

BFF361 Ministering to God

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. What are we doing today?

Steve: Several weeks ago, I was immersing myself in scripture, I pray, I sing, I give thanks, and praise His name. God's helped me to remain faithful to this daily regimen. It is a bit of a challenge when I'm at a conference, I have to leave the conference, so I can get alone with God.

I normally sing all the verses in a hymn, whether it's four or five verses. One day I thought, "Well, it doesn't say how much to sing, it just says, 'Come into His presence was singing.'" I was running a little late, so I thought I would just sing one verse and I felt like God said, "I enjoy hearing you sing."

It caught me off guard and I thought, "Really?" Then, I started to think about how much I enjoy hearing my son sing. When John is upstairs singing in the morning, my wife and I look at each other and almost cry because we know he's in a good place. We enjoy hearing him sing.

I think anybody listening to this is going to resonate with this. We enjoy when our children are in a good place, we enjoy hearing them sing. Yet, when I'm singing, it's different than just being in a good place. I'm singing to Him. I'm worshipping God. That thought lodged and began to work in my heart.

I thought, "When I was reading all those verses in Exodus about Aaron and his sons being ministers, a lot of those verses say, 'We're not only to minister to others, we're to minister to Him.'" I'll read a couple passages.

Exodus 28:1-4, "Bring near to you Aaron your brother and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve or minister to Me as priests..." The words "serve" and "minister" are the same Hebrew word. I'll get into that in a minute, but different translations use "serve" while others translate it "minister."

"...Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." We've talked about the garments for the priests. "You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with the spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for My priesthood.

"These are the garments that they shall make, a breast-piece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to minister to Me as priests."

A little bit further down in Exodus 40:12-15, "You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

"You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations."

Now, we're going to pray, but I think that we need help in this whole concept of ministering to God, because our culture is not God-centric. Our culture that we live in today, the world in which we live, even the Christian world, is self-centered. We are self-centric. We're not Christocentric or Theocentric. We're self-centric. It's a part of who we are.

If you look at hymns, for example, in the past, a lot of the hymns were God-centric. "O worship the King all-glorious above." Now we like to sing, "Just as I am." We like to sing about ourselves.

We sing to make ourselves feel better and to reassure ourselves more than this new concept, the vertical aspect of ministering to God Himself. I battle this myself.

Let's pray. Father, this is a new concept. It's taking me some time even to get my mind around it, how to even address it. I pray that You will help us by your Spirit to understand what it means to be a minister to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: The phrase, "minister to me," appears 16 times in the New American Standard Version. Other versions use the word, "serve," but it's the same amount of times. I looked up what the word "minister" means, it's Kohan, which is a verb, and means to serve or minister as a priest.

Kohan appears 23 times in the Old Testament. It's based on the word, Kohane, which is a noun, and is used 750 times, referring to "priest." Interestingly, the first mention of a priest in the Old Testament is Melchizedek, who we encounter when Abraham was returning from his battle and met Melchizedek.

That's the subject for a whole different podcast someday. We're not going to address it now. I started thinking, "Well, no wonder there's the word "Cohen." In our modern parlance, or Cowen, Cohen, a lot of these words, they have their root in what it means to be a priest.

I mentioned briefly what some of the things that I go through in my daily times of seeking God. I sometimes have to really work hard to find hymns that are a part of my daily studies that are God-focused, because I want to focus on ministering to Him, praying to Him.

This is what the priests of old did. They went into the courtyard, then into the holy place, the holy of holies once a year. They were there, not only to take care of the different aspects of the tabernacle, the showbread, the lampstand, the incense, etc., it was God-centered.

You and I have talked about how it would be hard not to be God-centered if you lived in those days because of the pillar over the camp, the way that the whole camp was

arranged with the tabernacle in the middle. Today I want to have the same attitude. I want to have the attitude of ministering to and focusing on Him.

When I first began drawing near to God through the principles laid out in Psalm 100, "And come into His presence with singing, and make a joyful shout, and give thanks," is because I wanted to sense God's presence. I wanted to meet with God.

For years, this has been the highlight of the day, when I sense that I'm connected to God. Boy, that just worth everything. It says in scripture, "To know God is eternal life." I sense fresh life just connecting with God.

