ He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

I took my first ride in a helicopter with a friend who not only had learned to fly a chopper but actually bought one. It was an unforgettable experience hovering over the surrounding neighborhoods and seeing the countryside from that perspective. After watching my friend demonstrate the basic maneuvers of the bird, he suddenly looked at me, said, "It's your turn to fly," and motioned for me to take the controls. An overwhelming feeling of inadequacy swept over my entire body. I'm normally a pretty confident person, but not at that moment.

If you're like me, you lack confidence when you feel ill-equipped or unprepared. We also may lose our nerve when we feel unworthy or unqualified. In this passage, Paul told believers we never have to lack confidence in our walk with Christ. Why? Because we are equipped and we are prepared in Him. God has given us everything we need to be competent ministers of the gospel.

I'm sure we've all faced moments when we feel inferior or ill-equipped to serve the Lord. In those moments, we may sense something inside us saying: *What are you thinking? You don't have what it takes!*

But in this passage, Paul wrote that our competence for serving in His kingdom doesn't come from ourselves, and our sense of self-confidence doesn't arise from our own ability. Believers have the Spirit of the living God inside them. God has given us Himself; therefore, we have more than enough to do what God calls us to do.

When have you had the privilege of ministering to someone?

QUESTION #2

“He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” This “letter” is the law recorded in the Old Testament. The law is a good thing, because our obedience to it brings us into a right standing with God. The problem is that none of us fully obeys the law. Not a single one of us. As a result, “the letter kills” because our failure to obey it puts us under a curse.

Jesus Christ removed that curse and gave His Spirit to all who trust in Him. (See Gal. 3:13-14.) So, any competence we have to serve God doesn’t come from obeying the letter of the law because we’re unable to keep it on our own. Instead, the Spirit gives us competence because He empowers us.

2 Corinthians 3:7-10

⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, chiseled in letters on stones, came with glory, so that the Israelites were not able to gaze steadily at Moses’s face because of its glory, which was set aside, ⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹ For if the ministry that brought condemnation had glory, the ministry that brings righteousness overflows with even more glory. ¹⁰ In fact, what had been glorious is not glorious now by comparison because of the glory that surpasses it.

In the Old Testament, people often experienced God’s glory in a tangible way. Moses was one example. He spent a significant amount of time in God’s presence when he received the law. As a result, the glory of God was reflected all over his face. He literally glowed!

But, as Paul noted in 2 Corinthians 3, Moses’ reflected glory didn’t last. The glory associated with the law wasn’t a lasting glory; it was a fading glory—something “set aside” by the “ministry of the Spirit,” which endures.

How can we tell if we’re relying on our own competence instead of trusting Christ to work through us?

QUESTION #3

How would you summarize Paul’s point in these verses?

QUESTION #4

Paul wasn't dismissing the glory that came with God's law. But he knew that glory pales in comparison to the glory that comes through Christ. The law was glorious even though it brought death and condemnation; Christ's glory—which brings life and righteousness—is far greater.

Fourteen-time NBA All-Star Michael Jordan is universally recognized as the greatest basketball player to ever play the game, but his career had a humble beginning. When Michael was a sophomore in high school, he failed to make the varsity team. Motivated by the cut, he practiced, worked hard, grew several inches, and eventually reached his goal of becoming a starter, and a star, on the squad.

Michael would have missed a lot if he'd settled for that high school glory. He never would have led the North Carolina Tar Heels to win the 1982 NCAA Championship. He never would have been a six-time NBA champion with the Chicago Bulls, nor win two Olympic gold medals. But not even a career like Michael Jordan's can compare with the glory Paul described.

Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit equips us and empowers us for a ministry greater than anything possible through our own efforts—and with that greater ministry comes a greater glory. What is that greater glory? It's all tied to Jesus Christ. We achieve no glory through our own efforts at righteousness; instead Christ imparts His righteousness to us. He lives in believers, empowering and equipping us to live and serve. We can know no greater glory on this earth than to walk in His righteousness.



2 Corinthians 3:11-12

¹¹ For if what was set aside was glorious, what endures will be even more glorious.¹² Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness.

When I was ten, I attended a class at our church that trained people to share their faith. The leader kept it basic and showed us that all of us could tell our stories and share the hope we'd found in Jesus. As the class concluded, we were all challenged to take what we'd learned and apply it to our personal lives. The instructor challenged us to share the gospel with a complete stranger within twenty-four hours.

The next day after school, I saw a boy I'd never seen before. Something inside me said: *He's the one. Go talk to him about Jesus.* Suddenly the knots began to tighten in my stomach. Despite being scared to death, I approached the boy with the full intention of sticking to my training. Instead, I froze up. Then I blurted out, "Hey man, do you know Jesus or what?" He simply looked at me, squinted his eyes, and responded: "I don't know Jesus. Actually, I don't know anybody. My family just moved here on Tuesday." He obviously hadn't participated in the role-play portion of my witness training class, because that wasn't the way this was supposed to play out!

The idea of talking to someone about Jesus can feel terrifying—but it doesn't need to be. Our connection with Jesus brings a hope that can never be taken from us. That kind of hope empowers us to live on mission with a supernatural confidence and boldness. We don't have to worry or be fearful as we do the ministry God has called us to do. God is with us, and He gives us exactly what we need along the way.

This truth isn't just for preachers, teachers, and other church leaders. Paul was talking to all who've trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Since Christ has given us this competence, confidence, and hope, we can lovingly serve God and others with boldness. We don't minister in vain. We have a sure hope—and that is a hope worth sharing.

What does it look like to serve Christ with boldness in today's culture?

QUESTION #5

THE BASICS

In order to share your testimony, you need to know your testimony. Use the chart below to list the basic elements of your faith story.

Before Christ

Your lifestyle:

Your goals:

Encountering Christ

What did you feel?

What did you do?

After Christ

Your lifestyle:

Your goals:

What obstacles have hindered you from sharing this testimony with boldness?

LIVE IT OUT

What can you do this week to live out the truth of this passage? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Pray.** If you know Jesus, then God has given you His Spirit and the competence to minister in His name. Pray and ask God to give you a fresh dose of confidence so you can boldly minister to those around you for His glory.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask God to give you an opportunity to put your faith in action. Look for an opportunity this week to share Jesus with someone else. Go in confidence and trust the Lord with the results.
- ▶ **Make serving others a habit.** Like other habits in your life, the habit of serving is developed through intentional acts one day at a time. Make a practical list of ways you can serve and minister to others this week.



Outsourcing is a part of our everyday lives—but it should never be a part of our ministry. If you love Jesus, then you are called to make a difference by loving and serving others.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLmore**