

A Life that Ministers **Philippians 4:9-16**

- Everyone likes to have someone notice his or her need, and help to meet that need.
 - When another comes to help in a time of need, it reveals a compassionate heart that is selfless.
 - This kind of heart is the very heart of Christ.
- Many believers today act as though everyone else owes them something or that God owes them!
- Some people feel that, since their life is given unto Christ by faith, they should receive some kind of limitless blessings and exemption from sufferings.
- However, the opposite seems to be more common. Both Christians and non-Christians seem to have the same trials and sufferings. God isn't causing either one.
- However, the Christian should be the one who ministers to the needs of others, regardless of the struggles he or she is facing.
- God isn't causing trials in this corrupted world to draw people to Him. But He does want to use Christians to minister in the midst of these trials, seeking to draw the lost and hurting closer to Him.
- God needs people to be the tools that He can use to minister to the needs of others today!
- Every person can become an instrument of God's power.

How can you be used of God today?

1. By learning from godly mentors

- The Philippians had Paul to learn from as an example. He was a spiritual mentor to them.
 - Acts 16 records Paul's first trip through Philippi, where he was arrested, beaten, and jailed.
 - While he was there, he never let his circumstances derail his usefulness for the Lord.
 - As Paul and Silas sat in the prison, they prayed and sang praises. They were an example and a witness in the worst of situations.

- As a result of Paul and Silas' willingness, the Philippians learned what serving others looked like, as well as what Christ was capable of doing through those who choose to follow Him.
- Read Acts 16:22-31.
- Look at Philippians 4:9.
 - Paul reminded the church to apply the things they learned, received, heard, and had seen in Paul.
 - It is never enough to just watch and listen. You must then apply what has been observed, and do it as well!
- If you know Christ as your personal Savior, then you should have some people in your life that also have a personal relationship with Christ.
- How can you learn from others?
 - With a heart to listen and increase knowledge
 - Listening to the words and thoughts of godly friends and leaders who teach God's Word will increase your knowledge greatly!
 - The word "*learned*" that Paul uses in the verse means "to increase one's knowledge by use and practice."
 - We tend to listen when being instructed, but what about in the normal routine of life? So much was gained by those who followed Christ as they observed the way Paul spoke to others.
 - By applying the knowledge you receive
 - The word "*received*" means "to associate with oneself; to join to one's self."
 - You take the knowledge you have received, then you make it an active part of your thinking as well as a guide in your decisions and actions.
 - By watching the actions of godly examples
 - The greatest form of flattery is imitation!
 - It isn't always good to imitate people, but if they are following Christ in their daily walk, then you should seek to do the same.
 - Paul told the Philippians to be followers of him.
 - "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Philippians 3:17
- As you surround yourself with others who love the Lord, and you allow God to use them, you will begin to learn how to become an instrument of God's power.

2. By ministering to the needs of others

- You will never be used by God if your eyes are closed and your fingers are in your ears!
- The Philippians were looking for opportunities to serve!
 - Read Philippians 4:10, 15-16.
 - The church in Philippi was obviously keeping tabs on Paul and the ministry work Paul was heading up.
 - While Paul was in Thessalonica, the Philippians knew his needs and sought to send him what he needed.
- Sometimes opportunities will present themselves when you are ready and alert to your surroundings.
 - When Paul and Silas were in the prison at Philippi, they sang and prayed—not so the guard would come and get saved. In fact, we don't know how long they sang before the earthquake, but the guard didn't come until there was a major problem.
 - Once the guard came, Paul and Silas could have fled with the others, but they were alert and ready to minister to the need of the jailor.
- Other opportunities will have to be sought after, requiring sacrifice and hard work.
 - The church at Philippi had sent gifts to Paul on multiple occasions.
 - In Philippians 4:10 and 16, notice the word “*again!*”
 - The church sought to reach Paul with a gift when Paul was in Thessalonica and again in Rome.
 - For the church to send support to Paul while he was in Thessalonica, they would have had to travel about 200 miles, round trip, by foot. Think about the fact that they would have done this more than once!
 - They were seeking to find ways to serve and be used of God to meet the needs of the ministry!
 - Then, to get a gift to Rome... that obviously wasn't easy according to verse 10!
- As you learn from the examples of others and become aware of opportunities to minister, you will begin to see the Lord using you to become an instrument of power.
- As you are being used of God to minister to others, you may grow tired and even frustrated, but the last point will help you as you minister to others.

3. By resting in Christ's power

- Meeting the needs of others can be draining on you, emotionally and physically!
- There are times that you need to take a rest. But there are always times that you can do more in the Spirit than you can in the flesh.
- Paul had a difficult ministry, both physically and mentally!
 - There were times that Paul was beaten, shipwrecked, jailed, even stoned. Yet he continued on his mission to share the truth and minister to the needs of others.
- There were times when people made choices that frustrated Paul. Galatians 3:1-5
- As an instrument of the Lord, when you invest in people, then you see them struggle to apply what you know they know, it can be very draining.
- Paul's answer to the struggles of serving is answered in Philippians 4:13.
- For the Christian, serving others should be a way of life. But the ability to do it has to come from the Lord.
- When it seems too hard to serve, remember, "*I can do all things...*"
- How many things are possible to do when it comes to serving the Lord? All of them!
- However it isn't you that can do them. It is "*...through Christ which strengtheth...*"
 - The word "*strengtheth*" is also seen as the word "*strong*" in Ephesians 6:10.
 - "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*"
 - Both words are from the Greek root work "dynamo."
 - This is the word we get "dynamite" from.
 - It's interesting when you think about dynamite and a believer.
 - Dynamite is made of a simple piece of cardboard, sealed by wax, and filled with a highly explosive material. When ignited, the results are powerful!
 - The believer is an ordinary container, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and filled with the power of Christ! When the believer is ignited, the results are powerful!
 - Now I see why Paul told Timothy to "*Stir up the gift of God...*" in 2 Timothy 1:6.
 - "*Stir up*" mean to "inflame one's mind!"
- If you're going to be used of God and expect to see any results that are explosive, you're going to have to rely on Christ's power in you!

- *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* **Philippians 2:13**

Conclusion:

- Some tools remain in the drawer, not able to be used, only collecting dust and rust, while others are oiled, shined, and used often due to their usefulness. Which kind of tool of God’s power are you today?
- God uses people to minister to the needs of others. Throughout the Bible, God has used men and women of all different backgrounds as instruments of His power because they had the right mentors, a desire to minister to needs, and they relied on the Lord.
- God wants to use every person who has accepted His Son as his or her Savior. That is the first step towards being a useful vessel for the Lord to use.
- *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”* **2 Corinthians 4:7**