

The Confession Of A Minister

A Warning To Those Who Have & Who Seek To Serve God

This is the introduction to the Study: "6 Years a Servant"

"In Peru, Christians don't expect to get something for serving Jesus, they expect to give something!" -Pastor Zapata

Serving God full time can be a rewarding and blessed experience. You will reach unbelievable highs as you see God answer prayers, heal, bless, and work in people's lives. Despite all the trials you will face, it is eternally worth it. Knowing Jesus gave His all, we are called to give no less. It is the right response to such a powerful love.

Introduction

While this will give the layman and the body of Christ a peek behind the curtain, it is primarily for those who would be ministers for the Lord. I would like to prepare and give these anecdote and antidotes to those who seek to serve God. This is an attempt to shorten the learning curve and provide the hearer with signposts to look out for. So when they inevitably come to them, they will remember this warning. Then hopefully, they will not feel as if something strange has happened to them.

This is also an attempt to remove the rose-colored glasses of pride, ego, and personal kingdom building. As many get into ministry with ideas of "*All they will do for the Lord!*" not realizing this is pride with religion as its pillar. As I have seen these types coming out of seminary believing that personal success is the same as kingdom success. Let me tell you right now, it is not.

One might consider the missionary who died for Jesus on their first trip as a failure. No book written, no sermons given, no church built, no soul saved. Yet in the kingdom, this was the greatest success of love by giving oneself completely to be used by God in whatever way He desires. For some, this is not enough- they want the name, the church, the book, name recognition, and big conferences.

Worldly success is not heavenly success. So, leave all your preconceived notions at the door. You will not change the world, you will not be a history maker, and you won't do anything of use for the kingdom of God. Yes, you heard that right. If anything is going to be done, it will be Jesus in you doing it. You are a tool, an instrument meant to be used as the Master Craftsmen sees fit. You have no say in this. To reject this role is to reject Christ. Your works will be burned up and you will have wasted your time concerning your own well being.

Though God can still use an ego-filled, self seeker for the good of others; others may be blessed, but you will have failed God and yourself. God does not need a mover and shaker; someone who will “*leave their mark,*” what He requires is humble obedience in love, the individual that will be empty of self, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as content in sweeping the alleyways in God’s Name as he would be running the largest church in the world.

The Great Lie

What is often taught in seminaries is a lie: that serving others is the same as serving God. That is straight from the pits of hell. Loving others is loving God; that is clear in scripture. Serving is a different thing. You become of reasonable service to others by serving God. To the other extreme, you become of no use to God serving others, thinking you are doing it for God.

Who is your master, the people or God? You cannot serve two masters. The issue is that we desire companionship and recognition so greatly; we think we can serve man and call it serving God. When all this does is invite compromise and rejecting of God to please the people we say we serve in His name. If you truly serve God, your companionship with humanity will suffer great harm. As you will find making God happy often does not make others happy.

So you want to serve God, are you willing to do it completely alone? There is profound loneliness in it that no other can ever know, unless they are doing the same. God told me that if I was going to be His friend, I will no longer have any friends. This is true, though I do have my church family. Are you prepared for that? Yes, you will have a church family, but they will never understand the calling you have to be separate.

Do you want God enough to love Him so much that you can do without the love and support of others? Not that there is no love, just not like you would receive if you did not serve God. How is this? Most think acceptance is love, while a minister must serve God, and place the soul of the person above their feelings, their happiness, or your relationship with them. They won’t understand this “real love” as love, and since you reject their sin and rebellion, they will feel rejected as a whole. Unable to separate the two, no matter how much brotherly love, sacrifice, or otherwise you show them. For them, their sin is who they are; they do not see themselves as God sees them, nor how He wishes them to be.

Now, magnify this across every person in your life. You become the voice they wish to ignore, as you keep pointing back to God. If they can’t kill the message, as the saying goes, they seek to kill the messenger. Now this is not a problem if you want to be a satanic people pleaser. They will love your constant acceptance of their rebellion against God. If you want to be a God pleaser, then they will respond to you like they responded to Jesus with indifference and hate.

