

Struggle and Suffer for This

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[0:00] So we're continuing on in our Colossians series. If you've got a Bible, you can pull it out. Go to Colossians chapter 1 and verse 24. If you don't have a Bible, that is okay. We're also gonna have it on the screen as well.

So this is an interesting passage because it is about ministry. And if you're a follower of Jesus, then you need to understand that you're both qualified and called into ministry.

Okay, you're both qualified and called into ministry. And you may think like, no, Jesse, you don't understand me. I'm like, I can't do that kind of stuff. But here's the thing. God doesn't call the equipped.

God equips the called, okay? And those whom he has called into salvation, into his son, he has qualified. You know, and the reason, where we get this from is a doctrine called the priesthood of all believers.

It is a doctrine that has replaced the old doctrine of the Old Testament covenant, where priests, you had to be a man and you had to be born of the tribe of Levi to be qualified to be a priest.

[1:04] And what priests did in the Old Testament, they were in God's presence, that they ministered to God on behalf of God, before God, for God's people. That's what they did. But now, in what Jesus has done, he's the new great high priest.

He's reset the whole thing, right? A whole new temple, not a temple made with hands, but a living temple. Jesus, he was the temple, and then he passed it on to the temple where the life of heaven walked around here on earth and broke out here on earth.

But now he's handed it off to us, his disciples. We are the new living, walking temples of the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God. And together, us as a church, we're also the corporate representation of that as well.

We get to do that together. And so in Jesus, you and I, man or woman, you know, old or young, we are called into this amazing calling of priesthood where we get to minister before God on behalf of God's people.

And we get to minister to one another. And I wanna say this, before I understood this doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, I simply went to church. But once I understood it, once I got it, I began to be the church.

[2:13] And there's a big difference there. Going to church gets boring and tedious, right? You show up, you do the attendance thing, you listen to sermons, you clap your hands, you raise your hands when at the appropriate time, you see some songs, and then you kinda go about the rest of your life.

But being the church, doing ministry is anything but boring and tedious. It's a life of joy, it's a life of adventure, it's a life of blood and sweat and tears and all of those things wrapped into one.

If you were a Christian for some time and you're like, man, Christianity is boring, I would say you're just not doing it right. In today's passage, we are going to look at ministry in a few ways.

What is the nature of ministry? What is the aim of ministry? What are the means that we do ministry? What is the fruit of ministry? What should we be looking for? Like, what are we hoping happens? And then what is the cost of ministry?

That sounds like a lot, but trust me, we're gonna get through it in record time, all right? So throughout this sermon, I want you and I to have an eye in two directions.

[3:16] One, are my elders and pastors, are we living up to this calling of ministry that we see in this text? And then also, am I living up to this? All right?

So Colossians 1 verse 21 says this, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of

which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, Colossian believers, and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I'm with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

[4 : 59] This is God's word. Amen. So before we get into the aim of ministry, we must understand the twofold nature of ministry, right? And there's a general ministry, a common ministry that is true of every believer of Jesus, and then there are particular ministries.

And Paul talks about becoming a minister in verse 25, right? I became a minister for you, for the church. But that word there, when he says minister, that word is servant.

In the Greek, it's diakonos. It's where we get the word servant from. It means to be a dusty person running around doing things. And then he also goes on to talk about being entrusted with a stewardship, right?

Which is a different word. In Christ, to be a minister, to be a diakonos, is a common calling that we all share. You might say that when we're saved, we are called into service.

But then there's a different part of this too. To some, to particular people, God entrusts unique roles and assignments. You get into the first Corinthians style, a vibe of things where he talks about we are a body made up of many members.

[6 : 05] We are multi-gifted. We are a multifaceted body of believers. Not everyone shares the same gifts. The Holy Spirit and his sovereignty, according to God's perfect plan for his church and for the blessing of the church, he assigns and he equips and he gives certain gifts as he sees fit for the purpose of the building up of the body.

There's unique roles and unique assignments within this general calling that we all share. Now that word for stewardship in verse 25, it's an interesting one.

