



Become an Able Minister

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Introduction

With 31 years of ministry experiences since the Lord moved me from the corporate environment, I've observed many situations of ministry to people in the Body of Christ. As a pastor for 24 years, a short term missionary to 11 different countries, assisting in starting a number of churches, teaching in two Bible colleges, counseling in two residential treatment centers and overseeing two ministerial fellowships, I've seen many people encouraged and discouraged with their function as a Christian believer.

Those who have been the encouraged and fulfilled ones have been functioning in an activity that gave them fulfillment, some recognition and were considered as ministers within their circle of "life in the Kingdom." Those who were more discouraged, unfulfilled and unrecognized were those who didn't pastor, preach, travel to foreign countries or teach in a Bible college. In fact, they are for the most part not listed in Ephesians 4:11. It is not unusual for very enthusiastic believers to be able and volunteering for all kinds of service during their first ten years of becoming a Christian. Then they fall away from church activity all together in a feeling of no appreciation, no niche, no recognized function of any meaning, or just of no value.

So I went to "The Book" for some answers to this particular matter. I recall that the Lord Jesus gathered to Himself twelve regular guys, twelve off-the-street citizens of the day and He would build His Church upon the revelation that He passed on to them in a little over three years. I've always thought it noteworthy that this was a shorter period of time than the average college and seminary process takes today.

While in the Bible I found these following statements by the Apostle Paul:

"God made us Able Ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

(2 Corinthians 3:6)

"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, Jesus Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, which causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

(Ephesians 4:15-16)

It is clear that in those early days, those who were the ministers of the revelation and reality of Jesus Christ were not theologians, scholars, extraordinary people of high talent and education, but rather the duplicates of those original twelve who had a personal experience with the Living God, Christ our savior. These two scriptures, and others, tell us that God made us each able ministers of that new covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus, not just those elected or appointed by a board, council or presbytery. In fact, we qualify ourselves by our actions, knowing who we are and the authority within us. The scriptures tell us that we are Ambassadors of a holy nation, the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

The second scripture above tells us that we are each to grow up in every dimension of our lives and to operate with Christ as the head of every department of our life experience and every room of our house. It goes on to tell us that as

individual parts of the larger Body of Christ on your block, in your town and in your world, we are to recognize other Body parts as equally important, fitting together, functioning in a productive manner and contributing to the growth of the whole Body of Christ. As this growth and maturity materializes in teams of people working together to achieve a Godly purpose, all of the parts, the members, are being built up in the love of the Lord.

Allow me then to introduce you to the concept of being an Able Minister. As the scripture says, not of the letter, not scholarly, but of the Spirit, spiritual by experience and example. Many of those dusty theological diggings, although important to the mature theology student, have a way of stealing our enthusiasm for doing the works that Jesus did. We should expect to see genuine everyday problems in the lives of ordinary people, be solved or vanished by a power greater than the letter of the law. The enabling power of an Able Minister is the Holy Spirit power, illuminating the Word of God, and that power itself energizes us to do useful things and set our hands to needed tasks, as a functioning organ within the body.

Able Ministers' activity is all about gifts, talents and skills operating within the body of Christ to aid other people in the name of the Lord. Many of those activities are not traditionally considered preaching, teaching or worship ministries. Therefore, in most liturgical churches they are not recognized or even given a place to function. These empowered people are sitting on the bench or watching the game from the dug-out year after year, even some taking a turn at warming up in the bull pen, but never allowed into the game. They have talents and a desire to minister to and build up others in the name of Jesus Christ, but what they want to do is called in some circles: "Body Ministry."

So, the following pages are meant to inspire those who have a desire to be useful to the Lord, but might not be considered as a head, or an eye, or a mouth. Perhaps you are one of those extremely important Body parts like a liver, a foot, a hand, two of you together are lungs, or kidneys; all very necessary. Let me invite you to consider this as your new play book. Then, after your weekly locker room experience, get out onto the playing field of life around you.

The National Conservative Christian Church has a unique program of encouragement, recognition and membership for those called to the very much needed Body Ministry, "being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part." As soon as you finish reading this book, get in touch with the N.C.C.C. office by phone or email and connect up with other Body parts becoming useful to Christ, doing something common in the name of the Lord.

What is an Able Minister?

Imagination is a Godly ingredient in the life of a human. God speaks to believers in dreams and visions, but He paints pictures of what could happen and who we could become and how many could be helped, through supernatural communication to our imagination. The problem with most of us is that our environmental conditioning rebuffs or stifles our imagination when it collides with the “normal practice” or the traditional activities associated with the church.

So, right now you have my permission to begin to imagine yourself doing for someone else something you would like to do. These *some things* are usually things which you already know how to do. Sometimes however, the Spirit of God is urging us to go get ourselves equipped to do something far more significant, which requires further preparation, even some training to accomplish. But to the fellow on the back pew at church they look like activities the pastoral staff wouldn't be doing next week.

Are you with me? Let me help your imagination. Below is a list of definitions of Able Ministers right out of the National Conservative Christian Church manual. I'm sure you can think of a dozen more, or better yet, have an idea for helping other people right now yourself. These would not be considered on the church staff agenda any time soon. Think about these.

Able Minister Definitions

1. Dramatic arts and dance ministry.
2. A clown ministry for birthday parties for children.
3. A *Praise Chorale* to accompany other preaching ministries.
4. Behavioral wellness ministry via “Created In God's Image” seminars.
5. Clothing mending and repair for widowers, single dads, elderly.
6. Coaching a *Men of Honor* team.
7. Coaching a *Power Leap* for teenagers.
8. Coaching a *Women of Glory* team.
9. Debt freedom and financial coaching ministry.
10. Health education seminar ministry.
11. Home School aid and Home School parent consultant. (Like a teacher's aid.)
12. Hospitality ministry of dinner at your home on holidays for widows and the lonely.
13. House sitting or pet care while owner is away.
14. Ladies cosmetic makeovers and self improvement seminars as an evangelistic ministry.
15. Personal transportation for elderly to get to a store, office or medical appointment, which includes staying with them while they are there. (*The Going Somewhere Ministry*)
16. Providing child care for single moms one evening a month.
17. Reading to a blind person, including reading their mail to them.
18. Teaching etiquette and responsible courtesy to youth and the younger generation.
19. Teaching musical instruments to children of low income or under-motivated parents.
20. Teaching signing for the hard of hearing.

