

Effective and fruitful ministry

by Ross Callaghan
<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>

Be fruitful and multiply. Genesis 1:28

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10



God



Ministries

- God eg. praise, worship, thanksgiving
- Others in the Body of Christ eg. children's ministry, worship leading, intercession, teaching, cleaning, encouragement
- Others in the community eg. evangelism, helps, food bank, budget advice, parenting support, hospital visitation

There are countless different ministries. In each God does His wonderful works through Christians who are open to receive from Him; willing to learn, grow and develop, and willing to share God's grace with others.

But how can we be fruitful in our ministries? Here are some principles we can follow to ensure the things we do are really effective.

Effective ministries are born of God

For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world. 1 John 5:4

Effective ministry is all about reproduction.

Right at the beginning Adam and Eve were told to 'be fruitful and multiply'. Reproduction takes place when a seed from the Father is placed in the Mother and gestates for a while. It is then born and has the nature of the Father and of the Mother on it.

In ministry, God plants the seed (His word) in us; it is nurtured and grows within us; and then we share it with others.



See Mark 4:1-20 (The parable of the sower).

- The seed is the Word of God.
- The Word of God may not take root in our hearts (due to distractions, shallowness, persecution, worries, desire for other things etc).
- If the Word of God does take root in our hearts it will bring forth fruit.
- For some this will be 30 fold, others 60 fold, others 100 fold.
- Everyone doesn't bring forth the same fruit. It depends on what seed God has sown in the heart.

Effective ministries come out of relationship with God.

God has chosen us so that we will bear much fruit: fruit that will last.

See John 15:1-17

- God is the source of lasting fruit. He is the vine, we are the branches.
- We must abide in Him if we are to bear much fruit. This means maintaining our relationship with Him through prayer, worship, waiting on Him, feeding from His Word etc.
- Anything that is not of God is unfruitful and of no lasting value. We will need pruning from time to time to remove these unfruitful aspects from our lives.
- When we bear much fruit it results in God being glorified.
- Fruitfulness comes when we do what God tells us to do.
- As we do what God wants there is much joy, for God, and for us.
- This requires us to lay down our lives in obedience to God, and in service to others. This is what 'loving God' and 'loving others' really means.



Effective ministry is not determined by the methods we use or how hard we work. It occurs when the ministry has God as its source; when we hear God's word, obey Him and do what He wants us to do. It starts with God, is communicated to us by God, is empowered by God, and results in God's glory. The key for effective ministry and fruit that lasts is our relationship with God!

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10, 11

Effective ministries are led by the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit and result in the fruits of the Holy Spirit

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. John 15:16

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. John 16:13,14

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. John 6:63

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22, 23

If a ministry doesn't result in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control it is worth checking its source!

For effective ministry

- the Holy Spirit communicates God's will to you
- the Holy Spirit leads you
- the Holy Spirit empowers you
- the Holy Spirit does His work in the person or situation
- the Holy Spirit brings forth His fruits.

We can never be effective in ministry in our own strength!
Only the Holy Spirit can produce genuine, long-lasting fruit.

Because it is initiated by the Holy Spirit it has his nature about it: ie. the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes the fruits of the Holy Spirit can minister to people.

eg. When you are with someone and their love, peace, patience, gentleness etc. ministers to you.

eg. **John**. The central theme of his writings was **love**. *For God so loved the world* John 3:16.
Let us love one another for love comes from God. 1 John 4:7

eg. **Paul**. Received much **comfort** from God through his extensive troubles and persecution. This developed **longsuffering**. As a result Paul was able to **encourage** others.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.
2 Corinthians 1:3-6

eg. **The parable of the trees**. See Judges 9:8-15

After being mightily used of God Gideon fell away and led the people of Israel into evil (Judges 8:27). In the confusion after his death and the appointment of Abimelech as King, Jothan the prophet gave a parable:

The fruit of the olive tree produces oil giving light and honour; the fruit of the fig tree gives goodness and sweetness; the fruit of the vine cheers and brings joy, but the fruit of the thorn bush just devours, burning others and being burnt itself.

People are very sensitive about this. If we radiate the fruits of the Holy Spirit they will be open to receive ministry from us. "What you are is speaking so loudly I can't hear what you're saying". "Actions may speak louder than words, but what we are speaks even more loudly!"

