

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 10

Self-Promotion in Ministry

By

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Have you heard the latest? Faberge Incorporated announced recently that they were producing and promoting a new product, a new fragrance. It is called, “Scent of the Stars.” Now the word is not S-E-N-T in this particular product. It is S-C-E-N-T. This is a true story. What they are doing is gathering the scent from various stars like Sylvester Stallone and Madonna. They are actually gathering true perspiration and analyzing that perspiration, seeking to duplicate it and market it so that you can smell like Sylvester Stallone, Madonna, or whatever stars are being used in this program. There is something kind of crazy about a society that wants so badly to be like the stars, even if it is just to smell like them.

But it is not just in our society; it also can creep very subtly into ministry. We can want to take on the fragrance of stardom. “Oh Lord, give me a greater authority, a larger ministry, a brighter visibility. Oh Lord, it is all for Your glory, ostensibly.” In reality we desire to be a star in the firmament of ministry. Something in us wants to shine brightly. Something in my flesh wants to be acknowledged and wants to be noticed, so I want to shine brightly. I am tired of being in the *Who’s He?* I want to make the *Who’s Who* eventually, and I really hope that someday people might take notice of me. My flesh cries for it, yearns for it. You may think, “My goodness, if it does not happen soon, I am in trouble. After all, last week I turned forty. I am getting old.”

As we get older there are some physiological changes that inevitably take place. It used to be that I could eat whatever I wanted. Now I am a member of “Calorie Chapel” and I cannot. You eat something and you gain weight. But the Lord has built in a way to make up for that because even though at this point in life when I am starting to gain weight pretty easily, something happened to me about eight months ago now. I was eating popcorn and I hit a kernel. My tooth cracked and half came out. So it is almost as though the Lord has built in this way to kind of neutralize that fact. When you start gaining weight more easily, your teeth start falling out.

You may say, “Oh, that is terrible because then you look kind of funny with your teeth falling out.” Not really, because at the same time your teeth start falling out, your eyes start going bad as well, so you cannot see yourself when you look into the mirror. You do not even notice how bad you are looking. “Oh, but Jon, other people do and they talk about you that you are not looking like you used to.” At the same time your hearing is not quite as keen as it once was, so you do not hear those conversations as easily. Even if you hear them, you do not remember them the next day anyway.

We are getting older and it is causing stress. Did you see this article in Thursday’s paper? This is from the Associated Press.

Doctors have uncovered what must be one of nature’s crueler ironies. People, especially men, are about twenty percent more likely to suffer a heart attack on their birthday than any other day of the year.

That is incredible. Why? They go on to say that it is because of the stress of realizing you are getting older. It has something to do with this midlife crisis mentality, or whatever. I suggest to you that it has more to do with the free dinner you get at Denny’s.

At this point, though, a lot of us start thinking, “When is it going to happen?” It is like the father who talked to his son who was always playing Nintendo. He said, “Son, you know what? Here you are, glued to that game. When Abraham Lincoln was your age, he was studying every night

by the light of the fire.” The boy looked up from his Nintendo game and shot right back to his dad. “Yeah, well, when Abraham Lincoln was your age, he was president of the United States.”

When I was younger and used to hear the stories about Calvary Chapel, I thought, “I am in my twenties and that did not happen for Chuck until he was forty.” And now, a lot of us are beginning to wonder, “When is it going to happen?”

Thus, many of us fall at this point into the very real vulnerability, the very real temptation, to make it happen in our own energy—self-promotion. “The clock is ticking. Man, I have to do it now.” Consequently we go to seminars that are given entitled, “Marketing the Church,” and we try to figure out how we can better present ourselves.

Let me tell you, self-promotion paths lead to the pit. Literally, self-promotion brings you to the pit. Ask Lucifer. He was in heaven. He had a rip-roaring ministry. He was a worship leader. He was not only a worship leader, he was a worshipping machine. His body was an instrument. His hands were tambourines. His vocal cords were like organ pipes. He was really a lean, mean worshipping machine. He had a significant ministry and then he decided to promote himself a little higher. You know the story. Right there in [Isaiah 14:14](#), suddenly Lucifer said, “I will ascend and I will be like God.” It led him down. He will find himself in the pit for a thousand years, escatologically. Literally, it is the bottomless pit. Satan shows us very clearly that self-promotion will lead to the pit.