Poured Out And Emptied

Are you ready to be poured out and emptied beyond what you can conceive from the starting line? If you do not know yourself very well, have no fear, you will get to know who you really are. It's easy when everything is working out great. Then the problems start and your problems will reveal your true character. Don't be surprised if you do not live up to your delusion of yourself. God intends to break you down and pour you out in the fire of His correction. You will not be the same person you are now, if done right and you don't resist God, you will be more like God.

You are not better than Jesus, in **(Luke 2:52)** even Jesus had to grow in favor with God. You are no different. Come to terms with how greatly you stink, you are not good enough, and that God has a lot of work to do in your life. If you cannot come to terms with this, you are already failing and it proves the point.

What will happen is that over time you start to think so little of yourself, even as being the worst of those around you. For the closer you get to the throne of God, the greater your shortcomings are revealed. This will never stop. Get used to it. Yet, you will understand how valuable you truly are to God. It's a strange trade. Yes, often you will be walking on a higher path than most around you, yet realize to who much is given, much is required **(Luke 12:48)**. In this, you will see your filthy nakedness in the light of God's Holiness.

I have been called prideful, as I speak the word of God with absolute conviction. They mistake my conviction and confidence in God as Pride. When in reality, I think so poorly of myself that I am mystified why God chooses to love me. Yet, I believe in that love absolutely.

Serving God is an exchange and a transformation; you think you will change the world, when in reality it is God that will change you. It is God that will give the increase in others lives as you sow seed and water. It is God in you that will change the world. You just get the blessing of being there when it happens. Don't forget this: it's not you, it never will be, and it never can be!

What Do You Have To Offer

What seed will you sow? What water will you pour out? Is it your own great understanding or love? Where did you get that? **(1 Corinthians 4:7)** asks: "what do you have that has not been given to you?" So, what do you really bring to the table for God? NOTHING!

You cannot come to Jesus unless you are called **(John 6:44)**. You have no gifts unless they are given **(Hebrews 2:4)**. What is it you're really bringing to the table that God doesn't already have? Nothing except willingness, even in this, the potter has made the clay as such **(Romans 9:21)**. These you can focus on: love, submission, humbleness, and thanksgiving. You need to realize that the only thing that makes you special is God's love for you.

If you still think what you can do for God is the meaning for your walk and relationship with Him, this will fail you complexly. A day may come when nothing can be done, and the problems stop all your best efforts. What then? Are you a failure? Should you think less of yourself, and should you give up? Of course you would, if this was a worldly situation. Find another job and try again. Yet with God, your worth to Him is not based on your success for Him. As we can never really perceive what success is in God's eyes.

Think of Mary and Martha in **(Luke 10)**, you can either do it with God, or for God. *"With God"* the outcome matters less, as you are with God. *"For God"* the outcome is everything, who wants to feel like they failed God? Yet, there is the torment of doing *"for God"* as opposed to doing *"with God."* Be a travel partner with God, do what you see Him doing. Don't run ahead and be a "doer" for God, you will be lonely and burned out.

Will you live out your ministry life being outcome oriented, always looking for the results? Or, process oriented, being faithful with the days needs? Who can really know what outcome God has planned for your efforts?

Outcome orientation is often beholden to an immediate future that is within arm's reach of the minister. It is a torment and tyranny that will drain your spiritual strength. The process oriented minister gives it to God. Knowing that the effort today, like the disciples, are not just for today, yet for a future you cannot even fathom.

Imagine if Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was *"outcome ministry"* driven, having a 10 year plan to reach Israel? His early death would have become a failure to the goals and plans. Being a *"process oriented"* minister, all he could do is what God called him to do and be faithful in that. Dare I point out, that before his death, Jesus stood for him at the throne of God to witness his *"process oriented"* faithfulness in **(Act 7:56)**?

Will you allow yourself to be anchored to results or process orientated faithful labor? One will help free you, the other will be a cruel taskmaster.

Burn Out

Imagine for a moment that you're an Olympic long distance sprinter. You just sprinted the race of your life. You're tired and exhausted. What do you do now? Do you quit sprinting for the rest of your life? Just because you are tired after you finished one race? You definitely are not fit to run another race right away, but after some rest, you will be ready for another go.

This metaphor is ministry. Don't let the devil convince you to quit just because you become tired after putting in all the effort. Burn out and stress come for us all. You live in human flesh and yes, the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak **(Mark 14:38)**. Even Jesus in the garden, as found in **(Luke 22:39-46)**, grew weary, as also found in other places in scripture. If you want another example go look at Elijah in **(1 Kings 19)**. Are you any better than these?