Effective ministries are exercised in love

If you don't exercise your ministry in love it is unlikely to be accepted.

People are very sensitive to the attitudes of others. If you really love someone they will sense it and will be open to you and your ministry.

See 1 Corinthians 13

- Exercising ministries in love is the 'excellent way'.
- Without love what we share is 'nothing'.
- Love is not necessarily easy. It is patient, kind, does not boast, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs, rejoices in truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres. It never fails!
- Our ministries are imperfect.
- Maturity in ministry comes as we know more of God and share more of Him, in love.



And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. v 13

Effective ministry involves laying down of your life for others

Effective ministry comes from God. It starts with Him, is empowered by Him and is dependent on Him for lasting fruitfulness. All true!

But we have a significant part to play as we are the ones that God uses to minister to others.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
Matthew 10:39

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.
Matthew 16:24-27

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5: 16

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
Matthew 7:16-20

Effectiveness in ministry is costly. There's no place for laziness or excuses! You lay down your life for others in obedience to God's call. It will affect your time, your effort, your resources, your freedoms, your privacy, your priorities..... Your life! But oh what a sense of fulfillment and purpose as you do what God wants you to do, and see blessing in other people's lives.

God wants 'everyone to come to repentance' 2 Peter 3:9. *The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.* Matthew 9:37

This means all Christians are called to ministry: each in our own way.

We will be effective in ministry and bring forth the fruit that God desires as:

- our ministries are born of God
- our ministries come out of relationship with God
- our ministries are exercised in love
- our ministries are led by the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit and result in the fruits of the Holy Spirit
- we lay down our lives for others.



Jesus bids us shine
With a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle
Burning in the night.
In this world of darkness
So let us shine -
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine
First of all for Him;
Well He sees and knows it,
If our light grows dim.
He looks down from Heaven
To see us shine -
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine
Then, for all around;
Many kinds of darkness
In the world are found -
Sin and want and sorrow;
So we must shine -
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.

Some implications

Effective ministry is all about doing what God wants us to do!
Here are some practical implications of this:

- A need doesn't constitute a call. This means we don't need to feel condemned if there is a need and God doesn't call us to meet it. It is much more fruitful to find what God wants us to do and do that!
- We should not organise programmes or activities and then ask God to bless them. He will bless what He initiates. He is supposed to be in charge, not us!

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts". Isaiah 55:8,9

- It is easy to organise programmes and activities and spend our energies maintaining them. This can be a waste of time, (even if the programme or activity is a great one!). Unless something is 'born of God' it won't 'overcome the world' and will take us away from what God really wants us to do. This is why so many Christians are worn out or feel disheartened about the 'ministry' they are doing.

Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Matthew 15:13

- There is no excuse for laziness in ministry. We are to work hard for the Kingdom of God, but in doing the things that God wants us to do.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. Colossians 1:28,29

- Appointment to ministry is by God's call and empowerment, not by natural qualifications or training. Whew! Think of the implications of that!

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.
1 Timothy 1:1

- The Church is not a democracy. Decisions should be made by hearing from God and doing what He says; not by voting and seeking to find the 'will of the people'.
- 'Fruitfulness coming from doing what God wants' is all through the Bible from the Garden of Eden, right through to Revelation. Look for it!
- The principle of fruitfulness is also in nature. Something from the father is placed in the mother; gestates for a while, and then is brought forth having the nature of both parents on it.

So give yourself wholeheartedly to the Lord to do whatever it is that He has for you.

... for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:13

See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord. Colossians 4:17

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. Ephesians 1:16-20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20,21

Questions for discussion

Why do so many ministries not last?

Why are so many Christians worn out or burnt out.

Why are there so many Christians in Churches who 'have nothing to do', while the 'faithful few' seem to do all of the ministry?

Why are so few people being won for the Kingdom of God?

Why are lots of Christians giving up on organised Church?

What has God called you to do for His Kingdom?

What are some motivators for ministry? eg. being up the front; being acknowledged; getting recognition, being liked; being anointed by the Holy Spirit; doing what God wants, getting paid, Which ones are valid? Which ones are just self seeking?

How can we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, and know that it is Him?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about the sharing the gospel and bringing the Kingdom of God into your community?

How can you be more effective in sharing the gospel and bringing the Kingdom of God into your community.