

Pastor Chris Session 3 Sermon Notes

Avoiding the three major pitfalls:

Avoiding the Perils of Personal Power and Desire for Glory in Ministry

Introduction:

Today, we address a critical issue that has the potential to undermine our ministries and the Kingdom work we are called to do—the perils of personal power and the desire for personal glory in ministry. These temptations are subtle, often disguised as ambition or zeal for the Lord's work, but they can lead us away from the true purpose of our calling. This lecture will explore how we can safeguard ourselves and our ministries from these dangers by grounding ourselves in Scripture and embracing a Christ-centered approach to leadership.

I. The Danger of Personal Power

Let us begin by examining the danger of seeking personal power in ministry. Jesus Himself warned us against this in Matthew 20:25-28:

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:25-28, NIV)

Jesus contrasts the world's view of power with the Kingdom's view. In the world, power is about authority and control. But in the Kingdom, power is about service and humility. As leaders, we are called not to dominate or control but to serve others in love. This is a radical departure from the world's approach, and it requires a daily commitment to humility.

Consider the warning in 1 Peter 5:2-3, where Peter exhorts church leaders:

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2-3, NIV)

Peter's words remind us that our role as leaders is not about wielding power, but about being examples to the flock, serving willingly and eagerly. This is the model of leadership that God desires—one that is rooted in humility and service, not in the pursuit of power.

II. The Peril of Seeking Personal Glory

Next, we must address the peril of seeking personal glory in ministry. The desire for recognition, praise, and admiration can be a subtle trap, leading us to prioritize our own image over God's glory. Jesus provides a stern warning against this in Matthew 6:1-2:

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:1-2, NIV)

Jesus cautions us against performing acts of righteousness for the sake of being seen by others. This applies not just to acts of charity but to all aspects of ministry. When our focus shifts to gaining recognition, we have already received our reward in full, but it is an empty reward.

Consider also the example of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30-31:

"He said, 'Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?' Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, 'This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.'" (Daniel 4:30-31, NIV)

Nebuchadnezzar's pride and desire for personal glory led to his downfall. God humbled him, stripping him of his power to remind him that all glory belongs to God alone. This serves as a sobering reminder that when we seek to glorify ourselves, we risk losing everything, including our ability to lead effectively.

III. Safeguarding Ourselves from the Dangers of Power and Glory

How then do we safeguard ourselves from these dangers? The Apostle Paul provides valuable insight in Philippians 2:3-5:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:3-5, NIV)

Paul calls us to adopt the mindset of Christ—a mindset characterized by humility, selflessness, and a focus on others. This is the antidote to the temptation of personal power and glory. Let us explore some practical steps:

1. Cultivating Humility:

James 4:10 reminds us, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."* (James 4:10, NIV)

Regularly practice humility by acknowledging your dependence on God and recognizing the contributions of others. Give credit where it is due and avoid the temptation to take the spotlight.

2. Fostering Accountability:

Proverbs 27:17 says, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* (Proverbs 27:17, NIV)

Surround yourself with trusted individuals who will hold you accountable. These should be people who are not afraid to speak the truth to you, even when it is uncomfortable. They can help keep your motives in check and ensure that your focus remains on God's glory, not your own.

3. **Emphasizing Servant Leadership:**

Jesus modeled servant leadership, as we see in John 13:14-15:

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (John 13:14-15, NIV)

Embrace opportunities to serve others, especially in ways that may seem beneath your position. This will keep you grounded and remind you that true greatness in the Kingdom comes from serving others, not from being served.

4. **Seeking God's Glory Above All:**

Jesus taught us to seek God's glory in all we do. In John 7:18, He said:

"Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." (John 7:18, NIV)

Make it your constant prayer and aim to seek God's glory in all your ministry endeavors. When faced with decisions or opportunities, ask yourself, "Does this bring glory to God or to myself?" Let God's glory be your ultimate goal.

IV. Embracing the Example of Christ

In all things, Christ is our example. Let us remember the words of Philippians 2:6-8:

"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8, NIV)

Christ, though He had every right to claim power and glory, chose instead the path of humility, service, and sacrifice. If we are to follow in His footsteps, we must likewise renounce the desire for personal power and glory, choosing instead to serve others and exalt God in all that we do.

Conclusion:

As we conclude, let us reflect on the words of 1 Corinthians 10:31:

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
(1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV)

May this be the guiding principle of our ministries. By safeguarding ourselves against the temptations of personal power and glory, and by seeking to glorify God in all that we do, we can fulfill our calling faithfully and lead others in a way that honors Christ.