Jude here in this little letter—this little postcard of an epistle—also points out that fact when he begins to give us some really wonderful warnings. I like that. As pastors, we need it. We need to receive it and we need to share it. As shepherds, if we only feed the flock and never warn them, we are just fattening them up for the kill. And here Jude is giving a strong warning so that we would not be fattened up for the kill and devoured by the enemy.

He talks about some very real examples of what can happen to those involved in ministry. The one that I am to share on is found in [Jude 11](#) as Jude says,

Woe to them! They are gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily
after the error of Balaam, and perished in the gainsaying of
Korah.

I want to share with you about this third individual mentioned in verse 11. “Woe to them that perished in the gainsaying of Korah.”

Korah also, like Lucifer, found that self-promotion is the pits. That is exactly where it will lead him. You know the story. Turn with me to Numbers 16, would you please, as Jude reaches back to this Old Testament example. Watch what happens as Korah begins this process of self-promotion, wanting to elevate himself beyond his called ministry and how it leads him to the pit, quite literally.

Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi,
with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of
Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; and they rose up before
Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty
leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation,
men of renown. ([Numbers 16:1–2](#))

Here Korah is leading a rebellion, an insurrection. Did you know that Korah, whose name means “bold one,” is showing some boldness here? It is not based in purity. It is based in self-ambition. I suggest to you that part of this problem between Korah and Moses is because they were first cousins. Korah’s father was Amram’s brother. Amram is the father of Moses. Consequently, these two were related. They were first cousins. Could it be that Korah was tired of watching Moses get all the press; that Korah was tired of seeing Moses gain all of the prominence? He was his first cousin and he knew him. He perhaps spent time with him in earlier days and it must have been hard for him to see what was happening. He may have wondered, “Why is Moses getting all the attention?”

Familiarity can indeed, bring contempt. The Lord can use that in a big way, when you say, “Why is my brother, why is my cousin, why is my colleague getting all the attention, all the glory, all the opportunity? It does not seem fair. What about me? Why should he be mister big shot? Why are they the big time? Why not me? I know them and I have spent time with them. I am certainly as good as they are. Why do they get all the attention?”

The Coptic Church has an interesting story. It is a legend, in which there was a holy man, a desert father who was living righteously in solitude, monastically. Satan sent several demons to try to seduce, tempt, and pull down this holy man. Nothing worked. The demons came back and reported to Satan saying, “We cannot get to him. He is a holy person.” Satan says, “Watch this.” According to that legend, Satan went to that holy man in the desert in disguise as a messenger and said to the holy man, “Did you hear the news? Your brother has just been named bishop of Alexandria.” That holy man’s mouth turned down, his eyes tightened up, and Satan knew that he had him. He could not get to him with the obvious temptations, but instead incited jealousy and ambition. He wondered why his brother was exalted to be the bishop of Alexandria and thus, Satan got him.

I suggest to you that this is partially what is happening here. Korah is wondering why his cousin Moses keeps getting the attention. What about him? And so he gets 250 men together, men that were famous, men that were of renowned. They gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron. It was not just Moses, but Aaron too. I wonder what Aaron thought when he saw Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 famous men, powerful individuals, coming towards him, instigating and launching rebellion against Moses and against him.

I wonder if he was sort of burdened, haunted, and convicted. You see, a couple of chapters previously, Aaron did the same thing Korah is now doing. He and his sister Miriam went to their brother Moses and began to question and judge him. Because of that—and again, you know the story—Miriam was smitten with leprosy. Even as Aaron was launching a semi-rebellion and judging Moses, now he is on the receiving end of rebellion and judgment. The birds are coming home to roost. That is always the way it is.

I wonder if we really believe the Scripture which tells us so pointedly:

Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows,
that shall he also reap. ([Galatians 6:7](#))

What we sow is going to come back to us. The measure that we give out—either in love and mercy, or in judgment and rebellion—is going to come back to you and it is going to come back to me.

