

MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SEMINAR VI

**Theme: “The Pentecostal Minister as a
Counselor/Caregiver”**

Committing My Future

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INTRODUCTION

You have come to a very significant turning point or crossroad in your life. You have committed yourself to go all the way for God in the ministry calling you know to be on your life. You may have started this journey a long time ago or a short time ago. However, your commitment to the ministry now takes on a new depth of intensity. You will be advancing in time to ordained minister and if qualified, to ordained bishop. You are choosing a road less traveled that will make all the difference in your life.

Committing your future to God requires self-examination on a regular basis. In order to commit your future to God now you must re-evaluate your life. You not only explore your outward lifestyle to make sure that this is in order, but you also journey inward and re-evaluate your motives, emotions, and attitudes.

Most of the time people follow their own thinking and choose their paths. We quickly begin to realize in the ministry that we cannot choose or control the consequences of our decisions. We also realize that, as we sincerely obey God and follow His will and direction, we cannot plan or predict where we will be or exactly which direction our life will take.

Committing our future to God is a step of faith and obedience. As we learn to trust God and abide in His care and will, we become fruitful and effective.

As we yield ourselves to God, we will find that He begins to knock off the rough edges. Our self-confidence will grow and our uniqueness and ministry gifts will shine forth. We will feel more humility, contrition, and tenderness. A sincere attitude of repentance and submission will grow in our mind. We will see more clearly than ever that we do not have all the answers, so clearly that it will be embarrassing at times.

The walk of faith will bring a new found humility and Christ-like perspective from which to search the deep things of God. Humility brings maturity. Spiritual maturity is no longer content with the trite, clever slogans or methods but seeks the real meat and substance of truth.

One of the great dangers in living committed to the will of God is that we can get off track and lose our focus. Having the right focus and perspective is essential. The devil is skillful at causing us to get side

tracked and focus on the wrong things. It is then when we try to grab the reins from God and end up taking control of our lives.

I sincerely want to be a man whose heart is fully committed to God. It is the deepest vein of desire in my soul. In the inner, hidden place of my heart where no man has ever been, in the secret place where only God has been, there I yearn to really be a man after God's own heart. I want to be a real, Biblical Christian. No fluff. No canned answers. No self-centered ambitions. I want to slay the flesh. I want to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we want to make our commitment stick and we want to live our life for God, then we must press on today to learn self-control, self-discipline, and the secrets of success and a life of joy.

God has a plan for the rest of our life! We must commit our future to God; keep probing, poking, penetrating, and striving to find God's plan for our future. We will never walk in God's will by standing still and doing nothing. We must do all we know to do! Get going and believe God for miracles and answered prayers.

The secrets of living our life for God are found in John 15:1-17. Christ makes it clear to us in the ministry that we are the branches and He is the vine. We must abide in Him. Jesus said, "He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from me, you can do nothing."

I. THE SECRET OF LIVING IS FRUITBEARING

We are to be fruit bearing branches. What is the fruit that God wants us to bear? It takes many different forms.

A. Winning others to Christ and helping them grow is fruit.

"He who is wise wins souls" (Proverbs 11:30). "Follow me and you will become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). It is a joy and privilege to win others to Christ. It is the result of allowing Christ's life to flow through us and bear fruit.

B. Another kind of spiritual fruit is practical holiness of life.

Holiness is nothing else but the beauty and character of God displayed in our everyday lives (Romans 6:22; 2 Corinthians 7:1). We cannot manufacture holiness. It must come from within.

C. A third kind of fruit we bear is the sharing of what we possess.

Giving to God and in His name is not something we do, it is the result of what we are. When God is flowing in us, we cannot help but give. Giving and living are synonymous when we abide in God.

D. Christian character is a fourth kind of fruit.

Galatians 5:22 tells us, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, self-control" These are qualities produced in us by the Holy Spirit and we cannot create substitutes for them. Only the life of Christ within can produce this fruit.

E. "Bearing fruit in every good work" (Colossians 1:10).

"We are saved by grace... through faith" (Ephesians 2:8, 9), but the result of salvation is always service. "Let your light so shine ..." (Matthew 5:16).

Each one of us has our own ministry to fulfill. We have our own future to commit to God. No Christian is competing with any other Christian in the will of God. In the Christian life there is no such division as "secular" and "sacred." All we do is a ministry unto the Lord. The Lord makes it clear that this fruit bearing is to be a continuous experience: "fruit ... more fruit ... much fruit."

The secret of living is fruit bearing. If our future is committed to God, we will bear fruit. We will get involved in our calling. If we must start a new church or go somewhere others will not go, we will be willing. If it means being a missionary -- even a home missionary in America -- we will be fruitful.