21. Hair shampoos and cuts for elderly women and men who are shut-ins or are residents of assisted living facilities or nursing homes.
22. Telephone encouragement ministry to the elderly. A daily checkup with an intervention alarm procedure.
23. Women's aerobics with praise and worship in the daytime, with a biblical study.
24. Worship ministry at retirement centers and nursing homes.
25. Worship ministry to the home bound in private homes.

There are far more activities for helping and encouraging other people in the name of the Lord than are listed here. I recently listened to the testimony of a teenage girl who shared publicly how beneficial being a part of a local youth ministry had been to her. She explained that she had matured as a teenage girl because an adult lady came to the Wednesday evening youth gathering for six weeks in a row and taught them manners, etiquette and how to be polite adults instead of selfish animals. I thought as I listened: "That was an Able Minister."

I've also learned over the years that the fulfilling reward and benefits of applying some personal time or effort toward someone else flows in both directions. Not only is there the intended benefit flowing toward the recipients, but the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as the giver is greatly enhanced and your personal growth may even become observable to others by your words, behavior and relationships.

Know the reason why

So many of the activities and ministries of Able Ministers are like seeds of a personal harvest planted in the lives of other people. If there is a need for more time in your life, plant some time seeds in the lives of a few other people. If you have a need for healing in your body, go pray for healing in the life of someone else. When you can identify someone who is depressed and you apply genuine encouragement and compassion toward them, you will be amazed at how your own depression and discouragement disappears.

The important one word question for a person about to undertake a new venture is "why?" What is your genuine reason for considering reaching out to someone else or volunteering for a task within a ministry context? It is absolutely important that you know in your heart why you are doing this and write it down. This is the objective or reason you are pursuing this.

Believe it or not, there will be challenges, resistance, and obstacles along the way. People may not receive from you as you thought they should. There might be a friend who will criticize you or laugh at your lack of talent. There may be time challenges and financial squeezes that present themselves. Your enemy, old slew foot, will put the thought in your mind that you shouldn't be doing this. "Why don't you just quit pushing," those thoughts will say.

At that moment, get out the paper where you wrote down the "why," your reason and objective for being a functioning part of the Body of Christ. When the dream is big enough, the facts don't matter. When your purpose is clear and defined, the barriers along the path will be reduced to speed bumps. The reason for locking in your "why" for activating your God-called ministry is to keep you on purpose. Commit right at the beginning to being an on-purpose person every day.

Defining who you wish to serve

Let me tell you about being an on-purpose person. If you have a desire to be fulfilling God's purpose for your life, it will include serving other people. Serving, whether in leadership, management, employment or ministry, is the activating of Jesus' example of the towel and basin serving in your own life. This leader-server attitude was demonstrated to the disciples, as recorded in John 13:4-17. An Able Minister is a server, a person who meets the spiritual, emotional, practical, or intellectual need in other people, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Even ministry leaders in the body of Christ are to be servant leaders if they are following Christ's pattern.

The question is: "Who do you see yourself serving?" What you do for them comes next. In moving forward to becoming an Able Minister, you need to have a clear vision of who it is that you want to aid, assist or benefit. Is it a particular group within society, an age group, an economic class, a physical uniqueness or handicap, a neighborhood or location, a category of existing relationship such as fellow employees, a specific gender or a combination of more than one of these definitions? As you look down the list of examples on the previous page, you will see the targeted groups shown on almost every line.

What is your heart telling you? Do you have a strong desire to help teenagers or children. Perhaps it's the parents of children. Give strong consideration to what it is that you will be doing. Would you do that for a specific grouping of people? Let's say that you want to teach praise and worship songs to people, but you are not the church choir director. A great group of people who appreciate that gifting would be senior citizen residents at a retirement center or serious teens at a youth ministry.

Perhaps you enjoy doing ladies hair. You might even be a professional hair designer and want to carry that talent into ministry. This is a guide to the group of recipients you could serve. It would likely be widows in a nursing home, but it could be children with life threatening diseases in a children's hospital. Let's suggest that you like teaching things to other people and you were good in English, grammar and writing when you were in school. Who would be candidates for your talent? Now-a-days it would be Hispanic immigrants in your town, who need to become proficient in the English language in order to seek high level employment. While you are instructing them in the English language, you use Evangelical Christian books and magazines as workbooks and lesson assignments.

This all has to do with a later subject: "Finding and connecting with your audience." Knowing who you will apply your gifts and talents towards is important right at the beginning. After you are really comfortable doing what you will be doing as your ministry service, you may discover that there are more audience groups available to you. You will need then to be careful of burnout and too much time from your life allocated to your ministry. Always be cautious of neglecting a higher priority of responsibility in your life and family.

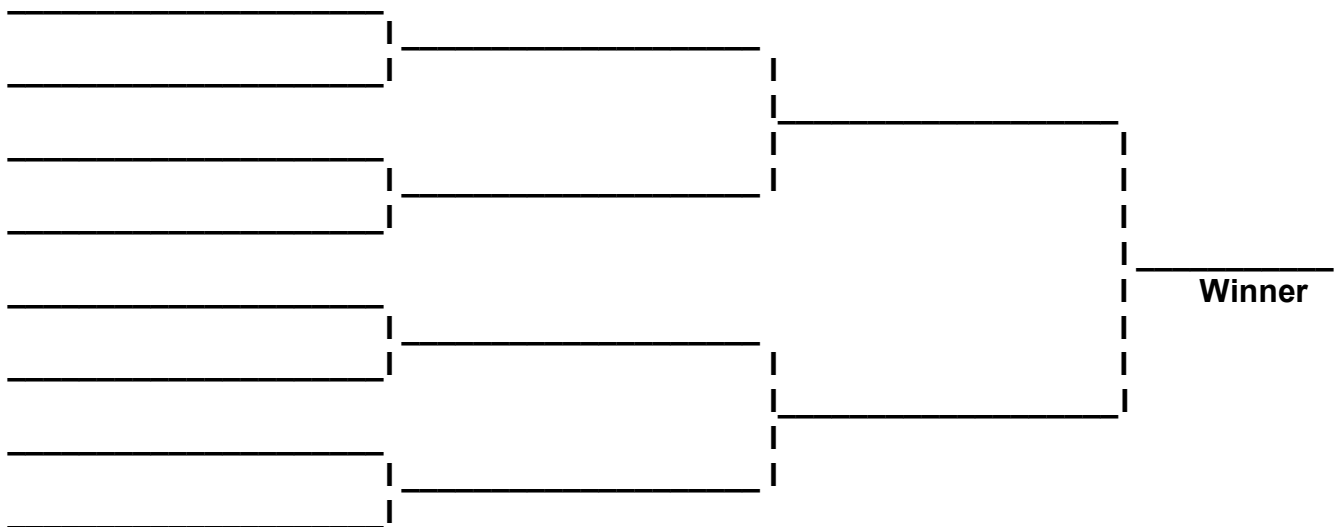
In these pages we are zooming in on the why, who, what, where, and when of your ministry. Once you are comfortable with who it is that will be the focus of your attention, you will be able to move forward through the other steps.