You say, “I thought the Lord was forgiving.” He is! “I thought the Lord was gracious.” He is. When I sin, the moment there is confession there is also absolute forgiveness. He declares to us, “Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” [Micah 7:19](#) tells us they are buried in the sea. For the people of Israel, the open ocean was a place they did not go poking around and digging stuff up in. The people of Israel were not a seafaring people. So when Jesus told them that if they offended a child, it would be better for them that a millstone was hung around their neck and they were cast into the sea, that caused a terrifying image to be conjured up in their minds (cf. [Matthew 18:6](#)). We explore the sea. We scuba dive. We send submarines down and film Jacques Cousteau specials and all of that. I suggest to you that a present-day kind of application would be to have your sins put in the bottom of a toxic waste dump where nobody wants to go poking around. Nobody should go poking in a toxic dump.

When I sin, because of the work of Jesus on the cross, I am forgiven. The moment I make confession—with confession comes forgiveness—right then, I am forgiven.

I need to remember that there is a serious thing about sin. The seeds that I sowed in my sin will still come up. It is inevitable. With confession comes instant forgiveness. In fact, it is already done. The price has already been paid. It has already been taken care of, as far as the Father is concerned, because of the propitiating work of Jesus Christ. Now I am declared justified. It is just as if I never sinned. I am free, but the seeds I planted in that season are going to come up.

That is why a lot of us are beginning to learn to hate sin. The beginning of wisdom is to fear God, we are told. And the fear of God is to hate sin. We begin to realize that even though we are recipients of grace and joyous forgiveness, sin brings some real stinking repercussions. The birds come home to roost inevitably. It is not God’s doing. He is not punishing me. That has been taken care of at the cross of Calvary. It is the results of the crop that I planted. The birds come home to roost.

This story in our newspaper last fall cracks me up.

The birds come home to roost. A man showing off a turkey he thought he had killed, was shot in the leg when the wounded bird thrashed around in his car trunk and triggered his shotgun. Sheriff Warren Silk said, “The turkeys are fighting back.” The accident occurred last week after Lan shot the turkey, put it in his car along with his loaded shotgun. They drove to a neighbor’s house to show the bird off. While the son was pulling the turkey out of the trunk, it began struggling, according to the sheriff, and his claw fired the gun. The shot went through the side panel of the car and shot the senior Lan’s leg.

The story goes on—

He shot this turkey a week before turkey season began. So not only was he shot in the leg, but he also was stiffly fined for doing it. The turkeys are fighting back. The birds come home to roost.

And here is Aaron seeing these turkeys, 250 of them, coming to gobble Moses and him up. Here they come, 250 in number, and watch what happens. As they gather around Aaron (who had previously launched a mini-rebellion himself) and Moses, they said to him, “You take too much upon you” ([Numbers 16:3](#)). The Targum translates it this way, or renders it in this fashion: “You have ruled too long.” That is an interesting implication. “Hey Moses, you have had your time. It is somebody else’s turn.” That is the idea here. “You take too much upon yourself. You have had your time. It is now time to step aside.” The implication is that Korah is saying, “Let me come in.”

You take too much upon you. The congregation is holy,
wherefore lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the
Lord? What are you doing? We are all equal in ministry. Who
gave you the right to rule so long and have such authority? (cf.
[Numbers 16:3](#))

Now watch what Moses does. I love it. “When Moses heard it, he fell on his face” ([Numbers 16:4](#)). He did not get in their face; he fell on his face.

Before I can really get in somebody’s face, I better first fall on my face. I think that we are going to recognize Moses quite readily when we get to heaven. He will be the fellow with the flattened face. This was a common practice for him. He was the meekest man on the face of the earth. How do we know that? He told us. The Spirit inspired him to pen that truth, in Numbers 12. He was a man of meekness and he falls on his face—not getting in theirs, but falling on his. He seeks the Lord for instruction and direction in dealing with this rebellion. By the way, this is the kind of heart that I want in my life. Lord, help me not to fight back, get in the face, or come unglued. That is a sign of a Saul-like mentality.

Saul was king but he was threatened in his ministry and in his position by this young upstart, David. People were talking about him and singing songs concerning him. And when Saul saw David play his harp, something stirred in him of jealousy, of envy, and so he grabbed a spear and fired it at David. David did a very wise thing—he ducked! But David, being a young man, could have easily taken that spear and hurled it right back at Saul, and probably had a good chunk of people behind him, saying, “Saul has gone crazy. David, you are our hero.” Three times Saul fired a javelin at David. Three times David ducked and he never hurled it back.

