## In the Dessert

There is a story of a man traveling in the desert and realized he had no water. Being in the desert without water is a serious problem. He didn't know whether to turn back or go forward. He finally decided to go forward. Traveling through the scorching hot sun, he knew he could not continue much further. He soon found a large rock to crawl under to provide some type of shade from the hot scorching sun and continued to travel by night. The heat was so intense and was paying its toll on his body. Every fiber in his body cried out to quit. Every step was getting slower and more deliberate than the other. Finally he just gave up. He said to himself, “I can't go any farther, I give up, I'll die here.” And that's exactly what he did. He was not aware that he was only 100 yards from civilization that could have provided him with water and rest. He quit and came up short.

There are four principle truths to this story. First, he was not prepared for his journey. One cannot prepare for a journey, especially in the hot climate in the desert without an ample amount of water. We see a lot of ministers who fall short of their vision or goal because of a lack of planning. Education is not enough to prepare oneself for this type of journey, it take real commitment and planning. When faced with the heat of life, can this minister be victorious and have the tools necessary to become successful?

Prayer is needed to seek God's perfect direction. Too many ministers are anxious to jump into the ministry, they often led by their emotions. Commitment is another quality to seek in. The life of a minister is not always a bed or roses. There are thorns, shortcomings, and hardships that are often attached to that position. Finding a mentor is very important for any young minister. A mentor has experience and can “guide and encourage” a young minister through difficult times. Trust what one knows to be true. If ministers go only feelings, most would resign Monday morning. Feelings can often mislead us.

Secondly, this man did not expect his journey was so long. Paul says, “I press toward the mark of His calling through Jesus Christ”. The race of life and being in the ministry is long. Many ministers discover that were not prepared for the long hours and endless time they spend outside of “just preaching”. 90% of ministers surveyed reports working between 55-75 hours a week and 80% report having a negative influence on their home life. These are statistics not studied in the seminary schools. How can ministers be overcomes?

Ministers need to be great planners of their time. They need to know when to delegate and when to say “no”. One of the most common problems in the church is that the church will “allow” the minister and his family do “all” the work, especially when the previous and current pastors allow it to happen. A pastor should spend most of their time in study and preparation of their message, not in custodial, building maintenance, or landscaping. Many churches may be under difficult financial hardships but can offer help to make sure the ministry is more effective. Many times, a minister has to educate the membership and break certain traditional yokes in order to accomplish what is needed.

Thirdly, this man finished short. One of the most alarming and discouraging statistic on the ministry reveals that 50% of the ministers who start out in the ministry will not last 5 years. Why? They did not prepared, they did not plan, and they gave up - maybe only a short distance from achieving success. It is not important on how fast one will finish as much as it is with just finishing.

Commitment was a quality previously stated but it is seldom seen in the church today. People give up too easily, whether it is in their marriage, their work or with anything they do. Commitment to church attendance has fallen off. Most Christians only want to attend Sunday morning services and not commitment to any other times, including revivals. Special work days around the church are usually attended by the same few individuals no matter what size of church one has. Commitment to giving is down with churches as well as missions giving.

The lack of commitment within the church often times brings discouragement to the pastor and their families. Ministers need to remember they did not make a commitment really to the church as much as they made a commitment to God. Giving up breaks that commitment with the Lord and it further causes the church to become more dysfunctional. The church needs strong leaders that will press through and prevail.

Ministers are in a race! A race of time…until Jesus comes. Every soul is very important! Even when we are tired and discouraged, we can lean on his for our strength. Isaiah 40:39 says, “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” God can provide us with that supernatural strength.

Finally, ministers, you are not alone. There is help, many times just over the horizon that can provide us with refreshment and rest. Seek help from time to time, spend time with your family often, and get away for reflection, refreshing and planning.