Defined objectives: A business plan

This is where you lay out exactly what you are going to do. Decide what you have a talent or gifting or training in and that you enjoy doing. It's not going to be fulfilling for you to decide to do something for other people just because you know how to do that. You may even do it in an employment situation. That doesn't mean you are happy doing it. Don't add more time to your unhappy hours each week.

What is it that you really enjoy doing for other people, even if you don't get paid for doing it? There may be several things which come to your mind. That's when you employ the tournament system to help you make a quality selection. Here is my rough chart to help you decide. You can also do this at a restaurant when you can't decide what meal to order.

Tournament of Choices



This is like a tennis tournament. You pencil in your eight beginning ideas or serving tasks in the left column. From each two in that list, decide which one attracts you or appeals to you the most. Go down the list and make that decision four times. Each time, write in the winner on the line in the second column. Now eight ideas have been reduced to your preferred four.

The objective is to run a play-off to discover the winner. From the top two choices in the second column, pick the one which appeals to you more. Write that choice on the line in the third column. Repeat that with the second pair of choices in the second column. Write your preference in each case on the line in the third column. Now you have two things you would like to do for others. One more play-off. Between those last two choices, decide which service would bring more fulfillment in your life. That is your winner. Write that on the line marked *Winner*.

Now that you have decided what it is you are going to do as an Able Minister, what are your objectives? What do you expect should be reasonable results? Will your subjects be saved from evil and sin? Will they receive healing in their body? Will they be better individuals as they apply your teaching? Will they have their home repaired so they can enjoy life without insecurity? Will they experience another day of enjoyment on earth? You need to have an expectation of the results of your efforts.

Is anyone else doing this?

In the business world this question would focus on the competition, but that's not what this is about. There are three reasons for this question in the process. First is a matter of example or training. If there is someone else in your town who is doing this, perhaps you could learn from what they do and any systems they have developed. I would suggest you attempt to contact that person to see if they would give you any advice or pointers you should know before beginning. This could lead to some mentoring which would be worth an investment of value. Offer to have lunch with that person or invite them to your home for dinner. Go out of your way and pay whatever expense there might be. Never allow the teacher to pay the bill.

This matter of training and advice is another reason for you to be connected to an oversight organization or board. It is healthy for a man or woman in ministry to have someone or a group of persons to get advice from or to bounce ideas off of as you progress toward higher responsibilities. Because the evil one lurks around in circumstances and situations to destroy you and your work, it is wise to have an experienced minister or a board of loyal encouragers to advise you and to give a good report on your behalf.

The second reason for identifying those other people doing what you would like to do is about team work. Often, the best way to begin a new task or a more secure way to launch a new endeavor is to become a helper or an apprentice to that other person for a season. Consider strongly the idea of volunteering your services to someone else for a specific period of time, in order to learn as much as possible about this particular ministry before you go on your own. In exchange, you will be a laborer in their vineyard, you will help them, even doing mundane chores. They might also have you replace them for a few days or weeks of vacation, if you establish a good working relationship. Keep in mind an old saying: "Your reputation will make a way for you."

This reminds me of my early beginning in ministry, before I had completed my training. I volunteered to team up with a prison evangelist to accompany him every Sunday for months. I carried books and supplies. I helped drive the van to the prison. I took part of the counseling load with prisoners after the service every week. Occasionally, I would preach the message for the men in the chapel instead of the minister I was with. It was great experience at ministering on deep personal subjects to strangers. So I recommend this teaming concept as a great way to gain experience while someone else can cover your mistakes.

A final reason to consider teaming with someone who already does this service has to do with equipment and supplies. Things cost money, but are necessary to perform this task. That might be a sound system, a digital projector, wireless microphones, a computer, song books, Bibles and more. Its possible that you might have to borrow some of these things to get started. Who else would have what you need besides a person already doing these things. It would not be unusual that the experienced person might sell you some of their tools and supplies, especially if they were well used and that person wanted some new stuff. Better yet: if you establish a servant relationship, what you need might just be given to you. Praise the Lord.

Location: Where will I do this?

Are you going to be in need of a commercial location, a meeting space or an office space in which to conduct your activities? Many Able Minister activities are done in homes, churches or in other establishments, such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools. There are often ministry purposes that are done in a public venue, such as a hotel meeting room, a restaurant side room, or a community club house. If you are going to teach a class, you will need a classroom large enough.

The leading question is: “can it be in a church building or should the event be in a neutral location.” If your target audience includes members of other churches, it is wise to host the function in a public meeting room. Most meeting rooms will require a fee, either for rental or for janitorial and security. Here are some common locations for you to look into in your hometown.

City or county owned meeting halls are often run by the parks or recreation department. I remember a decade ago I ministered a number of times at a young church beginning in a town in up-state New York. The mayor rented the city court room on the first floor of their city hall to the pastor. That was interesting to preach from behind the judge’s rostrum. Many cities and counties offer community buildings or municipal auditoriums, some located at fair grounds.

Another source of space is your local public library. They usually have some noise restrictions, but offer the lowest rental rate. Public schools in most towns allow the community to use classrooms and auditoriums for religious activities. Some of your Able Minister activity may not be considered religious activity, which could be to your benefit in securing a space.

Then there are civic clubs and fraternal organizations like the Masonic hall and the Shriner’s club, ethnic social clubs and labor union halls. I’ve held large gatherings here in my home town in the Letter Carrier’s Union Hall. Don’t forget your friendly volunteer fire department. Most city fire houses don’t have meeting rooms anymore, but volunteer fire companies have gathering places right in their building. The location of the church I began in Venice, Florida, years ago held it’s regular weekly services in the meeting hall of the volunteer fire department.