Now, how do I know when I am moving in anointed authority and ministry, or I am carnal and fleshly and ambitious? It is very simple. It is when I am firing back at the people who are firing at me. Am I looking for every opportunity to make my point as I grab that spear and hurl it? It is amazing to me that you can always tell when somebody is threatened, intimidated, or not truly anointed because he will throw spears.

David, a man after God’s own heart, did not do that. In fact, the one time he came even halfway close to something like that (when he clipped the garment of Saul), it grieved him greatly. It grieved him that he would actually clip the garment of the one who David says was anointed. “Hey, David, I thought Samuel poured the oil over you.” David realized it was not yet time for him to take authority; that was left in God’s hands.

Brothers, when we start chucking spears, or when you are trying to make your point and nail somebody to the wall, you can be sure that there is probably a factor of carnal intimidation or fear. And we need to repent of that.

Moses was not firing, not initially. He was falling on his face in humility, seeking God. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are not argumentation or proving our point philosophically or theologically. It is not that.

Paul says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood” ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Any time that I wrestle against a person, I am inevitably fighting the wrong battle. There are spirits at work that are manipulating or exploiting that situation, and there is where the true battle is to be fought, in prayer, in intercession. Whenever I am fighting against a brother, struggling against a person, it is proof that I am fighting the wrong battle and I am moving out of fear and intimidation.

Moses here falls on his face, then he spoke unto Korah.

And he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!” Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel.”
([Numbers 16:5-9](#))

Do you not realize the opportunity that you have in your present situation, Korah? Do you not realize the calling or the glorious position that you are in right now? Why are you desiring, Korah, to take on more, and to climb the ladder higher, when you have a great opportunity presently to minister?

I think that all of us need to regularly be adjusted in our understanding of the priority of ministry. I do. We so often say that the key to ministry is speaking before the masses or evangelizing before the heathen. I suggest to you there is a different key. There is a higher priority.

Ezekiel 44 gives us that very pointedly. There we are told,

The Levites, who went astray when Israel went astray and caused Israel to fall into idolatry,” the Lord says, “they shall bear their iniquity. They will pay the price. They shall stand before the people, to minister to the people, to offer sacrifices for the people, for they caused Israel, the people, to fall into iniquity,” saith the Lord. (cf. [Ezekiel 44:10–11](#))

Now when I first read that it seemed very perplexing and confusing. Wait a minute. Lord, You are saying that these Levites who caused Your people to fall into iniquity and into idolatry are going to pay the price by standing before the people, sharing with them, and offering sacrifices on behalf of them? That is not punishment, Lord, that is privilege. But wait, the Lord then goes on to say,

“But the sons of Zadok (a subset of the Levites), those who went not astray, they shall come near to Me and they shall offer Me the fat and the blood. They shall come near to My table and minister to Me,” saith the Lord. (cf. [Ezekiel 44:15](#))

In so declaring, the Lord is showing that the true priority is not standing before people, but ministering to the Lord. That is what these guys were called to do. That is the opportunity that they had. And so do you, and so do I. The true priority of ministry is not to stand before people. That is punishment in comparison to the high calling of the Zadok. And that is ministering directly to the Lord, which can often be done more easily with less distraction, in smaller kinds of ministry.

Somehow we got into this mindset that numbers always indicate the success of the ministry. I am not convinced that is true at all. I believe that the Lord does raise up mega-churches—churches that have 20,000 people coming—because the Lord wants to say something to His whole body. Quite frankly, we are all too carnal to hear what the Lord might want to say through a church that has fifty, seventy, or a hundred people. It is just the sheer numerics of it that makes us stop, wonder and say, “What is going on down there?” We come to conferences and listen to leaders. When the Lord wants to say something to a generation, He will cause a church to blossom and grow incredibly in order to catch our attention because we are so carnal. We need that kind of bump on the head.

As I looked at Calvary Chapel, the Lord spoke to my heart. Coming out of Biola University frustrated, quite frankly, Calvary Chapel drew me because I was reading about it in the newspapers and *Time* Magazine. I was wondering what was going on and I was warned not to go there by my professor of theology. I came to understand some very important things that the Lord was saying to the church through that ministry; the beautiful balance between the teaching of the Word and the presence and power of the Spirit; the importance of systematic study; and the priority of love. Some key, foundational understandings were given in that large, exploding, growing situation.

