

Praise the Lord. This is Dr. Dana Gillon. I give honor to God, to Pastor Renée and to all of you my brothers and sisters in Christ. I thank the Lord for the privilege to be with you again today. As I reflect on the ministry of mercy, justice and repair in our community and in our world, I want to encourage us to consider that **Conspicuous Christianity Requires Persistent Preparation**.

Let us first focus on Persistent Preparation. Throughout scripture, we see persistent preparation prior to the execution of the work God calls us to do. God prepares us and then propels us. Persistent Preparation.

I want to suggest that our initial preparation starts and persists with prayer. Prayer is a powerful tool that strengthens our ongoing relationship with God. In our prayer, we invite God to guide us, to clarify the work of hands, to strengthen us and give us peace. **Ephesians 6:18** reminds us to...pray “always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” We must pray all kinds of prayer—public, private, healing, confession, thanksgiving, worship—all prayer. And, in the Spirit—not just speaking words but connecting our spirit with the Spirit of the Lord. And watching while we pray that we do indeed persevere in prayer, that we are persistent, come what may. And that we make supplication one for another. Persistent Preparation begins with persistent prayer.

Persistent Preparation also requires us to consider the will of the Lord for our lives. Each of us has a unique design and a unique purpose in God’s kingdom. Let us seek to understand the unction and divine call of God for us that we might be prepared for every opportunity God sets before us. **1 Peter 4: 10-11** tells us, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Scripture is clear that each of us has a gift and that we are to minister it to one another, as good stewards. Your gift matters to the Kingdom. Your ability to exercise the gift comes from the Gift-giver. Some of us have hesitated to use our gift. But, remember the ability to use your gift comes from God and we use these gifts that God may be glorified. **Ephesians 2:10** reminds us... “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Now, I want to pause and reflect on who we are individually because sometimes it seems we think God is unaware of who we are when He calls us and directs us. I suppose if I went around the membership of New Covenant Fellowship and took a poll to determine how many of you consider yourselves introverts, there would be a good percentage of folk who would identify as introverts. Someone focused on the internal more than the external. Someone associated more with

reflection and solicitude and limits social engagements. Someone with a small circle of close friends who is a deep thinker. Sounds a little like Jesus. Yet, Jesus was comfortable with His public ministry. He was indeed conspicuous. He engaged in large crowds, teaching and preaching. He sat amongst the people and communed with them. He was one with the masses and the small groups so that God would be glorified in Him.

God is well aware of who we are when He calls us to Conspicuous Christianity. I have often said that God has an interesting sense of humor when thinking of what He gifted me to do. In my youth, I was painfully shy. Refusing recess in grade school so I wouldn't have to be amongst the crowd. Incredibly studious in middle school and high school, attending no social events. But, one day in high school a family friend invited me to church. I went and I couldn't stop going. I found myself weeping on the inside and yearning for Him in ways I did not fully understand. He pursued me and I said yes. I gave my life and all that I am. I studied His Word and went to all the Bible studies I could. I went to the small groups. I went to the revivals. I went to the lock-ins. I asked questions. I purchased multiple versions of the Bible and commentaries. I prayed. I wept. I felt unworthy of His love, and He continued to pursue me. And, He showed me the gifts He had invested in me.

He said sing so I went to rehearsal and they gave me the solo parts. I learned to sing with zeal even when I didn't always feel confident. Confidence came later. Then He called me to preach and to teach. God was glorified. The version of me that wanted to be inconspicuous did not fit the call of God on my life. When I gave Him my life and began to study and to pray and to worship, I had unknowingly been persistently preparing for conspicuous Christianity.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

That which you are called to do, the action you are purposed to take will require you to be conspicuous—all eyes on you! The ministry of mercy, justice and repair in our community and in our world is a conspicuous ministry and it requires all of us. This ministry requires us to show up in spaces and communicate to large and small groups. This ministry requires us to encourage and sometimes to admonish. This ministry requires us to affirm and to love. This ministry requires us to engage and to facilitate. This ministry requires us to give as we have received.

In **John 8:12**, Jesus says that He is the Light of the World. Here in **Matthew 5:14**, we are reminded that as Christians we are the light of the world—workers with Him, reflecting His light. My brother, my sister, be conspicuous! Be seen doing the work of the Lord having persistently prepared for this Conspicuous Christianity. And, remember it is not your light you are shining, but the Light of Christ. We are not responsible for the gift nor the light. But, we are responsible for Persistent Preparation and Conspicuous Christianity.

As a result of what we do, others will see our good works and glorify God our Father which is in Heaven. Amen.