In the Greek word, it is okoinonomia. Okoinia. And that's a hard one to say, right? But it's, that word is, what it does, it describes a delegated authority to a particular servant.

And to understand all of this, you kind of have to get into like the context of that day. Paul was speaking into the Greco-Roman world. And in the Greco-Roman world, you didn't have like organizations and LLCs called businesses that you went to work for.

You had household businesses. And those household businesses were called oikos. And the purpose of that business was not to sell overpriced yogurt, okay? There's a, these households made up the main part of the economy, right?

[7 : 21] And so in every oikos, you had many servants, many diakonos doing many tasks, many ministries for the building up and the benefit of that household.

But also in every oikos, there were certain servants among the servants who were entrusted to manage certain affairs on behalf of the master of the house.

They were called the oikonomos. And these, these oikonomoses were also diakonoses as well. So when we think of ministry in a church, we have to understand the context that Paul is writing into, that he's helping us to understand.

It's a household kind of context, not a business kind of context. And so he's saying here, to clear up any confusion, that you guys, Colossian Church, us, City Grace Church, we are one of God's oikoses.

We are one of his kingdom households. And what are we doing? We are working together to, in our part, build up the kingdom of God. Working together, serving together to build up the kingdom of God.

[8 : 27] All of the saints in this church, we are ministers, we are servants in this household for that reason. That's kind of God's general calling over us. But then there's some servants who might

have a particular calling, right?

A particular gifting. And that's been entrusted to them by God to oversee certain affairs. And that's kind of where you get the idea of elders and deacons. But then there's, beyond that, there's like different functions and giftings that God puts into the church.

And we have to go outside of the text here to Ephesians 4, Paul talks about these gifts that Jesus gave to his church for the building up of it and to bring it into maturity. And there's apostolic functions and prophetic functions and evangelism functions, evangelistic functions.

And there's those who pastor and those who teach. And all these different giftings work together. None is better than the other, but they're working together and they're represented in the body of Christ for the building up of the body of Christ, for the strengthening of the body of Christ, for what? To bring it into maturity, which is the aim of all ministry. Ministry is serving Jesus's body, the church, to bring it into maturity. And let's be, let's make it sure, like the church is a collection of saints meeting together, doing life together, building one another up, ministering to one another.

[9 : 45] Anytime you and I, we serve the church, anytime we step in and do serving for the church, we serve Jesus. Before Paul came over to Jesus's side and wrote all these wonderful letters that he wrote in the New Testament, just like Colossians, before that happened, he was Saul.

Saul hated Jesus. Saul hated Jesus' followers. He went around putting them on trial. He went around imprisoning them when he could, and sometimes even hoping to bring them to capital punishment.

People were put to death because of Paul's accusations, his effective accusations. But one day, Jesus knocked Saul off his donkey. He's on his way to Damascus, knocked him to the ground, blinding light.

And you know what he said? He said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He doesn't say, Saul, why are you persecuting the church? Why are you persecuting disciples? No, Jesus says, why are you persecuting me?

And that says something quite incredible. It's one of the glorious mysteries of our union with Jesus. Jesus, somehow, somehow, when the, whatever happens to the church, Jesus is saying that is happening to him.

[10 : 55] Jesus deeply cares for us because he deeply cares for his own body, right? Paul talks about this in Ephesians 5, like shades to the husband and wife relationship in a marriage.

Like husbands, love your wife as you would your own body because you are somehow united. You are one, even though you are two separate individuals. Jesus, somehow, in that beautiful mystery of marriage, we can look and see how the church and him relate to one another.

Even though he is Lord in heaven, ruling and reigning, still he is one with us and among us, not absent with us. He is with us, moving and working and acting. And somehow, as we go, Jesus is feeling that.

He's saying, this is happening to me. What happens in our services today, what happens in our lives, it is happening to him. It's some wonderful, beautiful mystery. That's why he continually intercedes for us because he cares about our welfare.

He is all about us growing up into maturity in Jesus, in him. So whatever we're going through, Jesus really cares. Whether that's good things or sin or sorrow or suffering, he cares about it all because Jesus wants a healthy, strong body, a whole body.