I'm sure that God is not displeased with that. I'm sure He likes connecting because He's the one that said, "You draw near to Me and I'll draw near to you and we'll meet." That's why the tabernacle was there, so He could be among His people. He loves us and we love Him.

Lately, sometimes I don't feel or sense His presence the same way, but it's not deterring me from being at my post, because my responsibility is not just to feel His nearness but also to minister to Him.

In 1 Chronicles 15:2, David said, giving instruction to the priests, "No one is to carry the ark of God, but the Levites." We've talked about this before. "For Jehovah chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever."

This is one of our callings since He calls us "a kingdom and priests" in the New Testament. We are to minister to Him forever. This is what we're going to be doing in heaven.

When you see these glimpses in heaven that God gave John in the Book of Revelation, these revelations were of people that were joyfully focused on the Lamb. They were worshipping Him. They were ministering to Him. They were serving day and night before Him. They were singing to Him.

1 Chronicles 23:13, "Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his son's forever, to burn incense before Jehovah, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name forever.

Even when they did do a lot of the things that we've been talking about as priest, to teach and to bless, and to serve the people, they did it in His name. They ministered to Him. They burned incense before Him and they blessed in His name.

This calling is only found in a few verses outside of the Pentateuch, the first five books in the Bible. However there are a whole bunch of verses about ministers, ministering to Him, serving Him day and night in the tabernacle, within the Pentateuch. The ones present outside the Pentateuch are fewer, but they're rich.

Jeremiah 33: 22, "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant and the Levitical priests who minister to me." This is a foreshadowing. There's a promise here that He's going to keep His eye out for people who are going to minister to Him.

In Ezekiel 44:15–16, and I read a whole big chunk of this chapter to get the context this morning. This is wayward Israel, the 10 tribes that Ezekiel is prophesying to, that had departed the promised land and been dispersed among the nations.

They have done all these things wrong and it just one thing after another, but there's a little group of people who remained faithful. Ezekiel 44:15–16, "The Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me shall come near to Me to minister to Me."

When everybody else is going astray, there's a remnant, made up of the sons of Zadok. Levitical priests who remained faithful. When everybody else was going wacko, these guys stood at their post.

In that phrase, "These people, I have My eye on them. They shall come near to Me, to minister to Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Jehovah. They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall approach My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge."

This is what I aspire to. I want to be a part of a similar group regardless of what's coming on this earth. There's going to be a time when we are not going to be able to eat or do business unless we receive a mark. I'm not getting the mark, even if I starve to death. I want to have the attitude of those three worthies in Daniel.

God may miraculously provide for us and God may not, but whatever it takes, buddy, I'm not taking that mark on my arm, my hand, or my forehead, just get out of here. That's it. If it just a handful of us, so be it. We are going to be like the sons of Zadok. I aspire to be like these people who are faithful to God, ministering to Him, standing by Him, keeping His charge regardless of what goes on around us.

I'm sure that there's people who are saying, "Where is this in the New Testament?" I did some homework, which I really like doing. I could spend all day just sitting on my couch with my laptop, praying, seeking God, and two puppies right beside me.

Steve: The New Testament word is diakoneō, to serve, to minister. It's the root word for deacon, diakoneō. Interestingly, the phrase, "minister to me," is used in Philemon 13 when Paul is writing this inspired letter to Philemon. He says, "So that on your behalf, he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel."

It means to serve me, take care of my needs, be with me, encourage me, etc. Then, the first mention of the word, diakoneō in the New Testament is in Matthew 4:11. It said, "The devil left him and behold angels came and began to minister to Him." Angels, ministering to Jesus.

I pray for lots of people that are suffering. There's a girl in our church, who's about to leave this earth. I pray for God to send angels to minister to her and to minister to people that are hurting, and to take care of Henry. I pray for a whole host to angels to be around Henry and take care of his needs and minister to him.

This is a great word to serve, to minister, to be like Jesus. As it says in Matthew 20:28, "The son of man did not come to be served, he did not come to be ministered to, but to serve, to minister and give his life a ransom for many."

