

The Person God Uses

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We are living in amazing days. There are more people alive on the planet than at any other time in history, and the potential for the Church to impact a sighing, crying, and dying world with a life-giving message and life-changing power has never been greater. But are churches ready? Are the laborers that Jesus prayed for equipped and energized, or are believers barely hanging on, trying to merely survive?

This brings us to the question, “Who does God use?” We know that God posed the question to Isaiah, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” And we know Isaiah’s straightforward and sincere response, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8). How many are responding to God today with such heartfelt eagerness? I’m not simply referring to who will become a preacher or a missionary, but how many—regardless of a call to full-time ministry or not—are surrendering their all to God? How many are totally sold-out to serving God whether it be in their local church, the marketplace, or elsewhere?

Over the years, I’ve seen a progression, of sorts, in people putting themselves in a place where they can be used by God. While there are certainly other factors involved, let me take you through five very important components that people embrace in order to increase their usefulness in Kingdom work.

1. Willing

The willing are those who present their very lives as an unqualified “yes” to the Lord. God is not a thief, and He will not take from us what we do not willingly offer. He does not force people to serve Him against their will. God will plead with us, beseech us, implore us, and influence us, but He will not violate our free will. This is why times and seasons of consecration are important; those moments when we (like Jesus) say, “. . .not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). Years ago, it was common to hear people praying fervently at the altar and saying, “God, I’ll go where you want me to go. I’ll do what you want me to do. I’ll say what you want me to say.”

Sometimes people struggle with the issue of willingness because they realize that part of their being doesn’t want to surrender entirely to God. Some then feel guilty and pull away from Him. If you relate to that, let me encourage you. What you’re feeling is normal. That’s the flesh and the un-renewed mind doing what it naturally does—seeking to please and serve itself. If you struggle with willingness, don’t get under condemnation; talk to God about it. Tell him that you want to be willing, and acknowledge that you need His help.

Sometimes willingness begins with the willingness to become willing. Admitting that you can’t do it on your own can be a necessary step of humility that positions you to receive grace from

God to do what you can't do on your own. Remember Philippians 2:13 (AMP) which says, "[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight."

2. Available

Willingness is vital and foundational, and it is an important heart-issue in serving God. However, there is a practical and logistical side in serving God as well, and this brings us to the issue of availability. You can have the best heart in the world, and you can pray many prayers of consecration, but practically speaking, if you don't have some availability to offer, your willingness will never find practical expression.

If every time the pastor presents an opportunity to serve, an individual says, "Wow! I'd love to do that, but I'm too busy," that person will never do anything in spite of their good intentions. I realize that people have jobs, family obligations, etc. but having time designated to serve God indicates well-set priorities and a disciplined approach to life.

Remember that Jesus said, "...seek first the kingdom of God..." (Matthew 6:33). He didn't say "seek exclusively the kingdom of God..." He knows we have practical things to take care of, not just spiritual things. But God should be our highest priority. We should put Him first in everything. To me, this means that I'm going to put God first and make sure I've got time to serve Him. It is good to note here that serving God can also take place spontaneously and informally through relationships in the course of our day-to-day lives, but it's optimal that we also serve God consistently through positions in the local church. It's good to be available to God in every way possible.

3. Faithful

I've preached in hundreds of churches in many countries and all across the U.S., and if a Christian is willing and available, they will be put to work somewhere. Every spiritual leader will tell you that there is more work to be done than there are people who are willing and available to serve. However, if individuals are willing and available, but fail to demonstrate faithfulness, they will be great starters but poor finishers. Once we've established a willing heart and made ourselves practically available, it is essential that we be faithful in carrying out our assignments.

Faithfulness among workers creates reliability, dependability, and consistency; it is an essential ingredient to quality ministry. Yet as important as faithfulness is, it is not a trait demonstrated by all believers. A.W. Pink said, "Faithful people have always been in a marked minority." Solomon echoed the same sentiment when he said, "Many people profess their loyalty, but a faithful person—who can find?" (Proverbs 20:6, NET).

Faithful people are those that show up regularly, serve eagerly, and follow through on their commitments. They are a tremendous blessing to their pastor because of their unfaltering

trustworthiness. It is not uncommon for a pastor to introduce me to someone in their church, describing the individual as someone they can always count on. “Anytime we have a need, this person is willing to step in and do whatever it takes to get the job done. They may not even be gifted in that particular area, but they’ll fill the gap, and will give their best efforts to the task at hand.”

4. Skilled

A person can be willing, available, and faithful, but in many situations, it is important that he or she also be skilled. There are areas in ministry (as well as in life) where specific skill sets are necessary. For example, if my car has a mechanical problem, attitude and character issues can play a role in the person I choose, but ultimately, I need the person working on my car to have certain skills, those which come from extensive training and experience.

David’s example in serving God vividly demonstrates that it is possible to have both a great attitude and high proficiency. Psalm 78:72 says, “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.” Notice that both integrity and know-how are involved. Integrity speaks of the character, while skillfulness speaks of expertise in doing the job well.

A commitment to skillfulness does not mean that a person will be perfect before they start. If that were the case, no one would ever start, and it’s important to remember that practicing is an important part of developing skillfulness. Often, our performance at the beginning of a project reflects our lack of experience, and that’s OK. But let’s never be content to stay mediocre in what we do for God. It is important to have a culture of continual improvement as we serve Him; the Lord certainly deserves our very best. In secular endeavors, quality and excellence are usually highly valued. Henry Ford once said, “There’s a better way to do it. Find it!” Becoming a life-long learner and a commitment to constant improvement is important in serving God well, and we should endeavor to offer to heaven that which reflects excellence.

5. Called

In a very real sense, every believer is “called.” We are all called to be His children, called to love Him, honor Him, and represent Him in the earth. Different ones, though, have specific callings relating to certain tasks. Not everyone is called to be a pastor, or called to be a youth minister, or called to be a worship leader. Specific callings are accompanied by corresponding gifts and graces. Many will testify that when they were called by God to a certain task, an anointing of the Holy Spirit was also given to help them perform their assignment.

It is important to understand that not everyone who is called responds properly to that calling. If people do not develop their character or their skills, they can achieve far less in their area of calling (if they ever even step into it). It’s very sad when a person who is called sabotages their own effectiveness because they fail to cultivate their willingness, availability, faithfulness or skills. A calling alone is no guarantee of success.

When we cooperate with our Caller and cultivate our calling, great things happen! A calling does not take the place of the other attributes we have mentioned (willingness, availability, faithfulness, and skill), but incorporates and builds upon them. Those characteristics, when properly established and maintained, serve to enhance and fortify our calling.

How does this affect someone who reads this and says, “What if I’m not called to a specific ministry such as being a pastor, youth minister, or worship leader?” It is important to keep in mind that we are all called to serve God whether our calling is specific and leads to a titled position, or whether our calling is general and we serve more behind the scenes. Helping and assisting others is a very honorable work, and one that every believer should embrace. As I wrote in our book, “Qualified,” we are supposed to serve God...

- **with or without a title**
- **with or without a position**
- **visibly or behind the scenes**
- **through structure or spontaneously**
- **formally or informally**

Remember, none of us can fabricate our calling; God is the source of that. First Corinthians 12:18 says, “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” However, each of us can set our hearts—with God’s help—to be willing, available, faithful, and skilled. Along with that, we resolve to be the best we can be for God and others, all the while trusting in His grace and enablement in our lives. If we do that, we will be people that God uses.