You are no different. You are not special; keep reminding yourself of this. You may be willing and that makes you different, this does not make you “special.” In this context, only God and Jesus are special. Throw off that burden of being exceptional; you are not, so give it up! It is a pressure you cannot afford to carry around with you. It is the screws in the coffin Satan will always try to put you in.

For example: You failed in sin, “*I thought you were special.*” Your outreach did not work, “*I thought you were special.*” You’re tired and have nothing left to give, “*I thought you were special.*”

You see it, don’t you? If you are the focus for the strength of your service to God, you will always fail. Count on it. If you are always trying to live up to this idealized image of yourself, have you not turned yourself into an idol?

His Love, Not Your Perfection

Imagine yourself as perused by a magnificent love, the greatest the world has ever known. You did not deserve this love; you didn’t even know it existed. Yet, for some glorious reason, this love has sought you out. It wants to be lavished upon you. With all your faults and failings, it is poured out on you.

Think of it like a shower; the water cleans the dirt off. Is it you that is special, or the water that did the work? Now if you get dirty again, does the water/love stop being special? Does it lose its power to clean and change you? No, it remains special and powerful. You are the recipient of its power. It receives the glory, honor, and praise, and yes, the title of special.

Do not try to steal from God what is His. You should rightly call yourself His child, this means you are loved, and you call Him special. You have no power at all, only compliance in the power of His Holy Spirit.

When I fail, I do not think much of it. I repent and move on. I refuse to worship myself through useless guilt. For me, it becomes a legal issue: I do not want to fail, though I do at times, yet I do not let my failure be the reason for even more failure. I rob the devil of the power of guilt. Remind him that God is special and His love cleanses me of my guilt. Now that I am clean again, I move forward seeking to not fail again. For I am His child, a child that is loved, there is no torment in this, only freedom of being loved. Remember there is no fear in love (**1 John 4:17-18**).

Pride

God shared with me that pride is Joy turned inward. Meaning that when things go great and they will at times, we take the joy we are to shoot straight to God’s throne in acts of praise and eat it, and then digest it into self worship. We think “*Look what I did!*” or “*Look how I accomplished this!*” Pride is simply robbing God of His glory and praise due His name.

As I mentioned earlier, God can use an ego-driven person as His word and will not return void (**Isaiah 55:11**). Some mistake success as God’s blessing upon their work and overlooking their pride. Don’t worry; your works will get burned up in the judgment. Something worse is happening here though, you are using God’s name in vain to worship

self. This I have seen a lot in ministry. People riding the praise of God like surfers using it for ego of self: “Look at me!”

Do you really think God needs you that badly to bring Him glory? That somehow God will slip off His throne if you were not there to keep Him propped up in place? That He needs your prayers or efforts to accomplish anything at all? To the contrary, God is allowing us to partake in the work He is accomplishing.

If you ever allow yourself to think that God “needs you,” or you are “God’s man,” you are “His prophet,” or any other ridiculous idea, then you are lion bait. God has chosen to use humanity to reach humanity, this is true, but if you think for one moment you are not replaceable, then you live in a house of pride. You have become bedfellows with Satan.

Remind yourself every day the privilege God has extended to you to serve Him and love His people. When you feel great joy for a job well done, do not eat it; shoot it straight to God as fast as you can. And whenever you receive praise from others, may the first word out of your mouth be “*Praise God!*”, and really mean it. It is right, as the Bible says, to give honor where honor is due (**Romans 13:7**), but it is our duty and privilege to instantly redirect it back to God. As a minister, are you not trying to restore back to God what was harmed by Satan’s rebellion? This being the loss of Family, Praise, and Worship; the he must receive it absolutely all the time!

Why?

What is your reasoning for going into full time ministry? The harvest is great; the workers are few (**Luke 10:2**). This is true; though it is no reason for anyone to go into full time ministry. Often in the times we live in, with “rock star preachers” and very rich ministers, it can be alluring. You need to think of those examples as professional sports. It’s rare that only a select few make it to that point in life, and is not what is likely to happen for you, unless you sell your soul to do so.