[12 : 07] In discipleship terms, that's maturity. He wants maturity for all of us. And here's the thing, friends. Maturity, okay, maturity doesn't mean perfection.

It doesn't mean we got it all figured out. We got it right. We're sinless. Well, this is what it means. In Bible terms, when they talk about maturity, it is more like the plant that has grown out of the shoot stage and the adolescent stage and is now deeply rooted in bearing fruit.

It is not the plant. We don't look at, we don't look at like, you know, a flower over there and said, ah, that cannot get any better. We don't know that. We look at that and we see it flowering and we're saying, hey, it's doing what it's supposed to be doing.

Awesome. It is bearing fruit. So what kind of ministry then, if we're meant to be bearing fruit, if maturity looks like bearing fruit, if maturity looks like, hey, there is something inwardly that has been happening that is now coming out of my life, what kind of ministry helps us bring us into that kind of maturity?

Well, here's the thing. It's almost too pedestrian and boring. And it's very predictable. If the aim of our ministry is maturity, then the means by which we mature in Christ, Paul gives to us in verse 25 as well, right?

[13:30] He says, I became a steward or I became a minister to the church according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you. Well, what are the means, okay, of this, Paul?

To make the word of God fully known. We minister to make the word of God fully known so that we can mature in Christ. You know, there's always going to be a temptation to diminish the importance of the word of God in our, as we seek maturity.

You know, in Acts 6, the early church was, it was like, it was, I would love to have lived at that time because man, things were happening. Moon and shaking, disciples were being added, miracles were being done, like the church was growing day by day.

I mean, it was like, they were, they were getting it right, it seems like. And then Acts 6 hits, right? And there's some problems. Their food pantry ministry isn't working like it's supposed to.

Like the, some widows were being overlooked, some weren't. Okay? And so, the apostles step back and they're talking with one another, what are we going to do?

[14:38] Well, you know, ministering to their most vulnerable among them, widows, that's a great and noble ministry. And that's a great and noble purpose. They were the most economically compromised at that time.

They didn't have the social safety nets like we do today. But even for them, the apostles, even that was not such a noble ministry to neglect the ministry of word and prayer.

So the apostles wisely chose not to say, hey, we're just going to have to pick one or the other. No, they figured out a way by appointing seven men to that particular ministry so that they could continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

And that is what they did. And then it goes on in verse seven. What was the result of that decision?

Well, it said that the word of God continued to increase. More disciples were added to the church.

All the while, the church was being strengthened through the word. The widows weren't being neglected. The word of God wasn't being neglected. And here's the thing, friends. The Bible isn't meant to gather dust.

[15:42] We are a people of the word and we're meant to be a people in the word. No excuses. We believe the scriptures contain everything God intended to reveal about himself and his redemptive purposes.

That's what we believe. Followers of Jesus, that is what we believe. We believe that there is no new prophecy or vision or teaching that can supersede the word of God that we have or can complete it, finish it out.

We believe that the word of God is sufficient. It lacks nothing. And it doesn't matter if that prophetic vision or that teaching, it doesn't matter if it comes from the Pope or your pastor or meemaw.

If it ain't already in the Bible, it doesn't pass the smell test. Okay? The writer of Hebrews opens up by saying that God throughout history spoke many times in different places through the prophets. But now in Jesus, he has spoken his full and final word. Full and final. Right? Jesus said of himself on the road to Emmaus, all the Old Testament scripture is about him.

[16:59] It finds its fulfillment in him. If you want to understand what the heck God was on about in the Old Testament and all the different things that he was doing, what the temple system was all about and the different sacrifices and the different ordinances and all that was going on, what was his purpose and plan with Israel and all that, all that found its fulfillment in Jesus.

All of it makes sense if you say like, oh, that is a whisper and a sign and a symbol and a shadow that finds its ultimate substance in the God-man, the Son of God who came, who put on flesh and walked among us, who suffered and died, who rose again, who is now seated in the heavenly places and is one day going to return and bring the fullness of the kingdom to bear here on earth. All of it finds its fulfillment in Jesus. So what we have in our Bible, unlike what some of the false Colossian teachers were starting to bring in from the outside, is that what we have in the Bible is all the fullness of God's word and revelation for knowing Jesus and his salvation.