I am not convinced that it is necessarily the easiest way or the best way to pastor people individually in a mega-church setting. You pastors that have a hundred people or two hundred people or seventy people, you are doing the work of the shepherd. That is where the action really is, in shepherding the sheep individually. As the numbers grow it becomes increasingly difficult to do that. And perhaps the Lord is saying, “That is the size I want your ministry. I want eighty, one hundred, or two hundred people to be loved-on and cared for. That is the parameter.” You are not a failure for having a church that size. That can be right where God wants you to be, tending, caring, and loving those precious people that He is in love with. He died for them, and cares about them so deeply. “Yeah, but I want to be in the inner circle.”

I wonder what the disciples thought when Peter, James, and John were always being called away by Jesus. On three occasions they were called away. Jesus took Peter, James, and John—the inner circle—into the house of Jairus, where he resurrected that twelve year old girl to show His power over death. Then He took them probably to Mount Hermon, the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17. Peter, James, and John got to go and see this glowing thing happening. He was shining. Jesus was showing them His glorification through death, as Moses and Elijah talked to Him about what would soon be—His exodus, His death. And then He took Peter, James, and John into the Garden of Gethsemane where He tried to show them His submission to death. The inner circle. Three times they were pulled together and Jesus showed them power over death,

glorification through death, and submission to death. Why did He do this? Who was the first to die of the disciples? It was James. Who was crucified upside down, so brutally taken where he would not want to go? It was Peter. As for John, history tells us that they put him into a caldron of boiling oil that did not kill him, so they exiled him to a living death on the Island of Patmos.

I am not sure I would sign up for the inner circle when I see the full story. Jesus pulled those guys away because He knew what they would soon go through. I suggest to you that whatever circle you are in, whatever sphere that you are orbiting in with the ministry, do not strive to move closer because there is some weight there. There are some challenges that might not be beneficial for you, but distracting to you and to the ministry that God really has for you. Which is what? “Lord, it is to minister to You, to walk with You. Lord. You know that I needed to be in Oregon these years, where I would have perhaps a more limited amount of distractions in certain ways, so that I might just minister to You, Lord.” The Lord knew that and that is where He stuck me. That is where He placed me. That is where I needed to be so that I might minister to Him. I can do it there, real easily. There are lots of nice places. The atmosphere is conducive for it.

So rejoice wherever you are. “It is not good,” Moses was saying, “trying to move up or get closer. You do not understand the opportunity you already have right where you are, Korah. You can minister to the Lord in that special kind of way.”

There is one more thing I just want to interject here, and I think it is important. This lesson was not just for Peter, James, and John in New Testament times, but also for Joseph in the Old Testament story. “Hey son, you get the coat of many colors (or big sleeves, literally). You have authority.” What did that do to Joseph? First of all, it caused him to have a severe headache. There is a thing called sibling rivalry and a lot of us know what that is about. His brothers were jealous of his authority and they decided to throw him in the pit. It gave him a headache and it caused his father to have a heartache.

Joseph’s brothers took that coat of big sleeves, that sign of authority, and they smeared blood on it and sent it back to their father. Jacob saw that coat and thought for sure his son, whom he gave that coat to as a sign of authority, was devoured by the beasts. It broke Jacob’s heart. It caused a headache for him, it caused a heartache for his father, and it caused a double-take for the wife of Potiphar. Joseph found himself once more in a place of authority in the house of Potiphar. It is a new coat. His old one is gone, so he gets a new coat. This woman has eyes for Joseph. She flirts with him and tries to get to him. Finally she has an opportunity when she is alone with him and she grabs him by the what? She grabs that coat, that symbol (cf. [Genesis 39:11-13](#)). I will bet he was starting to wonder about coats at that point. He did something wisely which we all need to consider constantly. He slipped out of the coat and he ran for his life! He did what we are all told to do. He fled those youthful lusts (cf. [2 Timothy 2:22](#)).