Full time ministry is a calling from God. It is a gift given that comes with very specific attributes for the individual. Love being the greatest, which we will talk about. Outside of love it takes commitment, stick-to-itiveness, vision, and obedience, the ability to suffer and maintain a high level of competency, even when crippled by the weight of it all. To be offended and rejected often, and still be able to perform your calling.

Yes, it is a performance. Not unlike an actor, a singer, or even a police officer. You must be able to put your own struggles, pressures, worries, and concerns to the side and place others before yourself. This is not easy. I have often had no idea how I was going to take care of my own family, while taking care of others.

To endure this, it takes love and ability to perform your calling; much like one rising to the call as an athlete or firefighter. Do you think in these vocations they always feel great? Or, do you think they play sick, putting out the fires while tired, and press on for the good of others? You must do the same for God. Rarely will you feel 100 percent, with no issues in your life, spiritually, or pains in your body. If the devil knows he can stop you

from serving God and ministering to others by creating problems in your life, the problems will never cease.

You must get used to playing injured. You also must get used to others not caring that you are injured. As most can only think of themselves and their needs. You must trust that if you take care of God's people, He will take care of you.

The Drive Thru Window Of Ministry

People go through the drive-thru to order their food, demand fast and hot service, and with perfect execution. Never considering that they're the 125th customer in the drive-thru served that day. And out of all those orders, theirs was the first they made a mistake on. So the impatient person gives the attendant much grief and anger, and spreads rumors of the bad service to their friends. No grace, no mercy, no understanding.

This is a perfect metaphor for ministry. People often do not care how overworked you are, they rarely consider it at all. They only care that their "order" is filled and delivered right on time; the right word, in the right way, and no room for failure.

While this is wildly unfair, it is the truth of the calling. I could give examples in my own life, but I will not. Just know it is the way of things. Yet, you will have people in your ministry that are not like this and walk with godly compassion, but many more that demand perfection or else!

The Hidden Pressure

Not only do the people demand a much higher level of excellence from you, maybe because you point out sin in general, so they will point out your failings specifically. Not remembering that you are showing God's way, not your own perfection. Believe me; I have had the dumbest complaints from how I say certain words, to not allowing enough of "XYZ" -it is so stupid and nitpicky.

What this really is, is the devil. Those weeds amongst the wheat, set to destroy and work against you at every turn, waiting for your success to take you down. This does happen. Or, waiting for your success to take over what was built for their own glory. This happens in church boards a lot. Don't be surprised, the church is full of confessed sinners. They revealed themselves to become a member declaring their need of a Savior, don't be surprised when they act like they need one. Remember, they are the children of God and they often act like children.

That being said, they don't stop to consider the double judgment from God every ministry will receive; see (**James 3:1**). The pressure is great to always get it right, always have the right thing to say, always be in a good mood, always being ready to help, always on time, always available, and always being able to answer to God for it all.

Let us be honest: how many times have we gone up to ministers in our lives asking for help from them, and even once considered if they were okay or needed anything? Nope. Often it's a drive thru window for us. So don't be surprised when it happens to you and it will, a lot. Welcome to it. Did we consider the spiritual, mental, or physical health

of those ministers that have failed us in the past? Most likely not; so don't be surprised when it happens to you.

On top of all that, you may have a family that needs their husband, a dad, and son. While most get pulled in a lot of directions, the minister is the greatest, most stressful, and undervalued I can think of. From answering to God for everything you teach and tell people, the congregation needing you in a multitude of ways, then friends and family.

Where in all of this will you find personal recovery and time for yourself? You better learn quickly how to find it. Most ministers are natural givers, and the world is full of takers. We give in hope that people will see the love of God and respond. Some do, but most will just take and leave the drive thru window. The best you can hope for here is that a seed was planted in their hearts. We live in a heathenism society of constant pleasure seeking. Often people want the warm, spiritual, "fuzzy" quick fix, not the life-altering encounter with God that will force them to change.

Answering To God

I have come to terms with this. I strive to only say what I honestly believe to be correct and true. What I am willing to die for. A good word picture for this is that I walk around with a pistol in my hand. This represents my understanding and beliefs. Every time I talk with people about God and Jesus and what they desire, I place that metaphor right against my temple. Knowing at any point in my response, I am risking my own double judgment.