We have all that we need to know what it means to live in Jesus and for Jesus and to become like Jesus. It's just why disciples of Jesus are devoted to the word.

We make it our aim to fully know what God has made fully known. There is no secret hidden mystery out there, guys, left. Everything you have to fully know about God that he wants, he has

chosen to disclose to us, now that is not to say that there is some secret hidden things that belong to God, Deuteronomy says that, but you know what he says, like, I ain't gonna, there's some things that are just mine you ain't gonna know about.

[18 : 49] Everything that you need to know, it's there in your word, in your Bible. And that's good news to us. We don't gotta go chasing around the next guru, the next little thing and the next little fad that comes up.

You have everything you need in that word of God, in the scriptures. And that's the heart of true apostolic ministry that Jesus handed down to his apostles that they carried on, that they lived out, and from them they pass it on to the next generation who faithfully lived it out, who faithfully taught the word of God, who faithfully made the word of God fully new, and who faithfully were making it all about Jesus and Christ centered, and then they pass it on down, and they pass it on down, and they pass it on down, and now suddenly here we are in this generation.

And what are we gonna do? What are we gonna do? What's a great opportunity? What do we get to do with the time that we have?

Man, what a glorious call. What a glorious calling into ministry that God has given us to do. It is not a burdensome thing. It is this beautiful opportunity for us to say, oh my goodness, the mystery that was once hidden has now been fully revealed, and it's right there in front of me in book form, and I get to dive into it every day.

And by the way, the Holy Spirit works into that, and he makes that book alive into our hearts, those truths alive into our hearts. Man, I wanna be a part of that. And that's calling of knowing the word fully and passing it on to others and sharing it with others.

[20 : 27] This is a common ministry without exception for every able disciple of Jesus. We read in Acts 2.42 that those first converts, what they did is they were devoted to getting together and they were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

Their natural response was to know and feel what God had made fully known in Jesus. their natural response. But to know the word in full requires more than you sitting in isolation at your study desk over the word of God all by yourself.

I would argue that you can't know in full what God has made fully known on your own, and here's why. Colossians 1.28 says, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom.

Paul doesn't say teach yourself and warn yourself. He doesn't say warn and teach the newbies. He says, we proclaim, we warn, we teach, us together.

This is what we are doing. And also, what it says here, what are we doing? This passage, this verse we read, it identifies the two-fold method of good word ministry.

[21 : 40] That will lead to immaturity. One is warn, and two is teach. We warn and we teach. Now I want to say this, we are living in an age where teaching is highly accepted. We love being taught, right?

Where's the next podcast? Where's the next sermon I can download and listen to? We're all about that. But warning, but correction, is a bit of a taboo in our day.

We don't much like it. We're like, hey, hey, give me some advice, give me your opinion, but like, don't give me correction. But a gospel community that is all about teaching and no correction is gonna produce immature disciples who really don't act much like Jesus.

There are times when I need somebody to tell me, Jesse, yeah, how you're acting. You're acting a fool right now, buddy. Like there's something about the gospel that you are not believing right now or you're living in a way that isn't Christ-centered at all.

Let's get you back on that track. And if we don't, if we're all about teaching and no correction, it is to our own peril because immature disciples are gonna miss out on what are the blessings and assurances that are possessed by those who are mature.

[22 : 55] And Paul lists these fruits of gospel maturity through gospel ministry. In chapter two, verses one to five, he says, I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.

What is he hoping for here? That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of Christ, of God's mystery, which is Christ.

All that assurance, all that understanding, all that knowledge, it's actually revealed in Christ. He's repeating himself here. Because in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Not some, not most, all. And I say this, Paul says, in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

For though I am absent in body, yet I'm with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. We see some of Paul's main concerns and his desires of the maturity that he wants to see.

