

GOD'S PLAN & YOU (Pt 7 of 9): "INFLUENCE AND INSPIRE"

THESIS: Influence And Inspire

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 2:12—3:6

OPEN: (*Story of how I went from a broadcasting career to preaching the gospel and pastoring with churches*)

In **2 Corinthians 2:12—3:6** let's discover God's plan for how you may choose among opportunities opened by the Lord and be competent as a minister for Him.

1. INFLUENCE AND INSPIRE OTHERS TO MINISTER FOR JESUS CHRIST.

A. **2 Corinthians 2:12-14** "Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, ¹³I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. ¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him."

1. Minister for Christ by spreading the knowledge of Him everywhere.

a. **Knowledge** (Greek: *gnosis*) means conscious sensitivity, understanding, a personal acquaintance of spiritual truth.

1. **Revelation 1:5b-6** "To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father..."

a. **Historical:** In the OT the tribe of Levi defended God's honor at the time the rest of Israel worshipped the golden calf. Therefore, they were dedicated to serving God. The Levites were set apart for religious duties as priests. The prophet Malachi sums up the role of the priests: "It is the duty of the priests to teach the true knowledge of God. People should go to them to learn My will, because they are the messengers of the Lord Almighty" (*Malachi 2:7*). In the NT the church is God's kingdom of priests (*1 Ptr 2:5; Rev 1:5-6*). We exist to make known the Lord's Word to the world (*2 Cor 5:17-20*). The chief business of all Christians is to show primary interest in the honor and things of God (*Mtt 6:33*).

2. **Eph 3:8-11** "This grace was given me: to preach to the (nations) the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

a. **Illustration:** (*Archaeology supports people, places, and events written about in Scripture*)

Archaeology supports people, places, and events written about in Scripture:

1. Handwriting on wall relating to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:5). Foundation walls uncovered.
2. Existence of Nazareth showed up in a 1st century synagogue inscription at Caesarea.
3. The Caesar Augustus census edicts (Luke 2:2) are referred to by an inscription at Ankara, Turkey; That husbands had to register their families for the Roman census was mandated in census papyri discovered in Egypt.
4. That Herod the Great ruled at the time Jesus was born is demonstrated by the numerous excavations of Herod's massive public works in the Holy Land; that his son Herod Antipas ruled Galilee is shown in similar digs at Sepphoris and Tiberias. Coins from these and the other Herodian rulers are a commonplace in coin collections.
5. As for Jesus' public ministry, the remains of the foundation of the synagogue at Capernaum where He taught still exist below the present ruins of the fourth-century synagogue there.
6. The remains of the Apostle Peter's house at Capernaum have been uncovered.

7. An inscription naming Pontius Pilate was discovered at Caesarea in 1961. The bones of the chief prosecutor at Jesus' trial, high priest Caiaphas, were inside an ossuary (a stone chest) uncovered in 1990, the first bones of a Biblical personality ever discovered.
8. That they nailed victims to crosses like Jesus was proven when another bone box was opened north of Jerusalem in 1968, and a victim's heel bones appeared with a seven-inch spike.
9. Ruins in Cyprus, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and elsewhere all bear out the many references related to the Apostle Paul.
10. Ancient secular writers who corroborate Biblical data include Jewish historian Josephus, Roman historians Suetonius & Tacitus, and Greek satirist Lucian. These secular sources say Jesus was crucified under Pilate; Jesus' disciples believed He arose from the dead; Jewish leaders charged Christ with sorcery and being born of adultery; Roman rulers bitterly persecuted Christians; believers denied the existence of many gods and were dedicated to Jesus Christ

1. **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.
 - a. **Illustration:** (*Story when in 9th grade classmate told me about preaching in youth service*)

2. **2 Peter 3:17-18** "Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen."
 - a. **Insight from Josh McDowell:** "Human beings are fallible. Since the Bible was written by humans, skeptics say it follows that the Bible is fallible. Humans do make mistakes, but they do not necessarily make mistakes in all cases. For example, a professor was teaching a class on the reliability of the Bible. For it, he had typed up a one-page outline of the course. The finished product was inerrant; it had no typographical errors, no mistakes in copying from the handwritten original. Although the author was human and was prone to make mistakes, he was infallible in this instance. The point is this: It is not impossible for a human being to perform a mistake-free act. It is not improbable for fallible man to correctly record both sayings and events. God used fallible men to receive and record His infallible Word so that it would reach us and without error" (*Reasons Skeptics Should Consider Christianity*, p. 24-25).

