

Serving the Lord Full-Time



What does it take?

Paul wrote these words about himself: “It pleased God, who separated me . . . and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15-16 NKJV). His example indicates that a divine call to full-time service is from God and according to His sovereign pleasure.

We may have a desire to serve the Lord full-time, and may even be encouraged by other Christians and by circumstances. However, unless we are definitely and firmly persuaded that God is calling us to give up secular employment, we should continue in it so as not to miss His mind.

Full-time service is a decision to be made in the presence of God alone after much prayer and exercise. The divine constraint should be so overwhelming that we have no choice but to serve Him full-time.

• **What is full-time service?**

Going full-time into Christian work does not put one into some special category apart from other believers; nor does it necessarily imply that one has greater devotion to Christ, greater gifts, or greater knowledge than other Christians. The Word of God knows nothing of clergy-laity dis-

tinctions, nor does it present different standards for Christians doing different things.

Whether a school teacher, a mechanic, an executive, a nurse, or a common laborer, every Christian ought to serve the Lord faithfully to his or her full capacity. The call to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God that we might prove His good and acceptable and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-3) goes out to every believer.

Further, one called to full-time service does not automatically become more faithful or have fewer trials and temptations than others. In fact, he or she may have more and greater trials. However, God’s grace is sufficient to meet all the needs of those who are serving faithfully in His will.

• **Recognizing the call**

A pattern generally found in the Scriptures as well as in present-day experience is that of busy people pursuing their occupations and serving the Lord in their spare time—lunch hours, evenings, weekends, vacations, etc. As the Lord blesses and enlarges their sphere of service, they become so engrossed in His interests that they no longer have time for secular employment.

The Holy Spirit makes it plain that He is calling them to serve full-time. This call will also be recognized by their local assemblies who then gladly extend to them the right hand of fellowship. The pattern for this is seen in the call to service of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-4)

Losing interest in one's job or studies, losing a job, or failing to gain admission to a university must not be construed as a call to full-time Christian work. Faith as to God's specific will for us must move us—not circumstances.

Look at your own life for a moment. If you are considering full-time evangelistic work, ask yourself, "How many people am I telling about Christ right now? Do I continually look for opportunities to do so? Are any being saved?"

If you desire to work full time in Bible teaching, search your own heart as to whether or not you are diligently and daily studying the Scriptures. Are you looking for opportunities to teach others the things God is teaching you? Are you teaching a Sunday school class? Are you preparing for the weekly Bible study?

If your exercise is full-time pastoral care, are you currently engrossed in helping the many weak

and discouraged saints all around you? Are you doing these things just when it's convenient, or are you consistently devoting your free time to meeting the needs of others? Are you willing to work without receiving any recognition from men?

• **Personal requirements**

God does not call unfaithful servants into more service. Instead, His Word says, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Lk. 16:10). Are you seeking to be faithful, by God's grace, to all that you are learning in His precious Word?

Are you faithfully gathering together with other believers according to God's Word (Heb. 10:25), or are you acting independently of your brethren, meeting with them only when it is convenient for you?

God's servants "must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient" (2 Tim. 2:24). They must be characterized by meekness, love and wisdom. One who would be a servant should carefully study "The Perfect Servant" as He is found in the four Gospels, and then heed His words: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29).

If the servant is young, he should “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). If older, he should still be an example to the flock according to 1 Peter 5:1-9.

• Financial support

God provides for His servants as they step out in faith, counting upon Him to supply all their needs. He does not teach them to seek a stipulated salary, either through an organization or through obtaining pledges from a number of individuals and organizations. Rather, He leads them to count upon Himself to supply all their needs according to His abundant promises. As they do so, God moves His people, either individually or collectively, to minister to their needs, according to His perfect knowledge of them. Many full-time servants can testify to God’s perfect faithfulness in this area.

• Preparation

Shortly after Paul was saved, he learned from the Lord in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-19). Our “Arabia” may take various forms, but it will always involve time alone with the Lord, getting to know Him

better through His Word and through prayer. It is not a specified time period, but a life-long process. We can count upon the Holy Spirit to teach us all things and to guide us into all truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13).

Timothy provides a good example of “on-the-job training.” As a young man, he was invited to accompany Paul in his missionary journeys (Acts 16:1-4). He served with Paul as a son with a father in the Gospel, not seeking his own things, but the things of Christ (Phil. 2:19-22). To him Paul wrote, “The things you have heard from me ... commit ... to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Learning to walk with God in the company of older ones who could teach and train him, he became fitted as a choice vessel of the Lord. If you are young in the faith, seek the company of older, faithful brothers and sisters, and learn from them. Take every opportunity to serve with them.

Is it necessary to go to a seminary or Bible school to be trained for Christian service? Although some might find this helpful for certain areas of study, there is nothing in God’s Word to indicate that one must have such training to become fitted as a servant of God. Organizations

and denominations might require such a background, but God does not.

On the other hand, God puts no premium on ignorance. He uses those whom He Himself has taught and trained through various means.

• Essentials for service

Those called to full-time service will be found abiding in Christ, the true Vine. It is only in this way that they can bring forth much fruit (Jn. 15:1-7). They must also purge themselves from the evil and iniquity which abounds in the world if they are to become vessels for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, and prepared for every good work (2 Tim. 2:21).

In God's service, our training and preparation will never end until we are home with Him in the glory.

– *Grant Steidl*