[24 : 03] And the markers of maturity that he points out is a shared love and faith that is uncommon and unshakable. When Paul says their hearts are knit together in love, that is more than just finding your people that you might share common interests with.

Right? I don't go, I don't show up to church because I'm looking for 47 year olds with four kids that have been married for 20 some years. The love of Jesus and the love for Jesus is what brings us together.

It's what brings us, it unites improbable people that would never typically unite outside of this. It knits together our hearts. And when you take Jesus away from that equation and you try to force people together in the community, what is going to happen if Jesus isn't at that center, you're gonna drift into tribalism.

That's what you're gonna do because we're naturally tribal. Study history. We're really good at breaking into different tribes. Now in Christ, they may not understand you fully.

I may not understand how you perceive the world and take it in fully. It may be different to me. You might vote differently because you have different priorities than I do. you might think Lord of the Rings is the worst book ever and I will pray for you.

[25 : 35] You're so blind and lost. But that does not mean our hearts can't be knit together in love. None of those things.

The covenant love of Jesus that bonds us to him, binds us to him, is the same love that binds us to each other. We are one together because we are with him.

We are in him. And as you and I are united to his heart, then and only then do our hearts become knit together in love. That's the only way.

And the more that you and I mature into Christ, the more you and I are becoming like him, the more you and I, his heart is becoming our heart, the stronger those bonds of love are gonna be because it's centered in Jesus.

And it can't, and that thing, these bonds of love that's centered in Jesus, we can't divide it from our faith. Right? There's no such thing as a mature faith without a mature love.

[26 : 38] And you know what? There's no such thing as a mature love without a mature faith. And here's the thing with maturity. Maturity isn't flashy because love isn't flashy.

Love is gritty. It's gutsy. It's sweat. It's blood. It's not giving up. Loving like Jesus puts in the hard yards, out of the spotlight for the benefit of others.

And unlike what we see with Paul, particularly what it cares about is their faith in Jesus for them to grow up, to reach maturity, to see the fruit of maturity forming in disciples of Jesus.

That's our chief concern. when we're thinking about ministry. And because of this, we see that there's an incomparable joy of ministry.

Paul says in verse 5 of chapter 2, man, I want to be rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Jesus. That's what we desire.

[27 : 44] These hearts knit together in love, this beautiful, loving maturity that we see, but also good order and firmness of faith in Jesus. Unity because of love, but unity in faith.

And those things are what brings joy. And you know what? We need that because joy helps us to endure the cost of ministry. You know, Paul talks in glowing terms about the privilege that God gave him to be a steward, the stewardship that he entrusted him with, but he is honest enough to acknowledge the cost that comes with it.

Look at verse 124, verse 29, and then chapter 2, verse 1. 124 says, now I rejoice in my sufferings. Right?

That word means agony. He rejoices in his agonies for your sake. He goes on to say, in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body that is the church.

In verse 29, he says, for this I toil. That word means to fatigue yourself. You're working so hard that you are gonna end up weary and fatigued. For this I toil, Paul says, struggling.

[28 : 56] Again, agonizing with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. And then verse 1, he says, for I want you to know how great a struggle. And that struggle, I want you to know how great I am, how great my state of agony is that I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.

There's a lot of privilege in ministry, but there's a cost. To minister is to struggle and to suffer for the sake of the church. Notice where its focus is.

It is for people. It is for the church. Because there were false preachers coming in and saying like, hey, look at my struggles. I'm gonna teach you how to suffer to exalt yourself. And there's a version of religion that will do that.

But here, Paul doesn't deny that true gospel ministry is not absent of hardship and hard work. Jesus ministered here on earth. Isaiah called him the suffering servant.

He put that on display. He lived that out. And our ministry that he gives us tends to take on the same quality. We are not the servants who stand above everything and not affected by anything, just kind of float along, no problems.

[30 : 20] We are suffering servants. We are wounded healers used by Jesus for that end. Our ministry takes on that quality.

Jesus, he got tired. He had to sleep. He had to rest. I mean, one day, there's one episode that you read in the gospels, like he does several days of ministry and then gets on a boat and a huge storm hits the boat so much that the disciples are like, we are sinking and they find Jesus asleep in the boat.