You will find in rural locations, a well built barn makes a great location for less formal events and activities. I remember some years back meeting in barns in Maine and New York. In New Brunswick, meetings were held in the assembly area of a mobile home manufacturer. Here is an opportunity for your imagination to be put to work.

I have experience at holding meetings and classes in dance halls, garden clubs, mansions of the Historic Society, club houses in mobile home parks and condominium complexes, funeral homes, and even some businesses have meeting rooms available. Most life insurance companies and many larger real estate brokers have sales meeting rooms large enough to seat 100 to 200 people. Your local Board of Realtors also has a good sized hall, as well as the Chamber of Commerce.

Having said all of that, keep in mind that ministry today is very effective when done at common everyday locations, just like you find recorded in the Gospels during Jesus’ ministry on earth. The target audience we discussed earlier will point you in their direction and may even provide the location themselves. Don’t be afraid to ask beneficiaries of your service to arrange for the location.

Function frequency: How often can you do this?

The discipline of regularity will add to your effectiveness. If you are teaching or coaching people, there must be assignments and accountability for homework. This should be on a weekly cycle. If you are providing a free service to people, you may want to establish a once a month discipline in order to provide the service to more people. Whatever it is, please stay on the schedule and demonstrate dependability.

If your ministry is one-on-one or in small groups, you may wish to calendar multiple occasions for the same ministry in the same month, but toward a different audience. Doing hair or nails or something like that, monthly is adequate. Therefore you will be able to repeat that activity often, but not for the same person. You might do something twice a week, but any one recipient may only see you once a month.

If you are coaching or mentoring, consider doing that in small groups, thereby expanding your influence while taking no more of your personal time. Group coaching is a locker room experience for those on your team and everyone gains from the benefit of hearing the answers given to each of the others on the team. In the counseling profession, this is called a process group. Everyone contributes to the process.

Some Able Minister's services to the Body of Christ are on a personal one-on-one basis and scheduled at the availability of the recipient. *You* must value your time if *they* are ever going to value your time. Never ask for a suggestion from the audience or recipient. Always offer a choice of two dates or times, which you have already determined you can handle. Those kinds of contributions from the recipients should always be "either – or" questions, not an abstract answer.

Set a calendar of expectation in your communications with those whom you are serving. Let them know what to expect and when there will likely be exceptions. Stay away from sudden attacks of urgency, when you expect your targeted audience to spring forth for activity or swiftly adjust their plans to meet your changed availability. A mailing list or a regular email reminder or encouraging message will serve to keep people alerted to upcoming events and future specials or changes.

Now is the time for you to consider a substitute or a fill-in while you engage in something more important in your life, or take some vacation time. When you set up a schedule, look at your own time load, examining yourself and your energy level. If you are a low energy person, do not over extend yourself by doing too many activities in a short period of time. If you are going to repeat that cycle in another week or month, your body will begin to resent your heart of compassion.

Your substitute should be available fairly early in the ministry for training and confidence building. They need to become confident that they can do what you do and you need to become confident in them to fill your vacancy when you take leave. Your function frequency will dictate how often you will need a substitute. Be careful of getting burned out or discouraged, because you will develop a bad attitude. Test for signs of a bad attitude and if that happens, call in the substitute for a few weeks.

What special skills or training do you need?

If you have used the choices tournament and decided to be a short term medical missionary, you probably need medical training. Likewise, if you and your three friends are going to form a quartette to accompany an evangelist to camp meetings, you will need to practice your music. If you are presenting interpretive dance: take some lessons. This is to say that sensing an urging from the Holy Spirit to get moving toward serving someone with a special interest found within you, doesn't eliminate the need to perfect that skill; even take some lessons.

We've already talked about receiving coaching from someone else who is doing or has done what you want to do. Now you must address two levels of this question. The first is that there may be an ingredient within your overall mission that you need to be trained in. That may not be the primary activity you are going to offer.

For example: you want to put on puppet shows for children, which will have a training message for them. Not only do you have a need to be proficient at handling puppets, but you need to design and print some brochures describing the benefits of having you come to do this. That is a promotional effort but it is very necessary and you can do that at home. However, you may need to buy some computer software to layout your brochures and fliers, and learn how to use that program.

This is the training part. There is a lot of self-training available on a huge stack of subjects. Learning how to put on Power Point presentations to learning all about home schooling are available in books and on the Internet. There are classes at your local community college and by correspondence. There are courses found in magazines which relate to your activity; even articles that would be valuable to absorb. Consider subscribing to a magazine that focuses on things related to what you want to do. But most of all, the Bible tells us to study yourself approved to do the work to which you have been called. Do not launch into something you know little about, hoping that the details will somehow work out all right.

The second level of this subject has to do with a gift or talent you already have. Perhaps it's something that comes naturally to you, like singing. It might be something you've done before or have some experience at in a church or back when you were in school. This is the perfecting of those skills. The saying: "practice makes perfect" is a good pointer. Raise your skill level of what you purpose to do, that you may do it with honor to Christ. You are His representative or ambassador, coming to your audience in His name. Be the best you can be, even though you will get better with experience.

What I'm saying isn't meant to hold you off until you're ready for Carnegie Hall, but I am encouraging you to practice what you do at home or with a small audience of friends before going out to strangers. If you're going to do hair cuts, do some practice hair cuts on the grandkids before you head over to the nursing home. If you are going to read to a blind person, try practicing reading orally at home with a friend who will critique how you sound and pronounce words. If you have a hard to understand regional dialect that makes listening to you difficult, you must slow down and practice reading out loud for a time. "Practice makes perfect" and you can perfect your activity before your first appointment.

You will have much greater self confidence if you will polish your preparedness. Have fun doing what you want to do.

Making contact with helpful people

So, you think you are going to do this alone? Your prospects for succeeding are greater if you are a team and not just an all-star. It's true that you may be the greatest at what you do or are about to do, but it's not necessary that you perform every task associated with this Able Ministry. You could use some help. Teamwork is far more productive and it also lightens your load when you have many opportunities to apply your ministry.

It's not just a matter of driving the van or carrying in the equipment. Help in your one-person ministry can be in the area of promotion, preparation, props making, booking your engagement, handling the finances, operating the display table, scheduling travel and making travel arrangements and a lot of other administration.

