



Spirit of Grace Herald

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Doing What We Can

When I was in my twenties, pastoring a small church, and praying for revival, I had an abundance of spiritual ambition. I despised mediocrity, and sought with all my heart to accomplish great things for God. I read the biographies of the greatest ministers in the history of the church and passionately sought to emulate them. I was a pretty fair preacher in those days, and the compliments I received from my congregation fed the flames of my ambitions, and I gave myself more and more to seeking a ministry that would not be merely successful but phenomenal.



I wanted it all in those days: to be a great pastor with a huge church, a great evangelist preaching to hundreds of thousands of people, with a dynamic healing ministry thrown in, and perhaps a Bible College as well. Well, why not? Did not my Bible tell me that if we abide in Jesus we could ask whatever we desired and it would be done for us? Did not Jesus declare that all who ask, receive, those who seek, find, and to those who knock, the door will come flying open? With enough faith and enough work and enough prayer and enough Bible reading and memorization, why should I not receive all these desires of my heart?

In addition to this, Jesus has promised that if

we would abide in Him, we would bear “much fruit,” not a little fruit, or some fruit, but much fruit. At the time I first really got hold of this abider’s promise, the church that I pastored had about fifty or sixty people attending on Sunday mornings, but I was certain that if I stayed true to my quest, the sky was the limit. I prayed, I fasted, I read the Bible in huge chunks, and I memorized great numbers of Scriptures, along with continuing to read biographies of all the great heroes of the faith.

It didn’t work out quite the way I thought. It took decades for me to totally embrace the idea that I would never be a combination Billy Graham, D. L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Kathryn Kuhlman, and George Whitefield. No matter how hard I tried, no matter how long I prayed, no matter how much time I spent in the Scriptures, I still ended up being... well, Dennis. To be sure, I had certain ministry gifts in my life, but they were never quite as large or impressive or world-transforming as I wished they were.

I pastored one other church and, like the first, the congregation failed to ever grow to 100 Sunday morning congregants. I have engaged in evangelistic meetings in Africa and seen success, but my audiences were usually in the hundreds or occasionally in the thousands, but never in the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands as I hoped they would be. Strangely the largest field of ministry has turned out to be through YouTube where my “Beat Diab-

etes” channel has over 100,000 subscribers and reaches people all over the world. Recently I interviewed (over the phone) an oil-rig worker from Scotland and an interior decorator from Oman. Both shared that my diabetes YouTube ministry had been a tremendous help to them in getting their numbers from extremely high diabetic levels down into the normal range.

It is gratifying to see how the Lord uses this, and I make an effort to let everyone know that this is a Christian ministry, but it is not what I ever envisioned for myself in those early days. Through my 40 years of ministry in pastoring, evangelism, Christian radio, Christian television, and producing videos for YouTube, I have learned a few lessons about ambition and allowing God to be God in our lives. The lessons are simple, but they are indispensable for all of us.

Doing What We Can

The first is that we cannot do everything. I know that sounds overly obvious, but some of us really need to see this. In my early Christian years, I wanted to do it all, from pastoring to evangelism to healing ministry, to establishing a Bible college... And if you gave me enough time I would have come up with more still. Forty years later I realize that this was never even remotely possible. It is far better to do one or two things well than six or seven things not so well.

It turned out that I really was not a gifted pastor. I could preach pretty well, but pastoring is a whole lot more than preaching. I truly believe I have been called to be an evangelist, but not at the Billy Graham level. I have engaged in numerous African missions. People give their lives to Jesus, but I have given up on the idea of filling sports stadiums with fifty thousand people.

Another lesson I learned is that I cannot reach everybody. Some people respond well to my ministry; other don't. It's not my job to convert the whole world or reach every category of people. I *can* reach some, however. And just because I cannot reach all people is no excuse for not making an effort to reach the ones I can. I am grateful for our many African missions, and the men, women, and children who have given their lives to Jesus. One young man who received Christ in my first meeting in Kenya is now a pastor and helping others to find Jesus, which gives me great joy.

I have come to realize that these simple thoughts: that we cannot do everything and cannot reach everybody, are lessons that every Christian needs to embrace, regardless of whether one is a preacher or exercises any other type of ministry. The truth is, it is not our job to reach everyone. It is our job to do what Christ has called us to do, to be what He has called us to be, and to bless the people He has ordained for us to bless. That is it! If we do this, whether we touch tens or tens of thousands, we are a success in the eyes of God.

Knowing this takes the pressure off and makes life a little more pleasant. We can take some time off sometimes, and enjoy the many blessings God has already given us. We don't have to live with our eyes on some imaginary future glory. We should seek for much fruit, of course. This is precisely what Jesus promised those who abide in Him. But we must give God the prerogative of determining what that "much fruit" looks like. And often it will look a bit different, or a whole lot different from how we saw it in our early days in Christ.

Our job is simply to stay close to Jesus, to abide in Him daily and let Him be the focus of our lives. He will direct us, and He will determine whether we turn out to be an orange tree, an apple tree, or a mango tree. And as He makes His will and His plans known to us, we follow Him. We don't waste time pouting over doors He has closed or dreams He has quenched; instead we watch for the doors He is opening and the new dreams He is placing in our hearts.

In the end, it will always be, "Not my will, but Thine be done." And with that we will be content. We can't do it all, but we can do something. We can't be it all, but we can be something in Christ. And we can't reach everybody, but we can reach a few, bless a few, and help a few to find glorious eternal life as children of God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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It really helps to have regular supporters whom we can count on to fund not only our missions, but our day to day ministry, mail-outs, videos, audio recordings, and other expenses. We Help us to continue to reach out to our world with the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