Now, he must have been exhausted. I mean, that is some deep sleep when you're just like, hey, like this boat's being storm-tossed around and I'm just snoozing.

Like Paul, like Jesus, be honest with this reality. Be honest with yourself about the difficulties of ministries as much as the victories that come with ministry.

We get to see some amazing things. When you're on the front line of ministry, you get to behold some amazing things of God doing things in people's lives that you step back and be like, but for Jesus, there is no way.

[31 : 31] But that comes with some cost, friends. And again, don't use sufferings to exalt yourself. Look how, look at all that I'm doing. How dedicated, like it shows how dedicated I am to Jesus.

All the rest of you just aren't doing enough like me. Now, we don't have to exalt ourselves in our suffering, but we don't have to hide our sufferings either. Just like in Paul's day, there's some who taught a hidden way of life full of divine blessings that escaped all the problems of ministry.

It was just all blessing. And they would say, their promise was, man, if you are suffering, you're just not doing it right. You need my secret knowledge that I can give it to you. I got some hidden manna, baby.

You want to know about that? The deeper revelations. Just like in Paul's day, there were some who taught that living in grace means no effort or sweat or discomfort.

And it's tempting to want to believe that because suffering and struggling isn't fun. And you know what? We also suffer and struggle in so many other areas of our life. We're just like, Lord, can we just have one place in our life where it can just be easy?

[32 : 45] We want that. I want that. I think about that all the time. I'm just like, man, Lord, can you just smooth it out for a little bit? But if we aren't careful with that sentiment, we're going to land in some unhelpful places that are going to motivate us through shame or guilt.

If we just avoid the suffering topic altogether, when suffering hits, that reality hits, we're just going to have to be like, well, I shouldn't be feeling this, so suck it up, buttercup, is kind of how we choose to do ministry.

Well, that's not good. Or we start to manipulate people if we don't think they're doing enough or just like, oh, well, I guess you can't. Jesus went to the cross, but you can't sacrifice a little bit more for him. That's just spiritual manipulation.

Or we just get into the facts and figures. Look how big the need is out there. Look how bad the situation is. We can't let God down. But that wasn't Jesus' way for his disciples.

That's not how he motivated them into ministry. And it wasn't Paul's way either. he wasn't saying, suck it up, try your best, do your best, work harder, expend yourself.

[33 : 54] It's all on you. Colossians 1.29, he says this. All this struggling that he's talking about, this agonizing, he's doing it with all his, Jesus', God's energy that he powerfully works within me.

friends, ministry will crush you unless you do it in God's power, unless you depend on God's power. Without his power, we are gonna bring upon ourselves a suffering that God never intends for us as we do ministry.

ministry. We can't do ministry for Jesus without Jesus. We just can't. Jesus toiled in ministry, but you know what? He spent a lot of time with his heavenly father in prayer.

He took time out. He said, hey, the good work can take a little bit of a pause. He got into boats and rested. He did that.

The same is true of his apostles. They did lots of gospel work, but you know what? When you read the book of Acts, you see a lot of praying going on. Their lives were full of time with God.

[35 : 11] Their lives were full of getting away and praying with God, communing with him. And when we do that, when we push pause, when we commune with God in prayer and in worship, it fills us with God's energy that carries us through suffering.

When Paul and Silas in that Philippian jail, that famous story of theirs where they're chained up, what do we find them doing? Like singing, nobody knows the trouble I've seen with Zazoo.

No, they're not doing that at all. They're not, woe is me. They're praying and worshiping, it says.

Which either they are loony birds that are sadistic and they don't get their understanding or they got something.

They knew Jesus. They spent time with Jesus. It carried them through. So much of what we do as ministry, it really comes down to discussing and talking about Jesus.

We do a lot of that. And that's fine, that's good. It's part of our like wrestle in the word. We talk about those things together but we also need to spend time being with him too.

[36 : 21] Going to him in prayer. asking for his power to fill us and to work in us. We need to be those who are dependent on him, just not discussing him.

