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**A Christian's Most Horrible Mistake**

By Freddy Davis

There are a lot of bad things a Christian can do. We could list things we consider sins 'till the cows come home for a pretty good outline of possibilities. As humans, we tend to put these sins into various categories, with some being really awful, some being just bad, and others being wrong, but not horribly so.

For instance, everyone knows that things like murder, rape, stealing money from the church's offering plate, and denying global warming fit into the "almost unforgivable" category. The "just bad" category would probably include such things as lying, sexual immorality, stealing, skipping church, and hacking someone's Facebook account. Then we have the "wrong, but not horribly so" category that might include thinking dirty thoughts, cursing, falling asleep during a sermon, and abortion. (Note: I have taken the liberty of being a bit facetious with a few of these. You can figure out which.)

Of course, we know that even a single really tiny sin is bad enough to tarnish our perfect holiness, and perfect holiness is God's standard for us to be in His presence. So maybe the sins I listed in my categories above don't really fit as well as we might think.

Okay, when we get right down to it, while we, as humans, put sins into categories of badness, God doesn't operate that way. Different ones may be evaluated differently by humans because of the way they affect individuals and society (and our own personal sensitivities), but God's standard is not based on how it affects other people. God has His own agenda, and His standards relate to how

our actions affect the accomplishment of His purpose in the world.

**What is God's Purpose?**

So just what is His purpose? In a nutshell, the very reason He created us was for relationship with Himself. Anything that hinders that goes against His purpose. Thus, we are to live our lives doing things that advance it. We do that in our own lives as we live in relationship with Him, and as we share with others how they can do it.

**Who Is Supposed to Work on God's Purpose?**

Many people have the mistaken notion that those who are primarily charged with carrying out God's purpose in the world are the professional church leaders. But that is not what the Bible teaches. Scripture tells us, in Ephesians 4:11-13, that the work of professional church leaders is specifically to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." Thus, leaders do have their part in carrying out God's purpose, but others have a job to do, as well.

So, if it is the work of professional church leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that means it is the job of every other believer to become equipped, then go out and do the work of ministry. Every believer should be about fulfilling God's purpose in the world.

**How Are Believers Supposed to Do That Work?**

So what does the work of ministry entail? Again, in a nutshell, it involves sharing the message of Christ's salvation to people who do not know Him, and helping believers (the saints) grow in their faith. There are many ways to pull that off, and the work of each individual will be unique to their specific calling. That

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said, every believer needs to become equipped to do that according to how God leads them.

## How Does That Work Practically?

But the above is a generic description. Thinking generically makes it a bit difficult for some Christians to grasp what that means for their individual lives. How does it play out in a practical sense?

What we need to more fully grasp is that there are two parts of our lives that we, as Christians, need to fully embrace. Most only embrace one part fully, while either embracing the other only partially or not at all.

The part that is generally fully embraced is our material life. People go to school, get special training, get advanced certifications and spend countless hours working at their jobs in order to become more competent, and advance in their chosen vocation. This is a good thing and is completely in line with God's purpose for humanity. We were given, as grace gifts, the various physical, emotional, and mental abilities necessary to accomplish work in the world, and we should carry out our responsibilities as God's stewards. We need to work as diligently as we can to serve God and other people, and make the world a better place.

There is another part of our lives, though, that most Christians are not nearly as good at, or as conscientious about. That is our spiritual work. Sadly, many people who call themselves Christians don't put any effort into that at all. Another segment exerts some effort, but consider that their proper spiritual exertion is simply a matter of attending church and supporting its work monetarily. While this is an incredibly important part of our spiritual work, it is far from the ultimate God wants from us. A big part of our

calling from God involves our personal efforts to promote His purpose in the world.

God's calling on your life involves both work on the material side and on the spiritual side. We are definitely to be diligent doing our material work, but must also be diligent doing our spiritual work. These are two sides of the same coin.

One of the important implications of this is that we need to put the same kind of effort into training for our spiritual work as we do for our material work. Of course, attending church services and Bible study classes is one part of that, but God has not called us to merely be passive observers. He has called us to be active builders of His kingdom – out in the world. To do that, we need to have certain knowledge and skills. That requires us to train for our spiritual work with the same diligence as we train for our material vocation.

The specific training we need will vary somewhat depending on the particular calling God has placed on our life. But there are some basics every believer needs.

One is basic Bible knowledge. Christians can usually get some of that by participating in Bible study classes at church. But they should also do independent study as a part of their personal devotional life, as well as take advantage of special study opportunities offered by the church or other organizations that offer that sort of thing.

Another important element of knowledge is how to share God's plan of salvation to those who don't know Christ. Christians can't share what they don't know.

But there is another important knowledge element that every Christian also needs. We live in a world that is

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religiously more complex (pluralistic) than what used to exist. With the widespread migration and immigration now occurring in the world, along with the vast expansion of non-biblical beliefs being taught in schools and promoted in the media and entertainment industry, not only is the ability to share the salvation message itself important, but knowing HOW to express it in a way that is understandable to such a diverse population has become critical in a way it didn't used to be. So, Christians need to also be skilled in speaking across worldview barriers. This is a skill that, in the past, was mostly needed only by missionaries, but is now critical for everyone. It involves learning both the basic principles of worldview, as well as a basic knowledge of the various belief systems that exist out in the world.

The final part of the training every Christian needs to acquire is more personal. God has called each believer into particular kinds of ministry, and there are skills associated with each one. Every believer needs to hear and accept their calling, and acquire the spiritual skills necessary to accomplish that out in the particular place in the world where God has sent them.

Those who are in professional Christian ministry generally have the opportunity to get specialized training in a Bible school or seminary. These are the people who

are called to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." They learn those equipping skills in their training. For the rest of us, that training should be provided by their church. If it is not, it is the responsibility of individual Christians to search out other opportunities to become equipped for the ministry God has called them to.

## Two Areas of Mistakes

There are two major areas where mistakes regarding Christian discipleship tend to take place.

### 1. *The Mistake of the Church*

The mistake of the church occurs when churches don't provide for the necessary equipping of their members. To pull this off effectively requires a discipleship vision by the church leadership and a commitment to implement it.

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## **2. *The Mistake of Individual Christians***

The mistake of the individual occurs when believers don't take seriously their own responsibility to become equipped. No matter how committed the leadership, nothing can happen if they don't have the support and involvement of the membership.

### **You Are Responsible for Making Things Right**

As we look at what is going on in society, we see a very sad sight. Ungodliness is everywhere. And that is exactly what you would expect when you see the nation increasingly moving away from God. The only remedy for that is for the citizenry to return to a relationship with God. And for that to happen, Christians must start taking seriously the spiritual side of their stewardship responsibility before God. That is the only thing that will ever turn things around.

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