

A Pause to Ponder God's Word
Ministry Struggle

We prefer a life of ease. We do all that we can to avoid contention or struggle. We seek the easy way to accomplish a difficult task. We favor hardly-working to hard-work. This is especially true when it comes to ministry. If we are doing His work and fulfilling His will, then it should be a breeze, without struggle and not much effort. Thus we are taken back when we hear the Apostle Paul announce: *I want you to know how much I am struggling for you. And even more his struggling was not only for people he knew but for those at Laodicea and for those who have not met me personally.* (Colossians 2:1)

The image is powerful. Drawing upon an athletic term for contending in the games - running a race, fighting it out in the ring – that morphed into a term used for struggling or fighting a battle, Paul declares that ministry to and for others is often a struggle. It requires all the stamina of the competing athlete, all the doggedness of a soldier in battle, and all the tenacity of mountain climber. Ministry – meeting people at their point of need, leading them to Jesus, discipling them to become fully-devoted disciples, uniting them into a unified community of believers – can and often is an intense struggle.

The reasons for the struggle are many; the purpose singular: *that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Colossians 2:2-3)

Ministry is not always well received. Ministry is often resisted, sometimes rejected. Ministry at times is messy. Ministry requires sacrifice, heart-ache, suffering, laying-down ones life. Ministry necessitates wrestling with the powers and principalities that have a death-grip on people. Ministry risks disappointment. Ministry accepts beatings while continuing to love. *As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. We have spoken freely to you, [those to whom we minister], and opened wide our hearts to you...* (2 Corinthians 6:4-11)

Not exactly a billboard advertisement for the greatest privilege in all eternity. Yet it is the reality of the greatest privilege in all eternity. If we are going to struggle, and in this life we will, is there anything more worthy of the struggle? We are called, equipped, and entrusted with the very ministry of Christ Jesus! There is no earthly joy that can compare to hearing Our Lord's *well done my good faithful servant*. There is nothing to compare with the thrill of seeing people become united in love, having the full riches of complete understanding, knowing and growing in Christ Jesus. We are humbled when that ministering disciple of Christ comes up to us to thank us for our role, often unrecognized by us, in their reaching this place in their life in Christ.

Co-laborers in Christ, let us join in the struggle. Their lives in Christ require it. The Kingdom needs it. We are called to it.

Keep Close to Jesus
Pastor Gerry