Consider that when the Lord fed the five thousand, overlooking the Sea of Galilee, He certainly did that miracle Himself. He didn't need any help. What about the boy and his lunch? Wasn't he part of the event and didn't he play a significant role? After the baskets had been filled with enough for the entire crowd, how was He to get the bread and fish to each of those families sitting on the blankets? Perhaps He could have thrown it at them, or called for angels to fly over and drop it on them. Jesus Himself used a team of disciples to walk around with the baskets and deliver the bread and fish. When lunch was over, they had to walk around the entire grounds picking up the scraps and leftovers. So much for one-man events.

There are two categories of helpful people you ought to be ready to include in your ministry. The first kind are able assistants. They are the helpers I spoke of just above. They fill in all of your weaknesses and short-comings. They do indeed drive the van and carry in the equipment, but they also do every administrative function you do not have time for or the expertise to do effectively and efficiently. They are also confidants, who will keep you informed of things you need to know about your audience, your facilities, your travel, the circumstances around you, and any emergency that may arise.

They often become long time friends and supporters of your ministry. In the early days, they will be volunteers. Later, as the ministry grows, they may be part of a paid staff. What one needs to realize when they are just beginning is this: If you do not see that staff at your side when you have no audience and no money, you more than likely will not achieve a great manifested result over the years all by yourself.

The second category of helpful people is the one or few who you mentor into doing what you do. It is a magnificent complement to assist one's student to become greater than his teacher. This much smaller group of helpful people may initially be just one person who you can trust. That person prays with you and goes with you when you do what you do. They watch you do it often, even jumping in to lend a hand when needed. That is the person you would entrust your ministry schedule to, if you were unable to get to a certain appointment on the calendar for any reason.

Eventually that person can substitute for you while you are on a vacation or a sabbatical. I once was such a person to a well known traveling minister. I had heard his messages so many times that on a number of occasions he was late in arriving and I went right on with the meeting without the audience being aware that any of the plan was being changed. That will be a very important person in your ministry.

What tools do I need?

Don't forget your tool box! That may sound like a very mechanical expression, but in a diverse ministry as we are addressing here, a well equipped tool box, car, van or brief case is probably going to be important. As I look at the list of Able Minister descriptions written earlier, I see a need to invest in or acquire some specific tools with which to perform one's ministry.

Begin by thinking about or envisioning every minute of what you are planning on doing. What are you holding? What do you take with you? What do you use at home to prepare for your event? Begin compiling a list of things you do not already have. The list could look something like this:

- Sound equipment
- A display table
- Projection equipment
- A large projector screen
- Printing equipment
- A white board and markers
- Handout materials
- Communion Service
- A wireless microphone
- A handcart to roll your supplies into the meeting location
- Special clothing or costumes
- Puppets
- A computer
- A color inkjet printer
- An answering machine
- A copier
- Folding chairs

Now, let some people know about your needs list. Have your list printed on a card or sheet of paper, with instructions for contacting you. Begin to carry copies of the list with you at all times. Make arrangements with an existing ministry that is able to issue income tax deductible receipts for donations, if you do not have that arrangement in place. You are now ready to solicit help for your ministry through the donating of any of these items or the funds to purchase them.

Many people you know would be glad to give you an early boost into an out-reach function if they were asked. A tools list like this gives everyone a financial spread to choose from without prices staring at them. Some people may have an item or two used in their home or office. Many of those reading this do not like the idea of asking people, their friends, for money. So instead, you are asking for tools.

Think of yourself as a candidate for some office. You are out campaigning: asking people for their vote. It is a very common expression to say: "I'm asking for your support today." I ran for public office a number of years ago and it was necessary for me to do that in order to become successful. In this case you are asking friends, neighbors, relatives, fellow church members, for their support. When they ask "how?" just give them a copy of your tools list, with instructions and an invitation to donate printed right on the list. It's not complicated and can be a great way to get you started on a low budget.

What to do before you minister your activity

It really doesn't matter whether you are about to sing for a group, recite a poem you wrote, repair someone's dress, patch their roof, or take an elderly man to his doctor's appointment, you are about to be Jesus' agent. When you go out to do your Able Minister activity, you must present yourself as a royal diplomat, even if you are dressed in overalls. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the first born of many. You are part of the many. How would Christ want His representative to act, smell like, talk like and sound like?

It's just possible that you don't have that special agent look and behavior in plain view out on your job all day. If then you have left that scene and are about to greet some people in the name of Jesus, you will need an attitude adjustment before you leave the house. The best attitude adjustment is 15 to 30 minutes or more in prayer. Talking with the Lord will help leave the worldly things of the day behind and allow you to put on your spiritual man. If your Able Minister's activity is going to be received as from God to them, you must discharge your Adam One nature and put on the mind of Christ before you do the work of your ministry.

We are not talking about a last minute rehearsal of a song or a speech, but rather a time to draw closer to the One who sends you. If you expect to receive from the Lord in prayer and meditation, don't be surprised if He reveals something about your audience, a primary focus of attention, even an urging to do something different this time. In other words, I'm urging you to have a meeting with your heavenly coach for a while in order to receive His focus for this coming event. Always go prayed up.

I've had much personal experience with the Holy Spirit revealing to me how to fix something or what to tell someone or even directions on how to get to their house. But if you are going to receive such valuable information, you must be on His frequency. You have to move from the noise of the workplace to the signal frequency of spiritual communication if you are going to be supernaturally prepared for your ministry activity. So get prepared, before you tell someone you are sent by the Lord. Get prepared physically, mentally, and spiritually.

This is not difficult. Play Christian music in the bathroom while you are getting yourself ready physically. Sing praise to the Lord in the car or pickup truck on your way to your destination. Give some of your testimony to a passenger in your vehicle who might be riding along.

Then begin to concentrate on what you believe should happen as a result of your ministry. Begin to see activity at this event. Envision how you are going to do certain things and what response you expect. When something significant happens during your appointment or as a result of you being there, do not be surprised. You should be anticipating good to come from every effort. Just because no person reports some significant good happening, doesn't mean it didn't happen. Sometimes good news travels slowly.

Picture this. If the Secretary of State of the United States is about to depart Washington, DC, for a formal meeting with people in a foreign country, he would have one final visit or conversation with the President before his flight takes off. That is what you should always do. Have one final visit with the Lord for last minute instructions before departing to your appointment. You will be absolutely amazed.