I want to suggest to you something a little more subtle that a lot of us have either discovered personally or observationally. It is a funny thing about authority—it attracts women. It is interesting that spiritual authority draws the women. It is amazing. Here is Joseph with his coat of authority and here are you in ministry. Do you know what happens, brothers? We know experientially or we know observationally, that what happens is not that a woman comes in the slinky negligee. It is the spiritual sister who loves God deeply, who is impressed with your spiritual authority and wants to pray with you. She wants to receive counsel from you. You have no interest in her romantically. There is no draw to her sexually; you just share with her. You listen to her struggles and you hear her prophecies or biblical insight. You share with her. And then a funny thing begins to happen. Jesus talked about it. Jesus said, “Wherever a man’s treasure

is, there will his heart be also” ([Matthew 6:21](#)). You pour your treasure into her, your insights. Or she pours her insights into you. A transfer of treasure begins to take place. Suddenly, unexpectedly, amazingly, your heart follows.

Now Jesus would go on to say, “No man can serve two masters” ([Matthew 6:24](#)). Then what does she do? She goes home to her husband and she wonders why he does not have these spiritual insights, the tenderness, and the wisdom that you do. He can do nothing right. You go home to your wife and you wonder why she is not interested in ministry and spirituality like this woman. No man can serve two masters. You find yourself inevitably hating one, judging one, or condemning one. It is amazing.

Now the man, seeing that his wife is receiving help from a pastor at church or from you, perhaps feels castrated spiritually; so he pulls further away from ministry. Your heart is now beginning to be softened toward her, maybe even romantically. Watch out, you are in trouble!

I suggest to you as ministers, it is not just enough that we flee youthful lusts and slip out of the coat. I suggest to you that we do that indeed, but take it a step farther. Take what Paul said literally, at face value. He said, “If a woman has a question, let her ask her husband at home,” period (cf. [1 Corinthians 14:35](#)). I personally do not believe that is just cultural. I believe that is very practical. If a sister has a question, you tell her as a pastor, “Would you ask your husband?” There should be no counseling—not one session, not five minutes. You lovingly, but firmly say, “Talk to your husband.” Then the husband comes to you and you have the opportunity to disciple him. He then goes and shares with his wife. He is not being castrated spiritually and you are not putting your treasure in a woman that will cause your heart to inevitably follow. You just do not answer questions in that way—in depth with women—period.

You say, “Well Jon that sounds pretty legalistic.” No, that is just wisdom. It is just wisdom. “But what if the husband is not a Christian?” Tell her to go ask her husband anyway. We have eight or nine men now at Applegate Christian Fellowship who were saved because we sent the women to ask their unsaved husbands. They were so blown away that their wives were asking them questions about spirituality that they called us up and we began to minister to them. Now they are born again. This is the way it should be.

You may ask, “What if her husband will not come and talk to you and he is not saved? What if she is single, divorced, or going through an estrangement of some sort?” I suggest to you that, again, Paul makes it perfectly clear in Titus. The older women are to counsel and teach younger women about being keepers of the home, loving their husbands, and good godly things (cf. [Titus 2:4-5](#)). Women are to counsel women. Men are to disciple men.

I believe that we need to realize that this coat that we carry in ministry has a strange effect on people and we better be very careful. Take Paul’s admonition literally and say, “We just will not answer questions in depth, at length, even in one session.” I throw that out for your strong and prayerful consideration.

Joseph had his coat. James, Peter, and John were in the inner circle. With those privileges come certain distractions, headaches, heartaches, double-takes, death, and all that kind of thing. Korah, you should relax and be happy where you are presently. Why are you seeking for more?

Then Moses calls these fellows together and says, “The Lord is going to show who is His. Take censers.” And they took censers and put incense therein and lit fire. The censers that they

brought, we are told, were made of brass. The Levitical law said that censers in ministry were to be made of gold. Why didn't they have gold, these 250 rebellious men with Korah, Dathan and Abiron? Maybe they used it all in making the golden calf in another rebellion. Brass is that metal that speaks of judgment. Gold is beaten. Brass is molded. What are we being told?

The flyers you get in the mail all the time for the conferences you are invited to about how to mold your ministry—it is brass, man. It is brass. Cultural relevancy, tricks, dancing bears, lighting, action and everything else—it is brass. It is molded. Mold yourself. Mold yourself so that you might be used and have authority, fruitfulness, and success in ministry. Gold is not molded. Gold is beaten. Gold is carefully hammered out.