- B. **2 Corinthians 2:17—3:6** "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. ^{3:1}Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. ³You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶*He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*"

1. *Minister for Christ by showing the Spirit of Him to everyone.*
 - a. **Historical:** The appearance of vagrant impostors led to the need for letters of recommendation. The Apostle Paul needed no such confirmation; but others, including

the Corinthian intruders, did need authentication and often resorted to unscrupulous methods of obtaining or forging such letters (*The Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1890).

1. **Galatians 5:22a** “The fruit (work) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”
 2. **1 Corinthians 12:7, 11-12** “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”
- b. **Illustration:** During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, Britain was running very low on silver for their coins, so they looked everywhere they could to find more of this precious metal. When Cromwell’s men came back after their search, they reported they found the most silver in England to be in the cathedrals. The silver wasn’t in the cathedrals themselves, but in the statues of the “saints” of the Catholic Church. Cromwell said, “Well, let’s melt down the saints and put them into circulation.”
1. That’s what membership ministry is all about. Taking people like you and me—finding our spiritual giftedness and putting us into circulation—ministry for the glory of God.
 2. Do you realize that when you’re baptized into Christ that at that moment you’re ordained into the ministry? The word “ministry” comes from the Greek word “diakonos,” meaning one who serves. It’s a function or service in the name of Jesus not a title or official position in the church.

CONCLUSION: Minister for Christ by spreading His knowledge everywhere and showing His Spirit to everyone.

1 Peter 3:15-18a “In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

Illustration: (*breitbart.com* “*Actor Woody Harrelson Criticizes Vice-President Pence’s Christian Faith*”)

Actor Woody Harrelson Criticizes Vice-President Pence’s Christian Faith

By Thomas D. Williams (*breitbart.com* 05/10/18)

Oscar-nominated actor Woody Harrelson said he and Vice-President Mike Pence palled around some at Hanover College in the 1980s but would probably not be friends today due to Pence’s Christianity—“that kind of fervor that you really don’t want.” Harrelson told late-night host Jimmy Kimmel that he himself had been quite religious when he was younger but decided to put his faith on hold so he could live his 20s and 30s in “extreme hedonism.” Harrelson added: “We were both very religious. It was a Presbyterian college at the time. I don’t know how we’d get along now, ‘cause I think he’s still quite religious.” Recalling his college dealings with Pence, Harrelson said, “I actually quite liked him and thought he was a pretty good guy who was very religious and very committed. He was involved with church activities.” The *True Detective* star said at the time he “was actually considering being a minister and then I just kind of went a different way. I had studied theology and I started to see how manmade the Bible was.” Last year, Woody Harrelson revealed that after 30 years of marijuana advocacy, he had sworn off pot yet is “still a party animal.” Harrelson told Kimmel that he believes in God again now—after reading an autobiography of a “yogi” but does not believe in the Christian God.

Quote from unknown source: “People do not reject the Bible because the Bible contradicts itself—they reject the Holy Scripture because it contradicts them.”

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

Insight from Charles Wesley: “Good men or angels would not make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ when it was their own invention. Bad men or demons would not make a book that commands obedience to God, service, forbid sin, and condemns their souls to eternal hell. Therefore, the Bible must be divinely inspired!”

Col 4:5 “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace (benefit/favor), seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

CLOSE: Influence and inspire others to minister for Christ—it’s God’s plan for you.