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# The Writer's Inkhorn

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Continuing Reflections on the Word for Your Personal Growth in Christ

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## Did I Do My Best?! Did I Do My Best?!



This second issue concludes the focus on mission teams and workers who are involved in short term mission projects around the globe, year after year. Again, *God* rewards...

At one time Northwestern University had a volunteer rescue team whose main purpose was to help people or ships in distress on Lake Michigan. Among those rescuers was a student of Garrett Evangelical Seminary who was studying to be a missionary. One night a ship gave a distress call and this young man was among those bringing others to safety. He swam out over and over until at last he collapsed with exhaustion after having rescued 17 people. As his brother stood beside him, he shouted out in his delirium, "Did I do my best? Did I do my best?!" His brother replied, "You saved seventeen people." And he said earnestly, "Oh, if I could have just saved one more ..."

When I heard that story it immediately pricked my heart. Every Christian, every saint of God ought to be asking in exhaustion, "Did I do my best? Did I do my best?" We don't know how much time we have, but however much it is or is not, God wants us to be diligent, undivided and faithful in the time we have left. St. John 9:4 says, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Did you know that we will be rewarded for our work?

*Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.* (I Cor. 3:8)

Our only real sense of accomplishment is when we *know* we have given our best. Our reward is to be promoted to greater responsibility with greater challenge, yet with greater persecution. But, remember the Apostle Paul's admonition:

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

There are a number of scriptures that describe us as workers (e.g. workers together with Him; workmen that need not to be ashamed). We must know how to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way. Let us take a look at the Apostle Paul's comments and instructions to the saints at Corinth regarding him and other Christian workers. I have indicated sections from 1 Corinthians 16 for our discussion here:

Verses 1-7. Paul is making plans to visit Corinth, but also to pass through Macedonia, and says possibly when he stops he may spend winter with them.

You must have a vision for your work for the future. Yes, make plans, explore means, methods, strategies, goals, and objectives, but notice the clincher at the end of verse 7: "*if*

*the Lord permits.*” You must have flexibility in your planning, in that God may change that “future” that *you* have mapped out. All of our plans must always be predicated upon “if the Lord permits.”

Mother Phyllis Leftwich of West Angeles, and longtime foreign mission worker, says our mission-attitude must be: “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape.” That statement alone has eased many a moment of tension when we just wanted to do what *we* came to do but were constrained by things which we could not control. It helps us to remember that God is *always* in control even when we cannot be.

Verses 8-9. In verse 8 is a simple statement that says a lot more than first appears. “*I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.*” And v.9 gives the reason: “*for a great door and effectual is opened unto many...*”

When doing the Lord's work, we must be thorough and sincere. Most problems in most job circumstances demand time for effectiveness, and require someone who is willing to complete tasks, accomplish goals, and see projects through to the finish. It is no different in the Lord's work. Make it your resolve to have no unfinished tasks and no unresolved issues. This has become my most recent prayer.

And we must have a commitment to be of service wherever we are presently – our current “tarrying place.” There are a lot of dreamers who dream about what they will do “out there *someday*” instead of doing what they **can** do where they are *today*. Your objective is to work as unto the Lord, all of the time, where you are planted, so that you may hear Him say the words, “well done” at whatever time and from whatever place He calls you home.

Faithfulness at your current level of service is required for you to be used at a higher level. You cannot just plan for the future only; you must also function in the present. The faithful servant of the few things becomes the ruler of many. Of course, that ‘many’ could be many people or many problems or many of both!

The Apostle Paul was an excellent example of one who never seemed discontented about his place of service. He gave his whole life / his total self wherever he was. We have got to learn that principle. We have got to ask ourselves often and daily, “Did I do my best?! Did I do my best?!” We must learn to prove ourselves wherever we can, wherever there is an open door.

Where you are now may, true enough, just be a **passage** way to where you will ultimately be, but work and treat it as though it is a permanent **position**. The *Lord* not only wants to know, but He wants *us* to know that we have done our best, that we have given our all to the tasks at hand.

