

# *The Mapmaker's Guide to Joyful, Spirit-filled Ministry*

## *Map 16 - Our Identity and Influence - Part 1*

### **Spiritual Exercise**

The plans we pursue are either from God or they are distractions. There really are no gray areas in His kingdom. There is a center of God's will for every one of His children. The key to finding that center is surrendering to God's purpose, and sacrificing for His plan.

Prayer does not mean that I am to bring God down to my thoughts and my purposes, and bend his government according to my foolish, silly, and sometimes sinful notions. Prayer means that I am to be raised up into feeling, into union and design with him; that I am to enter into his counsel and carry out his purpose fully. D. L. Moody

God does not exist to answer our prayers, but by our prayers we come to discern the mind of God. Oswald Chambers

If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. John 7:17 (NASB)

Knowing the will of God is a challenge for most Christians. God has given us the keys to hearing: Trust, humility, fear, surrender, and a heart turned toward obedience. It is not His intention that we "work up" any of these. They have been given as expressions of His grace. Our part is choosing to take hold of them - like a child receiving a gift.

### **Prayer**

Father God, may Your kingdom come and Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. We surrender to Your ways and thoughts for the fullness of our lives, but particularly in the area of relationship with You. Teach us to pray. It is by grace that we have been saved. Thank You. It is by grace that we will lay hold of the intimacy You have given each of us. We receive it; in Jesus's name. Amen.

### **Introduction**

The church in America has lost her identity. Don't believe me? When was the last time you saw the royal priesthood in action? How about a temple of God being, well, a temple of God? Smelled the aroma of Christ lately? Where are the "greater than" works that Christ promised for those who believe?

We have been deceived about our identity in God's story. Like the man in James epistle, we have forgotten who we are. This is particularly important for Marketplace Leaders, for without a true sense of identity, we are additionally deceived about our authority and influence. Consequently, the people God has called to lead the implementation of His plans are inadequately prepared.

When Christ came to establish the kingdom of God, He brought with Him a new kingdom order. This new government has official roles of authority and influence. Some have been carried over from the old, but in a new and broader form (e.g., king, priest, and prophet). The King has also established a number of new roles for the administration of the New Covenant - disciple makers, evangelists, deacons, etc.

Each of these identities comes with the King's delegated authority, influence and power to serve the church and impact a lost and fallen world. There are no coincidences for God's children. Every Marketplace Leader has been placed in a sphere of influence that God intends to transform. God has appointed each leader to an assignment that will require the assistance and fellowship of other individuals within their spheres of influence. We must get to know each other's identities.

Before we talk directly about identity and influence (in part 2), we need to have our minds renewed in regard to the working relationship that exists between God and the Marketplace Leaders that He will use to carry out His plans. This is the subject we will explore in part one of Our Identity and Influence.

## Definition

**Paradigm (noun):** A typical example or pattern of something; a worldview underlying the theories and methodology of a particular scientific subject. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**Worldview (noun):** The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group. [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)

Everyone has a worldview; and everyone has a paradigm regarding the nature of God and His church (i.e., how it works). Some hold onto their worldviews and paradigms quite firmly, resisting anything new or uncomfortable. As we've discovered, this limits our revelation of the mysteries of God. To fully experience the adventure of searching out the kingdom of God - and to be made free by the truths found there - we must not resist the truth's work in our lives.

There are times when the mysteries of God fly in the face of our paradigms about God and our relationship with Him. This is one of those times. It may be helpful to remember that the Holy Spirit is leading us. He is a capable and loving teacher.

## Searching Out the Matter

*(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)*

### Who is Serving Who?

In their appointed positions, it is critical that Marketplace Leaders understand "who is serving who" to accomplish God's ultimate purposes. Who is serving who? The answer to this question will challenge your thinking, renew your mind, and change the way you "serve God".

Let's start with the assumption that God needs something from us; that there is some service I can do for Him.