Needless to say I am very careful to only share what I truly believe to be right. God will forgive my shortcomings if in ignorance I fail. Yet, if I am willingly misleading people away from God's will; woe is me, woe is you.

If you don't know the answer, then say you don't know but will go find out. Don't feel the pressure to have all the answers. First off, you don't. Be willing to be wrong, and learn from your mistakes. Correct yourself on any errant teaching. You are supposed to be the example, if you are not willing to be wrong and teachable, how can you expect those you watch over to do the same?

I have a saying: "If I am willing to be wrong once, I can be right the rest of my life." Sadly, pride and pressure suffocate many ministry leaders, in the cycle of error all their lives. If you get to the core of this, it is the idol of self fueled by pride.

You're A Truck Stop

You should quickly come to terms that your ministry is a truck stop. Most people come and go throughout your life, while there are some exceptions, such as generational churches. For the most part, society is so highly mobile. Families come and go for many reasons, and pastors move from one church to another; it is the order of things.

Most ministers called by God are "people persons"; they desire meaningful, lasting relationships. Well, this is unlikely, except for a select, blessed few. This can be difficult, especially when you invest so much time into helping people recover and get better. Then off they go, often never looking back.

This brings us back to the profound loneliness I talked about earlier. You are a servant (**1 Corinthians 9:19**); don't be surprised when you get treated like one. While in this life you are treated like a house maid, in the Kingdom of God that is to come, you will be exalted up (**Mark 10:44**). Remind yourself that by loving the children of God, and being their servant for God and for His sake, you actually love God Himself and He will repay you (**Mathew 25:40**).

Persecution Awaits

This pressure can come from many directions, often from the direction you least expect. This topic lends it to spiritual warfare. The persecution is rooted in spiritual warfare. This also goes back to the "*hidden pressure*" topic. When you truly serve God, put Him first, and are willing to sacrifice to do so. Well, now you're a threat to Satan. You are an issue that he cannot ignore.

I have experienced a constant spiritual pressure in my life. It is always there, and at times it gets even stronger, like walking around with a heavy blanket over your shoulders. When you truly try to stand in the gap like (**Ezekiel 22:30**) for God and man, the war begins. Most people have a hard enough time getting their own lives right. They often struggle with keeping things together for themselves. They take very little, to no thought, to how much pressure a minister is feeling for all those they seek to watch over in their calling.

If you're a good minister, you are part of the spiritual covering God places over the people. As a shield and guard standing in the gap, you will deal with many of their spiritual battles. This has to be experienced to be understood. Then throw on top of that, those in your group attacking you for every ridiculous thing or shortfalls. You may even face board and church members jealous of the success you have in the church, so they seek to take you down. It doesn't matter how perfect you are. Look at Jesus, they just made things up.

Believe me, if they are motivated, they will invent whatever they need to justify their sinful behavior as they attack you. One day they will sing your praises and the next, attempt to destroy your life. Remember that this is spiritual warfare and the devil attacking you, and they are victims in this also, as they are tormented spiritually. Be like Jesus and ask God to forgive them. Turn the other cheek and be the servant. But never back down from the truth, nor submit to this evil spirit, no matter what it cost you.

And I warn you now, it will cost you. Remember this, God has not allowed you to build up for Him to keep it forever. He has allowed you to build up, so you can sacrifice it for Him, for His will and glory. We are not better than Jesus or His disciples, and look at their end. Don't seek it, but don't run from it either.

As I said before: be process-oriented and do it with God. It is and has always been His and He will do what He sees fit with your ministry. Don't worship what you have done for God, worship God and not your efforts. Keep it all on the altar before the Lord, ever ready, with knife in hand, to slay the "lamb" of your ministry.

Family:

This is a hard one. If you are so blessed by God to find a godly wife and have godly children, then I am very happy for you. Prepare your heart and mind for the most terrible pain you will feel in all your years of serving God. It is easy to take the hit of sacrifice, to be lied about and persecuted for God; if I am the only one taking that hit. Yet, when your faithfulness to God requires your family to feel all these pains, it is another thing entirely.

