

“Show Yourself a Man”
Northside’s 3rd Annual Men’s Retreat
Silver Maple Camp, September 19-20, 2008

Three Temptations Common to Man

I. The Temptation to be Relevant

Men need to be needed. We need to feel important and respected. Often times this basic human need slips over into our ministry in the church. Often times, in the struggle to feel needed, we are tempted to feel indispensable. We are tempted to think that things cannot be done without us. Not only this, but we become self-sufficient.

God calls us to be **ambassadors of Christ**. This means that we are not the boss, we are not even the message but we are the messengers of God. We are not the protagonists in the mission of God but we are servants of the Lord of the Universe, compelled by love to share His message of reconciliation. We no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that he does not preach himself, but Jesus Christ as Lord. We are like **jars of clay**, fragile vessels that carry God’s message of hope to the world. This shows that the power of God’s Word does not come from us, but that it is God’s power working through us (2 Corinthians 4:1-12).

II. The Temptation to be Spectacular

Ministry is about sharing God’s love and Word with others. It is about serving others. However, even ministry can become a selfish act. Many times as men we face the temptation to be spectacular – we want to do great things and we want people to notice. We have been blessed with many talents and gifts. Speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul in Romans 12:3 reminds us to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but rather think of ourselves with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given us.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:11ff that God has appointed us to works of service, not to be seen, not to be congratulated, but to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of fullness of Christ.” In other words, it’s not about us! It’s not about performance but **transformation**.

We are the hands and feet of God in this world. God has chosen us to make known His will and to serve in His name. If we are truly God’s hands and feet then in some sense, we must be invisible. In all things we must point to God! We must become so much like Christ that when the people see us they do not see us as we are, but they see Christ in us.

Once we understand God's mission for us, the temptation to be spectacular will become irrelevant. Once we have learned to resist this temptation we can say with full confidence alongside Paul the words found in Romans 14:7-8: "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

III. The Temptation to be Powerful

The world tells us as men to hide our weakness. They say, "Be a man! Tough it out! When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" The temptation is to be powerful, to surround ourselves with powerful people, to always look for the advantage, for what best suits us. However, Christ calls us to a life of self-denial and obedience.

We are called to follow Christ's example illustrated in Philippians chapter 2.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! 9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus, being God Himself was not concerned with His position of power, but willingly humbled Himself to become a servant, an obedient servant. Because of His great love for us, He was willing to take on the sins of the world. With no other reason to leave heaven other than His unconditional love for His brothers and sisters, Jesus left the comforts of heaven to dwell among an imperfect humanity in order to make a new humanity.

If Christ, our Lord and Savior was not concerned about power and influence, but wholly gave Himself over to the service of His Father, ought we not do the same? As servants of Christ, we are called to **mutual ministry**. We are not doctors at the hospital who are treating the ailments of their patients. We too are sick and need the healing brought only by the blood of Christ. This is why we must accept mutual ministry, which is serving out of our brokenness. We must recognize our physical and spiritual limitations while recognizing and serving as conduits of God's grace.

Conclusion: We must give up the temptation to be relevant, to be spectacular and to be powerful and realize that it is not what we do, but what God does in us and through us. **For God to work through us, He must first work in us.** We must learn to think as God does, see what He sees and hear the hopeless cries of the lost people of our world. We will only overcome these self-centered temptations when we lose ourselves in God's abundant grace – it will no longer be about us, but about Him and what He has done.