Create the right environment

In many cases, you will need to set the tone of the appointment when you arrive. If you are part of a meeting, there is a need for prayer and Godly, not guttural, conversation. If you are there to help someone, do something manual for them, then greet them in the name of the Lord and tell them a little of your testimony. You might tell them why you are doing this free of charge. The simple matter is, the recipient of your ministry must be aware of your *special agent* status; that this is not just another salesman, roof repair or taxi service.

If your ministry is in the form of a meeting in a home, take control of the environment. Ask the host to eliminate distractions so the Holy Spirit can get everyone's attention. When you walk in the room, ask for the television to be turned off or turn it off yourself. The god of television needs to be lowered in the average American household. Begin with that one. You cannot carry on a meaningful conversation competing with the low level noise on the TV.

Making sure that the dog or cat isn't going to run through the room or begin barking during the audible prayer is extremely important. If there are small children in the home, set the time of the get-together after the child is in bed. Ask if they can hold their phone calls until you have finished and by all means, do not let your own cell phone ring. Move the canary cage to another room or cover the cage. I've been told to shut off the bubbles in the fish aquarium, but I have yet to do that.

Quiet distractions can be tolerated if they are to the backs of your audience. Never sit with your back to a visual distraction such as an aquarium or window with activities going on outside. Those faces looking at you are attracted to the moving objects. These things may sound even humorous, but they are very serious issues in achieving your intended purpose for the appointment or evening.

Now for what you look like. If you are an Ambassador, then make sure you don't look like the town derelict. That doesn't mean that you wear a suit or long dress, but it does mean that your standard is slightly above the average dress in the room. If they don't see you as a step ahead, why should they listen to you or follow you? Your shoes should be clean and polished and your breath should be likewise. Our Godly purpose as an Able Minister is to build up another, encourage another, inspire another, give hope to another, increase the faith of another and raise their desire to be more like Jesus in their daily living. So, do you look like and act like you are mastering those things in your own life? That's what appearance and behavior communicate more loudly than your speeches.

Never sit in a low saggy sofa all slouched down. If you are with a group of people, ask for a straight back chair like a dining room chair. Sit up straight, maintain good posture and you will maintain leadership of the gathering. If you are slouched down in a beanbag chair you will communicate no credibility whatsoever.

Pray for the visit at the beginning. When a person or couple hear you pray for God to be a part of their conversation, they will be more expectant of that to happen. Pray for the home and all of the participants at the end of the gathering or appointment. It is your departing blessing and words of encouragement that they will remember until the next time.

What happens at the end of what you do?

Your departure is as important as your arrival. You should have a plan and an expectation for the end of your visit prior to your arrival. Where is your conversation, teaching, ministry or service of work leading? Anticipate assigning some homework. I know this is not college, but if you put forth 100% of the energy and the recipient puts forth 0% of the energy, you will receive all of the benefit and they will receive none. If you are doing one-on-one coaching, there is assigned work to be done before you meet again. If you are leading a home group gathering, there should be a written set of tasks or behaviors to be practiced or accomplished before the next gathering.

Perhaps you will recommend they read a certain book or listen to a tape of yours or your pastor, an evangelist or other teacher. The assignment, in the form of a pointed endorsement, might be to go see a particular movie which has a theme befitting the topic or need within that person's life. I remember receiving some counsel from a top level Christian counselor a number of years ago and she told me to go see a particular movie before we met again. She even had an advertisement of that movie cut out of the paper, which pointed me to the correct theater. (Notice she was prepared for the end of my visit.) She told me as we parted, to look for the principles in the movie that we had just discussed.

Assignments are often stated to have the listener put into practice some of what was communicated during your get-together. Then say: "We will discuss what happened when you did this, as soon as we meet again." That's an assignment.

Then always pray for people as you depart. Don't ever say: "I'll pray for you in church on Sunday." If they don't hear *their* name in the prayer they hear *you* speak, they will never be sure that you ever did what you said you would do. Do it now. By the way: Apply that to telephone conversations also. If you tell someone you will pray for them, they need to hear you pray for them.

Get invited back

Do you think effective ministry is a one-time event? Not at all. Effective ministry is usually a progressive thing. Many people can do a once-on-the-stage performance, but will their genuineness and living testimony become an influence in another person's life? When you volunteer to serve someone by providing for some need they have, look for a follow-up event to underscore or reinforce your message of doing for others in the name of the Lord.

Some things on our defined list of Able Ministries are repetitive activities, that cycle on a regular weekly or monthly schedule. That means there is an automatic returning. In one-time events, do not leave the presence of your host without asking when you could get together again.

A second thing you ought to ask for is the name and number of another person who they believe could benefit from inviting you over. Whatever your ministry is, it needs to be told about and passed on. An introduction by your host to another person they know, is a great way to get invited back to the first location again. How? By you reporting back to the first person what happened at the second event which they introduced you to. Got it? Go to the second location. Minister there. Then report back to the first location host with a positive testimony and a thank you. Open that conversation for an invitation back again.

Promotion of your ministry

It just isn't going to happen if you never tell anyone that you are available. Telling other people what you do, your talent and training, the benefit they would receive from inviting you, is all very necessary to becoming effective and influential in ministry. Many Christians are shy to mention their work and the results others have enjoyed from receiving from them. They say that is "blowing your own horn" and self-proclaiming. That is not the case. If you, the talented one, keep it a secret, it certainly will be a secret.

Even Jesus said: "go and tell others" twice in Matthew 28:7-10. In Mark 5:19 Jesus said: "Go home and tell others." Many other places we find "tell those who have been invited" and "proclaim it from the housetops." The matter of getting out the news has always been a required function of those who bring *the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. If it were not vitally important to tell others about what's available, then all of those sanctified announcements proclaimed in every church in the land, by every method known to man, would be unnecessary.

There are now, in the Body of Christ, entire ministries that do nothing but announce, promote and proclaim the ministry of other people. Our western society doesn't respond very much to simple little notes on plain white paper. We have been conditioned to equate the value of an event with the cost of the announcement. If you send an email paragraph of an event, it will be considered a little deal. If you prepare a glossy color brochure and mail it with an endorsement letter from a popular television personality, in a stamped envelope, it will get opened most of the time. If you buy a full page color ad in a glossy national magazine, it will get notice because it looks like a big deal.