Paul says this, be being filled with the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians, he says, you gotta be filled and then you gotta be filled again. You gotta be freshly filled with that power.

Friends, ministry isn't about climbing the religious power structure. It isn't about gaining badges to boast in. It isn't about beating yourself into a pulp in your body to show how great of a Christian you are and how dedicated you are.

It's not about your ego. It's not about your satisfaction. It's not about you feeling good about yourself. To minister is to be a servant in God's household who has been given an assignment to build his household for the sake of his glory.

And we do that by getting lower to love others to build their faith. And we build their faith through teaching yes and we build their faith through loving correction.

[37 : 31] And we do that according to God's word and we do it all in God's power. So, let us do ministry together.

Let us together suffer and struggle for that. Amen. As the band comes up and we look to respond. In a moment, we are going to be taking communion.

I want to say to you if you're here in the room and you're not a follower of Jesus and you're hearing all these ministry things and you're thinking like, wow, that is crazy. That is gnarly. I want you to hear this.

Jesus suffered and died. He did ministry for you. He became a dusty servant for you. He got lower for your sake.

He went to the cross for your sake. He gave himself, he poured himself out for your sake. You don't have to start with worrying about what is my ministry, how am I going to do this?

[38 : 33] No, no, you start by looking to him. Look to him. The author and perfecter of faith. Look to him. He is your Lord and Savior. You start there.

There's going to be a prayer on the screen for you to pray while the rest of us are taking communion and as we who are followers of Jesus come to the communion table today, I just want to encourage you to think about one, the privilege of ministry.

This opportunity that God has called you into, qualified you for and equips you and empowers you for and I want you to see that privilege as you come to him is he invites you to come to him and I want you to rest in the fact that Lord, I don't know what that looks like.

Maybe I haven't been doing it right and maybe you realize that and that's how God's been speaking to you. You can just say like, Lord, forgive me. Totally got off on the wrong track here. Totally been doing it in my own strength and for my own glory.

Thank you for reminding me. God's gracious and he's like, yes, son, daughter, love you, thank you. Let's get back on the right track. Maybe you're weary because of ministry.

[39 : 45] You've been in a long season where it's just like, Jesse, I can yes and amen this tiring part. I can yes and amen that weariness because I've been feeling it and I just want to invite you to come to God and say, Lord, give me grace.

If this is what you're calling me into, give me grace to hold up underneath, to be sustained underneath or maybe you just need to find where God is saying, hey, take some rest. Take some rest for yourself. That's okay. We don't rest from the ministry, we rest for the ministry. God's all about that.

Wherever you're at, maybe you're just like, wow, I didn't even know that as a disciple that this was even opportunity. I was just, I'm just so used to going to church and not being the church. What does this look like for me? Well, come and talk to us. A gentleman earlier today just has a confirmation of like, man, like God, you kind of work on people's hearts and the Holy Spirit does that and he said like, hey, God put this is, God put a particular ministry on his heart and it's for the community.

[41 : 00] It's, could be a blessing to the church as well, but God stirs those things. You know, he does that. Pursue that, go after that and as we multiply ministry, what happens is we multiply the amount of grace that is flowing in us as a body but also into our city.

Pray with me. Lord, we are coming to you right now as we come to the table. We thank you, one, that you're with us. You're in this room. You're working and moving and talking and acting and convicting and encouraging and building up even right now.

Lord, maybe to some this has felt like a rebuking sermon and I just pray that like, man, your rebukes are always for our good and I hope that there is some encouragement and excitement that has come with that.

Maybe for some, this is a revelatory sermon. This is an eye-opening. I had no idea and there's some excitement there but we thank you, Jesus, that in all of this, you are the all-sufficient Savior and in all that we can do ministry-wise that you are the one who gives us strength and courage and power and everything that we need to do that which you have called us into.

So we come to your table to be nourished. We come to your table to be nourished in faith as we take the signs and symbols of your death, your body broken for us, your blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins, these things that qualify us to do ministry for you.

[42 : 45] Be with us today. Be with us in this moment. Amen. Thank you.