That is the difference between Korah and Moses. With authority there comes, under the surface, some real difficult times of preparation and some stretches. Moses was a man who could speak with authority because he had spent time with the Lord on the mountain. Forty days and forty nights this man spent with the Lord. He did not eat a thing or drink any fluids. It was not because he was trying to prove some kind of spirituality. Do you know what happened? He was in the presence of the Lord and he just forgot to eat. He was just blown away by God's goodness. He was just enjoying the Lord.

Meanwhile, do you know what the people down below were doing? They said, "What are we paying the pastor for? Aaron, you be our leader. You are the assistant, so you take over. Where is Moses? We cannot find him. We cannot get a hold of him. He will not answer his beeper. What is wrong with him?"

But Moses knew something which Korah never understood and that is that there is a difference between brass and gold. Moses knew, "I need to be on the mountain no matter what is happening down below. I need to be with the Lord in order that I might have a word from the Lord for the people of the Lord. I have to be in touch." For forty days, he was gone. When he came down—speaking of gold—what happened? He was glowing. He came down with the law and the people said, "Whatever you say, we will do." Why? It was because he was glowing. They could see that there was something unique that was happening—he was coming with the word of the Lord.

There is a better example still. There is one greater than Moses by far. Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, what was happening with Him? That which was inside of Him was bursting out from Him. The real miracle of the Mount of Transfiguration is not that Jesus glowed that day, but that He did not glow for the rest of the days in His thirty-three year life. That is the real mystery. He just started glowing. Notice what they were talking about on that mountain. They were talking about death.

I suggest that we can talk to our people, we can talk to our fellowships, we can lay down the law, we can give the heavy word, the life and death kind of exhortation; but if we are not glowing, the people are not going to be receiving. They will take it as though they are being beaten or manipulated. They will interpret it as being pressured. Whether you are talking life and death-like transfiguration or laying down the law like Sinai, the fact of the matter is: if we are shining because we have been in the presence of the Lord—not some brass thing—then people will receive from us. It makes all the difference in the world.

The men of Korah had their brass censers. They were the wrong censers with the wrong fire. They are going to get burned, literally—[Numbers 16:35](#) points that out. When the judgment did come down, the fire of the Lord consumed those 250 men. Again, we know from Leviticus 10

where fire was to be taken from. Fire was to be taken only from the altar. They ignited their own fire.

A lot of guys are talking these days about being burned out in ministry. This is the ultimate burn out. They were consumed by fire, literally. “I am so burned out.” Whenever I hear that I always say, “Hey, you know what? If you are burned out it is indicative that the fire is not from the altar.” What does the altar speak of? It speaks of one thing—the cross of Calvary. The cross motivates us to serve the people or win the lost. Just say, “Wow. Lord, You have been so good to me in dying for me. My sins are forgiven. I am going to heaven. I am so appreciative of that fact I cannot help but serve You, Lord.” That is the fire that will cause you to glow. With any other fire, you will burn out. You know that.

These guys did just that. It was fire that was not from the altar. They lit it themselves. It was the wrong fire in the wrong censers. They were brass instead of gold. They were the wrong brothers. None of these guys, at least the 250, were Levites. Korah was, but these guys that stood with him and marched behind him, were not. They had no business attempting to do this because they moved into a sphere that they were not called to and they ended up being destroyed. They ended up being wiped out, and literally burned out.

What about Korah? Moses said, “The Lord is going to show today what is really happening.” Sure enough, the Lord made a new thing take place, even as Moses said would happen.

The Lord caused the earth to open up and they went down quick into the pit. They were swallowed up in the pit, and the earth closed over them and they perished there in the midst of the congregation. (cf. [Numbers 16:30, 33](#))

Do you want to get in the pits in ministry? Let me tell you how. Push yourself, leave the ministry God has called you to serve in—the sphere, the size, the priority, and start saying, “I am going to challenge this brother or that one. I am going to throw spears at them. I am going to show my brass. I am going to show my stuff. I am going to prove my point.” You will end up depressed. You will go home and say, “I am really in the pit. Why am I in the pit?”

Now let’s move into the Gospel of Matthew where there was excitement in the air. There was great anticipation. You could sense something was about to happen. Indeed, a few hours later the whole city would be lining the streets crying, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of Yahweh, the Lord” (cf. [Matthew 21:9](#)). You could feel it. You could sense it.