So, back to how do you get out your announcement. Begin within your budgetary capacity. No matter what it is, there must be something. Here are some effective things to do today.

Make a brochure

In this day and age you can produce a very attractive informative color tri-fold brochure yourself, if you have a home computer and an inkjet printer. You can find many artistic brochure paper stocks at your office supply store or at paper products companies on the Internet. There is special software for designing and formatting the front and back sides of brochures, but most word processor programs can do that with a little more skill required. Tell your story, what will happen, the benefits of participation and how to reach you, on the panels of the brochure. Then print them in small quantities at home as you use them. No major inventory expense. Hand one of these to the person you are talking with, every time, all the time. Mail them to your targeted people and group leaders.

Get Letters of Endorsement

Equip yourself with as many credible endorsements as possible. Ask your pastor and any other ministers who know you to write a letter of endorsement of you on their letterhead. When you receive those, make identical color copies of those letters. Use them when discussing an engagement. Many pastoral leaders will not invite a stranger into their sphere of influence unless they can get a positive endorsement from someone they respect.

Have a website made

Connected with every form of printed or spoken information piece about your ministry should be a website which tells the whole story. You can save mega-bucks in advertising by buying very small ads in programs, fliers, menus at restaurants, mailings, and publications, if you clearly point the reader to your website. A well designed website will do all of the informing, present all of the details and benefits, and provide an electronic way for the reader to communicate with you. Your website is worth dozens of pages of printed paper. And it can be changed on short notice, without having to throw away lots of printed materials.

Finding and connecting with your audience

Once you have completed your *Tournament of Choices* and have identified your ministry and your audience, locating and connecting with those people is the next step. Back on page 6, I addressed the question of who are the people you wish to serve. Now, where are they? Once you identify where they are, your promotional efforts on the previous page will become more clearly defined.

If you have a heart for the elderly, there are many ways of identifying elderly. Some are at home and others reside in professional facilities. Those who are in facilities can be located by developing a relationship with the management of the facility. Senior friendship centers, meals on wheels, churches and doctors offices are all great sources of names and numbers of senior citizens.

Likewise, if you are directed toward children, go where the children already congregate and explain your program to their leadership. If you have a talent that can be presented at group meetings such as women's clubs or men's organizations, seek to find a member who will introduce you to the leadership of such an organization. In some cases you may wish to run an inquiry classified ad for certain people, such as home-schoolers, shut-ins or pet owners. Ask all of your friends to help you locate those who you would like to connect with.

Then comes the connecting part. If you are preparing for a group ministry, you must step forward to arrange a conversation or meeting with the group leader. If you are going to serve on a one-on-one ministry, you have to pick up the phone and call them. They need to invite you over for a visit. You can't just show up one evening and not expect resistance.

The connecting part is a continual ingredient, as you increase their trust in you and what you provide. The success of personal ministry is largely dependent upon the recipient's level of trust in you. Developing trust through honesty and dependability, expressing a genuine empathy and compassion for those folks, will significantly raise your influence in their lives.

After you have served those people or that audience several times, ask for an introduction to someone else, a friend in need, or another group where you can expand your ministry influence. If you have developed your relationship, trust level, and demonstrated reliability and honesty, your ministry will begin to spread. Do not expect God to do all the work. These are the ingredients in the recipe for a successful ministry. God is looking for those who will bring an enthusiasm for serving to a level where it could be considered professional. It certainly can be first class; even developing into a full time ministry or career.

Financial needs

Your financial requirements to begin as an Able Minister are not large. You are not going to be buying television time or investing in real estate, which are the two largest demands on ministry cash flow. Your need will initially be for supplies and tools for the execution of your activity. Consider your list of tools and equipment from page 13. At this writing in 2003, an initial start up investment of \$1,000 should go a long way toward making you active. Buy used equipment and use older concept solutions to certain things at the beginning. Don't forget your needs list. Don't even think of borrowing money to do work for the Lord. He does not want you going into consumer debt to get His message of love and care to other people.

Your larger expense potential will be for administrative costs, such as a computer, paper, copier, storage, postage, and telephone. Travel can also be a significant expense and should be born by the recipient of your ministry. When you discuss an invitation to go somewhere out of town, never finish the conversation without discussing the travel and lodging expenses. Who is to pay for those things and when does it get paid? If you are beginning at zero, travel mileage and lodging should be advanced by the receiving group. You can't wait until you have gone there and finished your ministry to pay for the tickets or the gasoline.

There may be a friend or relative who will contribute to your ministry right at the beginning, but who won't be asked to continue the process once you are in operation. Let me go back to that consumer debt topic. An amount of money given to you to start your ministry should not be given as a loan. If that friend cannot afford to be without the funds, they should keep the money. That takes us to the next topic.

Do you need a sponsor?

A sponsor is not a committed supporter who is funding your ministry at a certain level of pledge. A sponsor is usually a commercial business that is paying you or is paying for specifically defined expenses, in exchange for credits on your printed handouts or mention on your website and radio broadcast. A commercial sponsor is making an exchange, although it may not be an equitable exchange. Consider inviting Christian business owners you know, to invest in something you need in exchange for their name being listed on handout materials and your website.

Be creative in how you give that business or other ministry some exposure. You could paint their logo on the front of your guitar. You could print on the back of paper handout materials: "This seminar sponsored by Complete Deliverance Septic Company" along with their address, phone and web address. You could offer them a display table at the back of a meeting room for them to man a product display. Mailings are many times paid for by a Christian business, which is also responsible for the actual mailing. They print it, stamp it and mail it, all for a small ad inside or outside of the mailing piece.

This method of covering the costs of moving forward in ministry is becoming more popular as the cost of operating ministries rises rapidly. Also, many businesses are looking for creative ways of getting their name in front of pre-selected audiences.

Things to sell

Financial advisors will tell you: “If you are in need of cash, sell something.” You might initially think of something you have in your home that you could do without. That’s not a bad idea, but it’s not what this is about. Most ministries today sell things as an on-going revenue producing source. It’s not about selling an asset, or even a liability that you’d like to get rid of. Strongly consider selling things on this list.

Printed materials

The most common items ministries sell on a display table or by mail are books, tracts, message notes, and workbooks on specific subjects. Most of the books are written by other authors. If you are a teaching ministry, make outlines of your lessons and print booklets or workbooks of them. Consider writing small books like this one, which will contain a specific teaching your audience has an interest in. Always take a supply of these materials with you to any group activity. An assistant can operate the display table for sales before and after your ministry.

