



Living Lent | Day 26

Seeking a Quickened Calling

“For it is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”

1 Corinthians 9:9-15: NIV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

As I read the Apostle Paul’s words to Christians in Corinth, I immediately thought about my Dad. For more 45 years, he, like Paul, felt “compelled to preach.”

Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in rural Appalachia meant pastoring without a salary, evangelizing up hollers where “free-will offerings” rarely provided gas money, and never asking about compensation before saying yes to an invitation.

Also like Paul, the tent maker, Dad was bi-vocational. He worked as a butcher

for ten years and later opened used goods stores, where he worked six days a week.

As his daughter (one of four children), I didn't realize the weariness associated with a pastorate 30 miles away, where he preached four times each week. I didn't appreciate the weight of his ministry on Mom, who ran the household, filled in as clerk at the stores, drove when Dad needed to re-read his sermon notes, had supper on the table, and rushed us all out of the house. (We were never on time!)

What I did understand, however, was that their calling was connected to a reward, to a blessing embodied in changed lives!

Now, decades later, I still reap those rewards. For example, on Father's Day, when I post a picture of Dad and me on social media, notes flood in, filled with gratitude for my parents' devotion, love, and dedication. People I never knew Dad ministered to share stories I never knew occurred.

Around the world today, dedicated men and women devote themselves daily to their calling. A lifetime of impact evidenced by hurting children they've revived, lonely seniors they've visited, and families they've rebuilt provide priceless rewards.

Their goodness, their silent, consistent toil, and their kindness, however, do not relieve us of our calling.

Nurturing children, counseling the needy, and lifting up the downtrodden require a unique calling. However, our calling to support these frontline workers is equally important. In fact, when we ignore our role, Paul says we unintentionally "muzzle" them!

Imagine the freedom, the clear, stressless effort, and the easy, caring manner of the "unmuzzled" worker! Imagine the love and attention available to each child when no one is distracted by worries or concerns related to funding.

Challenge to Prayer and the Exercise of the Privilege of Generosity

As you pray and sacrifice through fasting throughout this Lenten Journey, will you take this opportunity to pay forward in generosity a gift of at least \$1 per day throughout the 40 days for the Children? It is a privilege and a blessing to give as we all look forward to Easter and the Resurrection.

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Contributor

Phoenicia Miracle, M.Ed., Savannah, Georgia, leads a non-profit fundraising and marketing firm, Miracle Strategies, LLC (est. 2017). From 2000-2017, Phoenicia led fundraising efforts across several non-profit sectors including Second Harvest Food Bank, Savannah Music Festival and Memorial Health Hospital Foundation. (Her first career as a newspaper reporter quickly transitioned into secondary English teacher when she was asked to work on Christmas Day!) She and her husband, Dan Nale, now reside part-time in Charleston, SC, where he teaches at his alma mater, The Citadel, and she volunteers for the Lowcountry Hope Center and her Rotary club. Both she and Dan have embraced and supported the Mission of Morningstar Children's Home.

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