Now a woman came to Jesus, fell before Him, and she began to worship. The worship, though, was kind of interesting. It was kind of like mine is sometimes. Maybe yours is too, occasionally. It was to manipulate Him. Jesus saw that her worship was not because of her simple adoration of who He was, but because she was wanting something from Him.

We come into the Lord’s presence, sing songs, lift hands, bow knees or whatever we might do. “Lord, I love You. I lift my voice. I worship You. Oh my soul—by the way, Lord, now that I am here, now that You are listening, I have a little problem, a little burden, a little financial need.” We act like the Lord does not see through that. He sees. He must get the biggest kick out of me, the biggest chuckle out of you. We think that we are setting Him up, softening Him through worship to get something from Him.

Well, that is what she did that day. She falls and worships Him. Jesus says, “What do you want?” I suggest to you that there was a smile on His face and an understanding tone in His voice. “Well, now that You are asking,” she says. “Since You brought it up, Lord, two boys, Your disciples, James and John, can they be on Your right hand and on Your left hand when You come into Your kingdom?” (cf. [Matthew 20:21](#)). It seemed like a good thing to ask. “Can they be exalted? Can they have a place of visibility? Can they be lifted in a higher place physically? Can they have that kind of ministry on Your right hand and on Your left hand the day You come into Your kingdom?”

Jesus answered this woman rather quizzically, “Are you able to drink of the cup that I am to drink from, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am about to undergo?” ([Matthew 20:22](#)). James and John were standing there, no doubt feeling the glares from the other disciples who were disgusted with them trying to get ahead. They said, “Oh, we are.” And Jesus went on His way. His answer seemed rather odd to her that day. “What kind of an answer is that? What cup is He speaking of? What baptism is He talking about?”

It was not too many days later that same mother, Salome, was on a little hill outside of that holy city. She looks up and sees her Lord crucified, nailed to the tree. There are the Marys with her as she is standing there. The other disciples had all fled and hidden except for John who was hanging around. It must have hit her like a ton of bricks, a bolt of lightening, what she saw there that day. He said, “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” That day He came into His kingdom in a certain kind of way. It must have hit her brutally when she saw on His right hand, in a place of high visibility, and on His left hand, there were two men being crucified. She must have realized that was what He was talking about. “No wonder He did not answer me in the affirmative. I could have seen my two boys crucified today. I thought I was asking for something right. He did not answer me in the way that I wanted and now I see that He was right.”

Oh brothers, you have asked. You have talked to the Lord about a greater ministry. Leave it with the Lord because He loves you. If it does not work out in the way that you are desiring, in the way that you are requesting, I know that if He does not do it, it is best for you. “Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will be added to you” ([Matthew 6:33](#)). I know this. He proved His love on the cross of Calvary. And if He spared not His own Son, will He not freely give all good things? (cf. [Romans 8:32](#)). In other words, I can just relax. I am at peace in the place of cross-examination in my own ministerial situation.

Lord, I love You and I know You are in love with me. Here are some thoughts, some ideas, and some burdens. I will talk them over with You. But now I leave them in Your hands completed because I see in Your hands the proof that You do love me. The holes in Your hands and feet prove unequivocally, irrefutably that You are in love with me. Therefore I leave it with You. If You do not do what I am suggesting, Lord, I know that You see it would not be good for me and I just leave it with You.

The place of peace is at the foot of the cross, realizing that the Lord loves you so much. He died for you and wants nothing but the best in your ministry, in your life personally. Be at peace. Do not make the mistake of Salome, demanding your way. Just be at peace with what the Lord wants to do.

Well, let's pray, shall we?

Father, I pray that my brothers and I together might not be those who, like Korah, are striving for a different position, a higher ministry, but would just be what You want us to be, knowing, Lord, that You want the best. You proved it on the cross and there we rest completely. I pray, Father, for these precious guys, for my brothers, that Lord, if there are spear throwers, if there is in our hearts a rebelliousness, a restlessness, even right now, we might give it up, let it go, and trust in You as we see what You did on the cross. May we understand that You love and want the best for us. Father, we reaffirm our belief that You know what is best. We choose to do whatever You want us to do, serve wherever You want us to serve to however many it might be. We leave it with Thee, truly. In Jesus' name. Amen.