II. THE SECRET OF FRUITBEARING IS ABIDING

Commit our future to go! Walk through the doors He opens and abide in faith. How do we abide in Christ and His will? Remember Philippians 2:12-13, "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

- A. Abiding involves keeping in fellowship with the Vine so that God can work in us.
- B. Prayer is part of abiding.
- C. Confession is a third factor in abiding.
- D. A fourth factor is a desire to do His will (John 15:10). Let God have His way.

If we are abiding in Christ, there will be evidence in our lives that we are in contact with God.

EVIDENCES OF ABIDING IN CHRIST

1. The first evidence is fruit.
2. If we are growing in holy living, we will overcome temptations. The absence of temptation is not proof of abiding; the presence of temptation and testing is the proof. Bearing "fruit unto holiness" (Romans 6:22) is a daily process not a finished matter.
3. We will find ourselves developing new values and wanting to invest our life in God's will.
4. We will not have to be bribed into working for God. We will discover and develop our gifts to go to work in His church as He leads us.

5. We will find ourselves praising the Lord as we abide in Him. We will praise Him for the blessings and the burdens as well. The Christian who does not abide in Christ gives thanks occasionally for some things; but the abiding Christian gives thanks always for all things.

If we do not commit our future to God and abide in Him, we do not bear fruit; and if we do not bear fruit, the Father who is the Vinedresser, must deal with us! As John 15:6 states, we are then dried up branches thrown into the fire. We can get swept away into a wasted life. We can become disqualified -- a castaway.

The last thing God wants to do is to take away our opportunity to glorify Him in fruit bearing. But a fruitless branch is a disgrace to the Vinedresser. If we are abiding, there will be times of pruning. This is the process of cutting out of our lives the things that hinder us from being more fruitful. God always wants us to reach our greatest potential. This explains why abiding Christians are often suffering Christians. We experience the Father's pruning, and it hurts. God wants to cut away the excesses, the hindrances. He even cuts away things that we think are good. Yet He gives us something even more precious in return. Expect to be pruned if you abide in Christ.

III. THE SECRET OF ABIDING IS OBEYING (JOHN 15:10, 14)

Obedience leads to abiding. When the child of God obeys the will of God, everything in the world works for him; but when he/she disobeys the will of God, everything works against him.

In the universe, only man questions and disobeys God's will, because man (by God's grace) has a will of his own. He was created to make decisions, and he can decide to disobey God.

You and I will do everything possible to avoid obedience. Yet, obedience is the very key to God's blessings. There is no substitute for obedience. The blessings are not a reward for obeying, they are a result of abiding. Therefore, we must never bargain with God. Our obedience to His will and our commitment of our future to Him must be complete and unconditional.

If you want your ministry to be more fruitful as you now face this significant crossroad in your life, you must abide in Him. But remember, the secret of abiding is obeying.

As God's children, we should want to obey Him so that we might abide in Him. The blessings we receive come from abiding, just as the abiding comes from obeying.

It is obedience that releases the power of God in us but obeying is one of the most difficult things in the world. There is something

perverse and selfish in our nature that tells us, "Do it your own way!"

How can we obey God?

IV. THE SECRET OF OBEYING IS LOVING

There are three levels of obedience.

A. We can obey God because we have to.

This is the first level of fear. Fear can rob us of the real joys that God wants us to experience because we obey Him. Fear builds walls instead of bridges.

B. The next level of obedience is selfishness.

We do not obey because we need to, but because we get something out of it! Many Christians live on the bargain basement level. Their obedience is measured by what God gives them; and if they do not get what they want, they often turn against God. We obey God because we know He deserves it and it is the right thing to do no matter how hard it is to do.

C. The highest motive for obedience is love.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Why is love the highest motive for obedience?

1. Love centers on the giver, not the gift.
2. Love does not measure sacrifice. If we love God, we do not measure the cost of obeying His word. We simply obey. A love that calculates is not true love.

3. There is no fear in love. "...but perfect love casts out fear..." (1 John 4:18).

What does God require of His people?

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12).

CONCLUSION

The more we love God, the more we will obey Him. The more we obey Him, the more we will abide in Him. And the more we abide in Him, the more we will bear fruit.

Let us seek to know Him better as we commit our futures to His will. Successful Christians have learned the secrets of living. These secrets call for a loving, obedient, and disciplined life of prayer, study, and worship.

Paul advises us in Romans 12:1-2 that we should:

- give God our bodies
- give God our minds
- give God our wills
- give God our hearts

When we surrender our heart, mind, and will to God each day, we will be able to abide in His will and draw upon His power.

In order to keep our futures committed to God, we must watch out for enemies. Watch out for the little foxes which spoil the vines. It takes diligence and dedication to bear fruit for God. Once we become lazy and careless, we cease to bear fruit.

We need to search our hearts and confess our sins to God. We must totally commit our futures to God's will and to a life of fruit bearing, abiding, obeying, and loving God with all that is in us.