

The Ministry of Experience  
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From The Book of Luke. THE MINISTRY OF EXPERIENCE, PART 1

#1. The moment Jesus came into the world ("And she gave birth to her firstborn son, " 2:7), He was faced with the phenomenon of personal experience.

#2. We hold this phenomenon in common with the Lord.

#3. At Nazareth, the Lord cited Isaiah 61:1,2; in fact announcing that He had been "anointed" to serve God in His personal experience on earth (Luke 4:16-21).

#4. In this, Jesus is our example. Put plainly, Jesus' ministry was his use of experience. Also put plainly, by generalization, our personal ministry is our use of personal experience!

#5. One's personal experience is the locus of one's service to God. So we serve God in the complete spectrum of our experience, as did Jesus; or we do not.

#6. This disturbs what we may call "the ecclesiastical meaning" of "the ministry." One is not "looking for a place to serve"; for a ministry "to join"; for "a program with which to be involved." In other words to us, generally, "ministry" means rationalized ministry; at worst, a professionalized ministry.

#7. And this holds another powerful truth. My experience is my ministry, therefore, it is not to be escaped! -- "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. So He kept on preaching to the synagogues of Judea" (4:44.)

From The Book of Luke. THE MINISTRY OF EXPERIENCE, PART 2

#1. Jesus was "led" (Lk. 4:1) by the "Holy Spirit" into the experience of personal trial and privation (Lk. 4:2.) So were Joseph, Moses, Job and the prophets.

#2. The devil" (v. 3), a supernatural being, dangled the possibility of self-ingratiating experience before the Lord (v. 5,6.) Jesus, as a man, understood that to avail Himself of the offer was to corrupt the phenomenon of personal experience beyond its revealed purpose. So He declined.

#3. Experience is always a means to an end. Jesus was always concerned with the ends of experience.

#4. The Lord stipulates -- present tense -- the ends of our experience.

- FIRST: THE ENDS OF EXPERIENCE ARE SPIRITUAL NOT MATERIAL. "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone'" (v. 4).
- SECOND: EXPERIENCE SEEKS ETERNAL APPROVAL. Not social approval, nor that of authority . "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (v. 8.)
- THIRD: EXPERIENCE IS LIVED BY REVEALED TERMS, NOT HUMANISTIC TERMS. "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (v. 12.)

### From The Book of Luke. THE MINISTRY OF EXPERIENCE, PART 3

#1. Human experience is not inherently determinant. It is, rather, purely contingent upon the hand of God -- that's any experience.

#2. To make the point Jesus uses an analogy. A man facing the phenomenon of personal experience "is like a man building a house" (6: 46-48.) This man will make a decision which serves as one of the pre-conditions for how he will pass through the experience coming his way. "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I say"? (6: 46.) The pre-condition is obedience to the word of God or not.

#3. The other pre-condition for experience, of course, is the power of God. "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like" (6:47.)

#4. This is important because experience is coming. "A flood" is coming; a "torrent" will "burst" upon all of us (6:48.) Not being able to pick the experience we want, we can determine how we will go through it.

#5. The Lord's promise: There is a deep foundation "dug" and "laid" (6:48) for our passage through experience, whatever it may be. Your "house" will not be shaken. Your house will not be "collapsed" (6:49.) You will not face final "ruin."

May His Excellency be praised for this! We are never alone in experience!

### From The Book of Luke. THE MINISTRY OF EXPERIENCE, PART 4

#1. Human beings are routinely consumed by exclusive concern for and interest in personal experience over other things.

#2. A people called "the Galileans" (Luke 13:1) were just so motivated. In their case, experience was more important than God. For this they were called "sinners" (Luke 13:2).

#3. These people lived outside of the word of God. Their lived experience was conspicuous for its apparent absence of any leanings toward repentance.

#4. The Galileans were not the only ones living for experience. "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate" (Luke 13:2)? "Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13:4)

#5. To "suppose" that; to think that, amounts to a serious misappraisal. Not of the Galileans; but a misappraisal of God and of the word of God. Jesus warns twice: "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

#6. Human experience cannot measure the reach of the will of God.

#7. The only force strong enough to overcome one's lust for experience is what we may call the converse mind! Such a mind is in the grip of the sagacious measurement of repentance. Otherwise, you and I are just like dead fig trees (Luke 13:6-8.)

#8. Time runs out. "And if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down" (Luke 13:9).

#### From The Book of Luke. THE MINISTRY OF EXPERIENCE, PART 5

#1. Jesus instructs: "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns" Luke 12:36. The master is coming today or tomorrow! Thereby human experience is made relative to that promise. "You too be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect" (Luke 12:40.)

#2. People discover that the phenomenon of experience beguiles, captivates, fascinates and distracts. That's good or bad experience. if we are not on point, then experience will swallow us whole!

#3. Example: The "slave says in his heart 'My master will be a long time in coming'" (Luke 12:45.) Deceived by human assumption based in experience, the slave indulges himself. He will read the Bible from that assumption.

#4. Faithfulness, revealed truth, alertness (Luke 12:37, 42) so important as the Lord tarries in the "second" and "third" watches of the night (Luke 12:38), are suspended in favor of the appetite for experience.

#5. But Jesus teaches us: "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit" (Luke 12:1.) There is coming to all of us an unavoidable closing experience exceeding all previous experience.

"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into" (Luke 12:39.)