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. Deuteronomy 10:14

The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness,  
The world and those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1

If I were hungry, I would not tell you;  
For the world is Mine, and all its fullness. Psalm 50:12

The LORD owns all He needs and, as much as we might think differently, He is not in the habit of telling us when He needs it. Seems like one of those "duh!" things once you think about it. However, most of us would have to admit we really want Him to need us. We want to give back to the One who saves us.

But what would we do? Wash His car? Buy Him dinner? Shine His shoes? There is a humbling aspect to this whole matter of serving God. Once we accept the fact that He really doesn't need us, we can begin to experience just how much He wants us - and how much He is willing to do for His children.

For since the beginning of the world  
Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,  
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,  
Who acts for the one who waits for Him.

Isaiah 64:4

Our God is different from all other gods because He intends to act for us - when we will wait for Him. Let this sink in. Instead of waiting on us to act, God is waiting on us to wait - so He can act for us. Why would He do such a thing?

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

2Chronicles 16:9a

The LORD is looking to show Himself strong; and He knows that we are the ones that need His help - not the other way around.

Even to your old age, I am He,  
And even to gray hairs I will carry you!  
I have made, and I will bear;  
Even I will carry, and will deliver you.

Isaiah 46:4

In God's economy, it is the strong that serve the weak. This is the heart of a God that is *agapē* - God's sacrificial love. It was also the heart of His Son; for He is a good King.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

<sup>17</sup> And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

<sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:17-19

The Father sent His Son to serve His subjects. I hope this has overwhelmed you as it does me. If there's a lump in your throat right now, don't resist the urge to praise our Father and our Savior King. Go ahead! Give Him praise!

## **Then Who Do I Serve?**

Now that we understand who is serving who in our relationship to God, let's turn to the question that is niggling at the back of all our minds, "I am suppose to be serving, right? The Bible does say something about that, doesn't it?"

Of course it does.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

John 20:21

We have been sent by our King exactly as He was sent... to serve others.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Peter 4:10

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

Matthew 25:40

God's way in serving is for His children to serve each other (i.e., love one another). In doing so, we minister to Him - completing the circle and satisfying our desire to love Him as He first loved us.

It is important to recognize that serving others is harder than serving God. As someone has said, sheep are ornery, smelly animals. They bite and they wander off. And they don't regularly return favors. Therefore, most of us must regularly and intentionally commit ourselves to the sacrificial service of others. It is a battle against Satan, the world and our flesh that we must aggressively fight.

## **The Return on His Investment**

God has been very clear and direct about our working relationship with Him. But why would He serve us? What does He get out of it? Is it just for our benefit - because He loves us?

While it is certainly true that God serves us out of His love, there is more to the story. In this case, there is something that God receives in His service to us - something like a return on investment.

Call upon Me in the day of trouble;  
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Psalm 50:15

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
John 14:13

By showing Himself strong on our behalf; by responding to our need for His deliverance; by doing whatever we ask (in His will); God is glorified.

Additionally, God expects that His investment in us will have an impact for His kingdom. Most everyone is familiar with the parable of the talents, but God's expectation and His provision go far beyond finances. God has also entrusted authority to His Son. His Son has entrusted it to us.

<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."  
John 20:22-23

<sup>18</sup> Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ...  
2Corinthians 5:18-20

The very ministry that Jesus came to institute - the ministry of reconciliation - has been invested in us as His ambassadors. How does this influence, authority and ministry manifest itself? Much more dramatically than we have been taught to expect.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:16

When you follow God's way, what men see in "your good works" will not be something that will have them saying, "Isn't he a wonderful builder?", or "I think she is the best teacher in the church." Instead, they will be left awed at the presence and power of God. It is Him, and not our work, that people will notice. But, how is this possible?

<sup>15</sup> For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?  
2Corinthians 2:15-16

<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2Corinthians 3:5-6

These verses remind us that it is not our sufficiency that accomplishes these things, but God. This is not about our measuring up, but about our surrender and sacrifice - so the light that is His life can shine out from us; that His sufficiency would be to His glory.