If we have this heart that you want to minister to God and minister to others and serve, then we're right in line with the first servants, the sons of Aaron, the Levitical priests. This is what they were called to do, to serve God and to serve others. Jesus came in the same spirit. He is our great high priest. He came, not to be served, but to minister.

I'm going to close with the disciples' prayer. His disciples had come to Him and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say, 'Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.'"

I'm going to stop reading from Matthew and Luke. I'm just going to go through the Lord's Prayer slowly. As I did this a couple times this morning, I noticed how most of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray is vertical.

"Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who trespass against us."

Then our eyes are back up again. "Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the power, Yours is the glory forever and ever. Amen."

It's a combination of Matthew 6 and Luke 11. This is how Jesus taught us. Keep your eyes up. Appeal to God our Father. Bless His name. Ask Him to have His will done on Earth just as it is in heaven, and give us our daily bread, forgive us our debts. Don't lead us into temptation. Deliver us from evil. Our eyes are on God.

It's a beautiful prayer, and it's the prayer that he's taught His disciples, who were to become his first priests, you might say. He said, "This is how you pray."

It's very different. I'm finding it, it's a little bit of a culture shift now. Instead of asking, "Well, how do I feel when I pray?" Or, "Did I sense God's presence?" I am seeking to keep my eyes up. This is our calling as priests, to minister not only to one another, like Jesus did, Who came not to be served but to serve, is fine.

We are to serve each other and to pray for each other and to bear each other's burdens and to teach each other. We've talked about that. A new thought though, is to keep in mind that we are also called to minister to Him. He enjoys our singing, He enjoys our thanks, He enjoys our praise, He enjoys our joyful shouts.

He enjoys our incense that we're offering to Him as we pray. It puts a whole different perspective on what we do are we are ministering, not only to each other, but we're ministering to Him. That's just for me as much as anybody else listening, I hope I remember this daily. Now we're waiting for some sublime wise comment from you Scott.

Scott: I don't know if I have that. I'll give this, I'm hesitating a little because I don't want to push back at all. I agree with you.

I have heard on a number of occasions people get fussy about modern worship songs as being too self-centered, for lack of a better word, or too mushy or more like pop music, or whatever, which I agree with that complaint in some of it, for sure.

I also wonder if some of it was out of a reaction against the Pharisee-like tendency in the church and maybe more of an interesting being more intimate in worship. I don't know if that's making any sense or not.

There's a modern tendency to throw out anything that's not like it was back when we were good people in the '50s or whatever. I don't know as though the Holy Spirit works that way.

Steve: The hymns shifted back when we first started having hymns, because up to that point, we were given to singing Psalms and it could be boring. Isaac Watts came in and broke the mold, and this opened the way for Charles Wesley and others.

It's worth thinking about though. If nothing else today, I hope that we'll ask God to search our hearts and help us to have a complaint willing attitude to be led by His Spirit as we go about our singing, our serving, our teaching.

Scott: On the whole concept of ministering to Him I think is a fresh concept for a lot of people. I can chew on this for a while. I'll have a good idea next week, probably.

Steve: Yesterday, I was singing the song, "Crown Him with Many Crowns." You know that one?

Scott: Yes.

Steve: I'm not going to sing, but it's hard not to. Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne, hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns, all music but it's on. Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee, and hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of Love, behold His hands and side, rich wounds, yet visible above in beauty glorified. No angels in the sky can fully bear that sight, but downward bend their wondering eyes at mysteries so bright. Crown Him, the Lord of Life. It keeps going. Crown Him the Son of God, you crown Him the Lord of Heaven.

Steve: This is one of the songs that I really like to sing them because I feel like I'm in sync with what God designed me to do. God designed me to minister to Him, worship Him, serve Him, and love Him with all my heart, soul, mind and strength.

Steve: When we let God fill up our tank, it overflows and we'll love him back. It's a good place to be in. Thank you, Father for loving us well and thank you for calling us to love You. We don't do it out of duty. God help us to not do it out of duty.

Help us to do it out of obedience, help us to do it out of the love, which you have shown to us, and help us to love you back. Help us to love loving you and enjoy serving you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email, Steve at spdemme@Gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocialized.media.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.