

## **Keep Your Hand On The Plow**

Every Christian is called to be God's servant and should strive to serve with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. In Luke 9:62, Jesus said, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* Jesus is telling us not to look back at the world and our old way of life but to keep looking to God for all things. He seems to be speaking mainly to those in ministry, however, it applies equally to all believers. Even though everyone is not called into ministry, all believers are called to be servants for life. The Bible does not mention part-time Christians, part-time service or early retirement for anyone. Once a person accepts God's call into ministry, he becomes God's servant for life and should continue in service for as long as he or she is able. Once we have put our hand to the plow, we should not look back otherwise we will drift off the path God has chosen for us. If we long for what we have left behind, we will soon become worldly and backslide to become unfit for service in the kingdom of God. Our focus must always be on God and how to serve Him better.

### **Going into ministry**

Jesus warned those who wanted to follow Him that He had no place to lay his head and if anyone wanted to follow Him then they must leave their old life behind (Luke 9:57-62). Elisha is a perfect example of the attitude needed by a person accepting God's call into ministry. In 1 Kings 19:19-21, we are told that Elijah anointed Elisha to succeed him as prophet. At the time, Elisha was plowing with his oxen. After Elijah anointed him, he went home to say goodbye to his family. He then slaughtered his oxen and burned his plowing equipment to cook the meat as a feast for the people. *Then*, after burning his bridges, he set out to follow Elijah and become his attendant. Elisha knew he was going into ministry for life so he completely cut himself off from his old way of life; he left family, friends, cattle and land to serve the Lord. Jesus said, *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). Elisha denied himself all things and completely relied upon God.

### **Remaining faithful to the call**

Not all who go into ministry remain faithful. For example, Balaam loved the world more than he loved God and he became wicked (2 Pet. 2:15). Initially, going into ministry may not be such a hard thing to do but it can become very testing. It seems that when we first go into ministry, and also when we first get saved, we go through a honeymoon period with the Lord. We strongly sense the Lord's presence and everything goes very well (I floated on clouds for ages). However, after a while the Lord withdraws those feelings somewhat and the honeymoon ends, so to speak, because God wants us to live by faith, not feelings.

### **Continuing in faith**

Some years ago, I quit work and went into full time service for the Lord. In Mark 10:29-30 Jesus promises to provide for anyone who, like Elisha, leaves everything for Him and the Gospel. He said, *"I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."* For many years I had no trouble believing this promise but, with age, my faith has weakened at times. It is easy to trust in something that is a long way off but the real test of faith comes when we are face to face with the situation. Jesus' disciples were very confident that they would not desert Him but they soon scattered in fear when He was arrested. In the same way, my faith is being tested as I face old age.

This testing of my faith resulted in serious agitation at times and a complete lack of peace for long periods. Recently, worrying that the Lord would not provide for me, I considered getting work to stop my bank account from emptying but that thought brought an even greater lack of peace. After much prayer, I came to understand how I was sinning against God: I was seriously offending Him in two ways:

1. I had previously fully committed myself to Him but now I was considering going back into the world and removing myself from His service. Num. 30:2 came to mind and heavily convicted me. It says, "*When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.*" If I went back to work then I would be breaking my word and that would make me a liar.
2. I was calling God a liar because I was no longer trusting His promise to provide for those who had left everything for Him and the Gospel.

It's no wonder that I had no peace. God doesn't like being lied to or being called a liar so it is easy to see why He had taken my peace away. Thankfully, once I came to see that my weak faith was leading me into great error, I repented and, needless to say, the peace of God returned. There is no doubt that in the future I will waver from time to time but big mistakes leave big scars and I am not likely to forget this lesson in a hurry.

### **Finally**

When we look back, it is always easy to see our error but, the truth of the matter is, sin often creeps up and can overcome us like cancer. It starts out small but if we don't deal with it quickly then it will grow and cause us to sin. A lack of peace is a sure sign that there is sin between us and God; He always removes our peace when we sin. Sin can start out small but if it is not quickly repented of then it can soon cause big problems: A lie can utterly destroy relationships; dislike can lead to hate and even murder; a lingering look or touch can lead to lust and immorality; a covetous thought can lead to theft or jealousy or worse and our emotions can lead us into error just like my fear led to unbelief. For this reason, if we want to keep our hand on the plow and honour God then we have to keep our eyes on Jesus and deal with sin as soon as the Spirit convicts us. As soon as we lack peace we should ask God why He has taken our peace away. In this experience of mine, I was far too slow in seeking God and I suffered for it. I should have looked to Him much, much sooner. I have an article on hearing and following the Lord's voice, called *The Way Of Peace*, at <http://www.christianissues.biz/thewayofpeace.html>

(Please note that this article is about my personal walk with the Lord. I am not saying that it is wrong to be in ministry and work at the same time. Paul worked as a tent maker during his ministry.)

This article can be downloaded under the heading *Blog Articles* at <http://www.christianissues.biz/downloads.html>

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