Verses 15-18. Concerning Stephanus in v. 15 and other saints, Paul says “that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” What better addiction can one have? And he goes on to say in v.18 “*for they have refreshed my spirit and yours...*” Paul makes a similar statement about Philemon in his letter to Philemon:

*For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. (NKJV)*

The *spirit* in which we do the Lord's work is as important as the work itself. Whatever we share or do or give ought to bring joy to those who are on the receiving end. Only our love

should be felt, and it *can* be if we act with the thought that we are giving a hand *up* rather than a hand *out*. We must learn to give in such a way that we preserve the dignity of the receiver, considering ourselves and our own feelings if we were to fall upon misfortune of some kind.

I have long remembered the words of the Late Bishop Grant in Nassau, Bahamas on my first mission trip in the early 1980s. He said to our team, “The church can send all of the money it wants, but there is nothing like sending people.” He was **refreshed** by our physical presence as we participated in work and worship and fellowship with the saints there.

Doing the Lord's work requires wholehearted dedication, and God will give every man his reward according as his work shall be. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12b-13:

*[W]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*

## Missions and You

Are you aware that every born-again believer has a responsibility to expand the kingdom of God in response to the Great Commission? Too many of us act as though Jesus’ words in *that* instance was only for *those* disciples at *that* time, although we readily receive other words and commands that Jesus gave. These words of Jesus from Mark 4:40 seem appropriate here:

*“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”*

Fear is the absence of faith. The two cannot peacefully co-exist. The one paralyzes the other. That seemed to be what Jesus was saying here. In that sense then, we must determine whether we will remain paralyzed by fear, or whether we will move forward in faith in this work of advancing the kingdom of God.

If you are convinced that it is not fear or a lack of faith that is keeping you from acting on behalf of others, wherever they may be, then what *is* it? I have included some simple diagrams below to help you think through what you are or are not doing, and how you might focus your attention so as to organize your efforts and work more strategically.

### PERSONAL EFFORTS



- What is my *own* sense of duty?
- What projects do I have going, about which others may or may not know?

### LOCAL CHURCH



- Have I taken advantage of any training offered?
- How am I involved in my local mission activities and/or outreach?

### DISTRICT and/or STATE



- How do I help my district and state advance the cause of missions beyond my local church initiatives?
- Who can I influence to join in with me?

### NATIONAL and/or INTERNATIONAL



- What is my involvement in missions globally?
- What is my level of awareness of programs, projects, and people outside of the continental (COGIC) USA?

Take some time to answer each of these questions to increase your impact in this area.

“Wherever the Lord wants to send you, go. Say, “Yes.” (Hattie Minter)

Has the Lord been speaking to you about your work in ministry? Do you feel a burning desire to do more for Him through doing more for people? If this issue of the *Writer's Inkborn* is challenging your spirit because you have not dealt with these feelings or thoughts or desires or unctions or whatever else you want to call them, then I have one question left for you: how do you *sleep* at night? In all seriousness, the King's business requires haste, does it not? How do you *know* how much time you have remaining to get done what God has placed on your heart and in your spirit to do? “Yes, Lord” is the deepest surrender, and it says to God that you trust Him enough to say “yes” even when you do not know what the question is. “My answer to you, Lord, is an eternal ‘yes.’”

*Be confident of this one thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:6)*

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 4:9-11)*



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Are you interested in **summer mission travel** for yourself or young people that you know? Consider being part of a Youth on a Mission (YOAM) team through the Church of God in Christ. Visit [www.cogicworldmissions.org](http://www.cogicworldmissions.org) to see what COGIC is doing around the world.

Please consider giving support to The **Liberia Hope Foundation**, an Illinois registered not-for-profit, 501(c)-3, faith-based non-governmental organization based in Chicago. Its primary purpose is to build a vocational **high school** in Maryland County in an area where there is no high school within a 200 to 300 mile radius of Tugbaken. Donations for the vocational high school project can be sent to Consul Alex Gbayee at 7342 S. Bennett Avenue, Chicago, IL 60649. Consul Gbayee may be reached by phone at 773.643.8635. **Checks should be made payable to the Liberia Hope Foundation.** No gift is too small.

Contact me if I may assist you. I am dedicated to adding value to the lives of others for spiritual, personal, and professional growth and development. Feel free to reach out to me at 773.735.8713 or send an email to me at: [mary.webster@trnty.edu](mailto:mary.webster@trnty.edu)

