

Give Yourselves Fully to the Work of the Lord
Devotion by Ps Peter

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

(1 Cor 15: 58, NIV)

Two questions for our reflection:

What is this “work of the Lord” that Paul is talking about?

What does it mean “to always give ourselves fully”?

The context in which Paul made this exhortation is that some believers in the Corinthian Church denied the “resurrection of the dead”, hence, leading people astray. And in the whole of chapter 15, Paul took pains to make the arguments and present the evidence for the certainty of resurrection.

The gist of his argument is this: because Christ has been raised from the dead, we too shall be raised to share his likeness. His conclusion is that our faith in Christ will not be in vain, our labour in the work of the Lord will not be in vain, and our hope of resurrection is sure and certain and will not be in vain.

From the passage, it is not absolutely certain as to what kind of activities Paul was referring to by the phrase “the work of the Lord.”

In Gordon Fee’s commentary, the phrase “the work of the Lord” may refer more broadly to those kinds of activities that are specifically Christian or specifically in the interest of the gospel. This is so because in Paul’s writing, he often uses the word “labour” to refer to the actual ministry of the gospel. This means all our work – the work of PCC, the church admin and pastoral ministry are the work of the Lord.

I want to suggest 4 Ps to describe the work of the Lord to which we ought to always give ourselves fully.

First P is People.

People must be our primary concern. People of all ages, social status, types, racial groups, etc are our harvest fields of God’s work. Whatever we do, our ultimate aim is to bring people into the Kingdom of God and help them live as Kingdom people, as disciples of Christ.

This means winning souls and building lives must be our top priorities. We must be concerned and interested in people’s lives, their work and families, as well as their spiritual growth and maturity.

To always give ourselves fully means what we do must make impact in the lives of these people. It must be people-oriented, make sense to the people we are reaching, meeting people's needs and pointing them to God. This also means we need to bring people together as one.

For us to make impact in the lives of people and to transform lives, we not only need programs and activities to run all these ministries, we need Spirit-inspired and Kingdom-focused programs and activities, meaning our programs and activities must not only be people-focused, the ultimate goal is to fulfil God's purpose, that is, to fulfil the Great Commission. This is what we are to give ourselves fully to do in order to make a difference in people's lives.

The Second P is Personal.

Jesus' personal ministry is a great example for us to emulate.

- Jesus is personal in relating to people and in his ministry, in teaching and challenging his disciples and other individuals.
- His ministry is always with people. He is a people-person, always ready to connect with people, even one-on-one.
- His ministry can be described as 'on-the-way' ministry. Often when he is on the way to another place, another event, he would always stop to talk with people in need, minister to them, spend time with them, individually, in small group, in people's house, in the countryside.

To always give ourselves fully means to be relational and personal in the way we do ministry. We need to encourage our people to stay connected with one another in-person as well as through WhatsApp and social media.

- We need to make it personal with words of encouragement and affirmation to show our care and concern.
- We also need to give personal attention promptly. By being prompt, we are saying that we care, your problem is our priority.
- We need to encourage our people to meet regularly with one another, one-on-one or in small groups, where SMM allows.

The third P is Prayer.

I believe all of us know the need and importance of prayer – personal prayer and corporate prayer.

- It is impossible to do God's work in the lives of people on our own strength.
- If prayer is the work of the Lord, then we ought to go to God in prayer to seek His resources – His mind, His wisdom, His will, His grace, His blessings, etc.

I believe this is one area of God's work we need to always give ourselves fully.

- How many of us keep a list of names of those under our care to regularly remember them in our personal prayer?
- This is a spiritual discipline we should all develop because our ministry is about people and we need to give personal attention to those in our church, especially those who are new in faith, those who are isolated because of the pandemic, the vulnerable, the youths, those facing life's challenges.
- We also need to constantly pray for our colleagues and friends who are pre-believers that they may come to the Lord.

Corporate prayer is always a struggle in many churches. CHS is no exception. But this is definitely an area all of us need to give ourselves more fully.

- All leaders should make it a point to come together to seek the Lord in our monthly prayer meeting and to set personal example for others to follow.
- When leaders are committed to praying together, they have a contagious influence on their members.

When I was a lay leader in SJSM, I never missed church prayer meetings unless I was overseas. It is not that I love to go or I enjoy prayer meeting. Sometimes, I felt like giving it a miss. But it was a personal and corporate discipline that I committed myself to and abide by.

Indeed, if we see corporate prayer as the work of the Lord, how then can we give it a miss? I want to encourage all of us to make a personal commitment to God to be part of our church prayer meeting.

The Fourth P is our Personal life.

I am referring to the inner life. This is the mind of Christ, and the life of Christ inside us. I am also referring to the Christ-like character and attitude that we embrace in our life and ministry. These godly attributes, such as love for God and for others, trust in God and obedience to His teaching, take time to nurture and to grow to become more and more like Christ.

We cannot be effective doing the work of the Lord in other people's lives unless we ourselves have experienced the work of God in our own lives. How then can we avail ourselves for God to work in our lives? Only by the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit!

We need to make time to reflect and to allow God's word to shape our mind and the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and lives. Obviously, God has not finished with each one of us. This is a work in progress.

To develop our inner life to be like Christ is a personal responsibility. I believe we all owe it to God and to ourselves to make sure that we are constantly equipped through a personal Bible study program. As leaders, the study of God's word is one critical area we need to always give ourselves fully for the Holy Spirit to do a deep work in our lives.

In summary, to always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord means to give our time and attention to the 4 Ps which I share.

1. People: Focus on People, those in and outside the church, in our ministry.
2. Personal: Be Personal in everything we do.
3. Prayer: Make a commitment to God and be disciplined in personal & corporate prayer.
4. Personal Life: Take personal responsibility to strengthen our inner life and to live a holy life through a discipline of studying God's word and service unto God.

If we truly give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord in these 4 areas, I believe we will be very busy. Rightly so, we ought to be very busy as leaders called by God. But our busyness should not squeeze God out of our life and ministry. On the contrary, we are busy because we spend a lot of time with our Father and doing His work.

Amen. May God bless you.