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# GOD'S WAYS ARE COUNTER-INTUITIVE

*by Daniel A. Brown, PhD*

Since I no longer pastor, I'm able to say many more things in a more direct manner than I was able to speak before. No one could accuse me of having a vested interest in describing the biblical elements of what church is supposed to be. I'm not in the unenviable position most pastors are in: wanting to lead people in a particular way (vision), but not wanting to resort to commands (heavy authority) to get them there. I do not have to get anyone to follow my ideas from the scriptures, so I can more freely share those ideas—and let people choose whether or not to incorporate them in their church paradigm.

For instance, most church leaders want to know how to get more people to volunteer. That goal seems pathetic—too small—in light of our mission. I believe we're supposed to raise up able ministers who are each readied to minister to others, and who are prepared to do to/for others what was done to/for them. Yes, encouraging people to volunteer at church to work on some aspect of the program is an important step along the way. But the ultimate aim of church should not be so small as to simply get free workers in church.

I wanted people to serve as training for ministry. Since serving and ministering are the same exact word, tooling people for service, and getting them in the habit of saying “Yes” to opportunity, is all part of teaching them to hear God's prompting and agree to it. I do not mean that asking someone to help clean up after the picnic is synonymous with God asking them to pray for someone. But it's curious, through the years, I've seen a direct correlation between people's eagerness and willingness to do mundane service jobs and their openness to being used by God to serve others.

True, there are some people who are only too willing to be used by God in large, ministry arenas, yet those people avoid mundane service. But I would argue that those great ministers are not really serving people with their ministry prowess—they're serving themselves!

When people develop in their ministry, starting from simple, less-than-exciting, not-noticed-by-others chores and then “graduating” into more “spiritual-looking” ministry, they don't usually have struggles with pride. On the other hand, when people move too quickly into what's called

“ministry” and don't start with lots and lots of serving, they often become distorted in their grandiose thoughts about themselves.

God will continue to fill us throughout our ministry lives. That's why it's so important that we keep emptying ourselves by pouring ourselves (time, resources, energy, etc.) into others. If I don't pour much of myself out, there isn't much room for God to pour in anything fresh into me. Non-serving Christians grow stale very, very quickly!

How great to be able to say that sort of thing to a group of people. No one could accuse me of being manipulative or controlling or self-serving because I wasn't encouraging anyone to serve in any capacity in an enterprise involved with me. Since I'm not in any way saying, “Serve me or serve my church,” everyone who hears what I say must wrestle with the concepts, biblically. Is what I'm saying in the Bible, or not? No smoke-screens. No blame-game. No accusations. No hurt or rejection. No suspicion of motives. Nothing but a question, “Is this in the Bible, even if it makes me uncomfortable?”

God's ways are counter-intuitive. Try to preserve your life, time, money, family, etc., and you will lose it. But give yourself away, sow liberally, let God protect your resources and you will find unbelievable bounty. Keep finding new and additional ways to serve the purposes of God by serving the people of God. I believe that. I preach that. I practice that!

What do you believe?