Placing your family and their wellbeing on the altar takes another level of commitment. Most in your churches overlook this. They use labels like "PK" (Preacher's Kid) or "*Pastor's Wife*," not realizing that your family suffers greatly in everything you go through, yet they have no power outside of prayer and support to lessen the burden of it all. They will sit and watch you be destroyed by the very people you sacrificed for and loved. They know the person you truly are, even as they watch your name get dragged through the mud.

You will stand in the middle of it all. Not wanting to increase their burden by sharing how you feel about it all, nor the struggles you have. Wanting only to make it better for them and take their pain away. Then on the other hand, get the backhand from wayward sheep. Sometimes there seems to be no relief, exit, or way to get ahead.

Often, your family will deal with the "leftovers" of you when you are tired, worn out, and short tempered. I know I have been short at times with my family, being completely drained. Don't believe for a second you are hiding it from your family. You are not. It will bleed out of you. Since you have a godly family, they will be able to feel the shift in the spirit and read you like a book. I have no answer for this. I am not sure how to protect them from the pain of it all; just know it will happen. The only advice I can give you is to ensure your expression of love for them outweighs the pain they will endure.

Keep your family strong by being present with them. Remember, if you cannot lead your family first, you cannot lead His church (**1 Timothy 3:4-5**). The advice I give is this, in general, never put the church before your family; **NEVER**. I'm not saying in little things, like donations, etc., as my family has sacrificed great for the church. I'm talking about the hierarchy of spiritual importance.

Many ministers wind up divorced, thinking they are serving God. They let their wives and children fall away from them, as they seek to "save" everyone else around them, ignoring the spiritual and love needs of their own flesh and blood. This is a great sin. This failure is often rooted in ego and pride, as the minister enjoys feeling important and needed by others. They worship this feeling of being "the man with the plan." It is a savior complex; willing to save the world, while losing their own family. You have utterly failed if you have shepherded your church, but not your family.

Create a hard and fast wall around them. It is the highest and most sacred obligation. You will literally disqualify yourself from serving God by failing to rule your own house. If I can “save” your wife and kids, so to speak, but not save my own, what am I? Is not your wife one flesh with you? Are your children not bone of your bone, flesh and blood from your very person? To deny them for the sake of personal glory and professional satisfaction is to deny God’s calling in every form. You must choose God if they reject Him, but you must never reject them under the pretense that you are “choosing God.” How dare we use God’s name in vain in such a manner. To cast aside your family while claiming to serve the Almighty is a hollow and self righteous deception.

Love

While I could go on, I will end with love. If you want to be a minister that God can use, you must be filled with love. A love for God and His children; it is the only thing strong enough to keep you going and committed to the work.

I have dealt with disappointment, lies, sacrifice, rejection, pain, loss, and much more. The only thing that has kept me here is my love for God and love for His children. I have been fighting off burnout for years now; but I am still here because I love.

It is a love that is more powerful than self preservation, more powerful than pain or regret. It is love that will keep us able to minister for God. If we do not have love, we are nothing. If we have love, we have everything through Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (3) If I give away everything I own, and if I give over my body in order to boast, but do not have love, I receive no benefit. (4) Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. (5) It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. (6) It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. (7) It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends. But if there are prophecies, they will be set aside; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be set aside. (9) For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, (10) but when what is perfect comes, the partial will be set aside. (11) When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became an adult, I set aside childish ways. (12) For now we see in a mirror indirectly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known. (13) And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

One Last Thing

I will leave this portion with these final words of advice: pain in this fallen world is inescapable. Most try their best to avoid it at all cost, but it comes for us all. The best you can do is ensuring that pain is not invited into your life through disobedience to God.

You can choose what kind of pain you will endure. Your suffering can be a seed and bear fruit for you and the Kingdom; you can do this by investing into God and His children. When you do, you know that you will receive a return on your efforts. However, if its pain and suffering through sin and rebellion, then you have no hope of a good return, just suffering.

Serving God is not easy; Jesus never said it would be. Don't go into it thinking it will be easy, and you will avoid the surprise and disappointment. It can be a rude awakening otherwise that will tempt you to leave the work for what you think is a "safe harbor" in the world's system. But the safest place you can be is in the middle of God's will for your life. Always be seeking that and leave the rest in God's capable hands. Remember the great love of God and Christ, and then remember the sacrifice. With that, seek to do the same.

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