Now, going back to Matthew 5:16, we recognize that there will be “good works”. These are works that we were created to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). The good works that are done according to God’s plan will be the greater than works Jesus spoke of in John 14:12. They will be works that glorify the Father.

## **The Nature of Our Influence**

The nature of our influence - how God constructs our spheres of influence - may not always be what we expect. He is the Grand Orchestrator. There are no coincidences for His children. That includes the types of people He has given for the Marketplace Leader to influence.

Influence in the kingdom of God most often occurs in parent-child relationships: Boss to employees, elected official to constituents, teacher to students, etc. However, this is not always the case; and we must be careful to avoid being confined in our thinking by the world’s hierarchies.

God also gives Marketplace Leaders spiritual influence with customers, peers, and partners. Additionally, the most spiritually mature Christians may be the lowest in the corporate hierarchy, and still have the most spiritual influence. The most mature Christian in the Boardroom carries the authority of God for everyone in attendance.

Marketplace Leaders must seek God’s wisdom and revelation regarding the influence they have been given - be it obvious or hidden - to make disciples and transform communities. They must go to Him humbly - without presumption or pretense - seeking to know who He has drawn into their spheres of influence for inclusion in His plan.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s face it: The expectations are high. Very high! There is a lot riding on our participation in God’s plan. We don’t want to fail Him; and other people are counting on us (whether they know it or not).

A wise pastor once told me, “Whom God appoints, God anoints.” Much depends on our “taking hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of us.” We must, in faith, walk into our anointing. We must pray that God will give us the grace to feel the weight of the mantle of influence and authority He has given each of His leaders in the Marketplace.

## **Application**

God desires to show Himself strong on your behalf - if you are one whose heart is loyal to Him. Those that are loyal are the ones that share His desire to serve others. Now is a good time to renew your search for the ones that He has orchestrated into your sphere of influence; and look for opportunities to sacrificially serve them.

## **Reckoning**

God will be strong on my behalf.

## **Assignment**

It is important to know who we are in God’s plan and who He wants us to be.

1. What are your leadership roles in the Body of Christ and your community (e.g., employer, deacon, chair of \_\_\_\_\_)? Describe your relationship with the fellowships, ministries and groups with whom you are involved. Ask God to clarify His intention for your involvement in each of them.

2. Each day this week, pray the prayer of Psalm 139:23-24. Ask God to reveal any role you may have dismissed out of fear, misunderstanding, false-humility or disobedience.
3. Consider carefully any opportunities you have been offered to lead a group, ministry or fellowship. Let God, through the Holy Spirit, reveal the ones that are His intention (versus the ones that are distractions).

## **Devotion**

### **Who Must I Serve? (A Confession)**

**From Rob Streetman, inLight Adventure Blog**

I must confess that, in my flesh, I would rather serve God than serve other people. God is holy and deserves my service. People are difficult, lazy and, well, undeserving of my service. They don't always have the means to reward me for my service. So, I have been easily deceived into thinking that the highest service is service to God; and service to others is secondary, even unnecessary.

This deception has had a tragic impact on my relationship with others, and my relationship with God. It has inhibited my spiritual growth, and the growth of those I am responsible to disciple. It has separated me from the Body of Christ, and the love in them that God has for me. It has had me serving God for His acceptance, and reflecting that lie onto others. Like I said... it's tragic.

But - praise God! - I have been made free by this truth: God doesn't need me to serve Him. He wants me to serve others. And not just for them, but for me. Loving one another has broken me out of the isolation chamber that imprisoned my life in Him. I am free to love, and be loved, as God intends. I have learned that *agapē* is sacrificial love - a love that requires action. I have experienced that love flowing through me, from God to others. I am excited that there is infinitely more of that life in me... for others. I pray the same is true for you.

Loving Him and you more,

Rob