Audiocassettes and CDs

If you have a speaking ministry, such as a teacher or an evangelist, record all of your messages. Select from your collection after a period of time, a set of tapes on the same subject and assemble them in vinyl tape packs of two, four, six or eight. The vinyl pack has a place for a colorful insert in the front to make an attractive presentation. Tape sets on special topics sell better than singles. You probably won’t offer your own CDs unless you have access to a CD burner.

However, just as you may sell books written by your favorite Christian author, you may also offer CDs by your favorite vocal or instrumental artist. Offer a selection of these music CDs on your table and increase your inventory selection. Purchase tapes and CDs from other ministries at a bulk wholesale rate and promote them for a retail price. If you have a close relationship with a ministry that produces tapes and CDs, they may let you have a small quantity on consignment.

Videotapes

Some Able Ministers will have a ministry that is particularly visual, like dramatics, mime, dance, singing, concert piano, praise and worship, etc. These ministries lend themselves to being video taped. If you decide to do that, do it with a couple of decent video cameras and a mixer. Don’t attempt to create a product for sale using a consumer camcorder. Video tapes do however, offer the audience a way of remembering your ministry and benefiting from it again. It also reminds them to reconnect with you or to support you.

Website commerce

This last category is new in the 21st Century and many ministries are expanding their on-going revenue through the promotion of products and services on their website. Not only are these items in the ministry’s inventory, such as those things listed above, but to a large extent they are everyday consumable products and services actually sold through a commercial website. If you offer your own products, such as books, tapes, study materials, manuals, music, etc. you will need a shopping cart system on your website and have a credit card merchant account through which to receive the money. That’s how e-commerce works.

The other method coming on strong in the non-profit arena is an affinity relationship with a reputable sales organization that does all of the web presentation, shopping cart merchant account arrangement, inventory warehousing, shipping, sales tax accounting and remitting for you. A supporter of your ministry accesses your website and from there they link to the ecommerce site for their shopping experience. At the end of the month, that vendor pays your ministry a percentage or a commission on all of the merchandise purchased and shipped to your friends and supporters. That is a way to have a full store and not be directly involved yourself.

Should you accept honorariums or offerings?

Honorariums are grants given to you as a result of ministry you completed. It is a method of receiving compensation or honor for your gifting. Offerings are one-time blessings in connection with ministry and are also regular monthly support from those who love you or have received ministry from you. In either case, the answer is definitely yes. These are Biblical methods of compensation and family support of people in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several times in the Bible the Apostle Paul wrote to places he was traveling to or to home churches he regularly visited, that they should receive the offering ahead of his arrival, so as not to distract from the work of the ministry. He wrote to the young Apostle Timothy, in 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." The intent is clear, that it is Biblical to receive twice what a secular person would be paid doing the same thing.

How do you know if you are succeeding?

This is a question even people in business often misunderstand. Whether you are succeeding or not should not be a surprise when you get to the end of the day, week or month. It should not even be a relative or situational answer. As you set up your ministry activities, you should define in advance what the criteria for succeeding is and how to measure it. You and your advisors may decide that certain responses should occur as you are beginning in ministry, but those responses should increase as you become more proficient.

You may establish the measurement as an attendance count, or a financial count. It might be display table revenue or the percentage of engagements where you are receiving a second invitation to return. If you are operating in a one-on-one basis, success may be the combination of regularly scheduled return visits, plus new invitations calendared in a month. These measurements have to do with growth, expansion and paying the bills.

Many ministers will however, consider their success based on whether their personal ministry has impact and results. Being successful to these ministers is in the answer to questions such as: "Did anyone accept Jesus as their Lord today?" "Was anyone healed of a serious disease when I prayed and laid hands on them?" "Were any faltering marriages restored as a result of my ministry this week?" "Did any kids commit to abstinence after the youth meeting?" "Did anyone lay their cigarettes on the alter after my invitation tonight?" "Have any recipients of my sessions stopped drinking or doing drugs as a result of our ministry?" The criteria for measuring your own success is for you to decide, but it should be decided in advance.

Can you train someone else to do this?

Once you become proficient at doing the thing you are inspired to do, it should be one of your objectives in ministry to duplicate yourself. The pattern is clear in the New Testament, that Jesus coached the twelve in close proximity, in order that they would be able to take the good news of the Gospel in diverse geographic directions after He was no longer with them. He sent them out two-by-two with instructions and told them to gather back at the end of the day for a debriefing and more instructions.

Then we see in the First Century, that duplicating principle continuing. Each of the original disciples brought younger men with them to train and equip to go forth to expand the influence of Christ. There were no seminaries, although Saul, after his Damascus Road experience spent a long time at the training classes of the leaders of the church at Antioch. Every ministry activity that has value should be duplicated. Your assistants should become candidates for your coaching and releasing into their own ministry.

The National Conservative Christian Church is ready to encourage each of them and to assist them in their training and their development as mighty agents of God. You can perform a significant role in someone else's life, by being a mentor on location, meeting with them for the specific intention of passing your anointing on to others.

Will this lead to some other ministry activity?

The Word tells us that if we are faithful in a little thing, greater will be the responsibilities and opportunities. Be faithful to your God and to those who receive from you and to those who support you. That faithfulness will create a reputation for you and that reputation will make a way for you. Don't get ready to leave before you get started, but be aware that growth is personal as well as corporate. By that I mean that not only do you anticipate that your ministry and your team will expand and increase it's effectiveness and influence, but you as a man or woman of God will also grow in your capacity to do what the Lord requires of you.

Recorded in John 14:12, Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father." If you are just beginning, let me encourage you to pursue excellence in all that you do. The result will be that the Lord will be able to count on you for greater responsibilities and more significant ministry activity. That means change will occur over the years.

The Holy Spirit is constantly looking for those who will accept the calling from God, to go and be effective for the Kingdom of God. Once you are identified by Him as that good and faithful servant, He no doubt will have a greater assignment for you in the future. That means that you will not always be doing what you are doing today. That will change as you change personally. Greater ministry never occurs until He sees a greater person in you. Do not miss the excitement of your own personal growth and the opportunities for more significant influence in the lives of many others.

Be blessed. I look forward to getting to know you through the National Conservative Christian Church. I do hope I can be of some assistance and encouragement to you.

D.W.S.