

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME ONE

STUDY ELEVEN

The Exhausting Toll of an Effective Ministry

Mark 3:7–15

What a magnificent model we have in Christ! He never paid any attention to His press clippings. He never let any of that turn His head. He kept His perspective. He focused on the essentials.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SUCCESSFUL ministries thrill our hearts. An auditorium packed with people who love the Lord, the joy of being together in His presence, the heartfelt worship—it all fills us with excitement and wonder. Needs are met and souls are fed. Accounts of life transformation spread from person to person as crowds in ever-increasing numbers flock to see the outpouring of something divinely extraordinary.

As the ministry grows, however, so does the burden on the leader. The more he or she gives, the more people expect and even demand. Before sunrise and after sunset, sometimes through the midnight hours, the leader gives and gives and gives until the pitcher of his or her soul is poured out and left empty. It seems like whatever is given is never enough. The demands can leave the leader feeling depleted and dry, longing for *a different way*.

Jesus' ministry was a success beyond anything we've ever seen. At first, only a few witnessed His teaching and miracles. These people told others, and a gathering of a dozen grew to fifty, then into a crowd of hundreds, then into a multitude of thousands . . . and people kept coming! The weight of the demands on Jesus must have been crushing. He was the Son of God, but He was also human. How did He manage the strain without cracking?

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll discover how Jesus handled the exhausting toll of an effective ministry. Whatever your role may be, you can learn from Jesus' perspective, balance, focus, and dependence on His heavenly Father. Through this study, let the Holy Spirit help you see Jesus as your haven and inspiration in life.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

*“Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world.” (Psalm 46:10)*

Use this moment of quietness to surrender and trust Him. Acknowledge His authority, power, and wisdom as you seek to honor Him in the application of the principles revealed in His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mark’s record shows how Jesus’ ministry started as “the smallest of all seeds” and flourished into a fruitful, sheltering tree (Mark 4:31–32). Jesus began by planting seeds in the hearts of four fishermen who immediately said yes to His call (1:16–18). Within months, the crowds grew so large that “he couldn’t publicly enter a town anywhere” and still “people from everywhere kept coming to him” (1:45).

As with any successful ministry, there is an upside and a downside. Jesus’ courage to speak the truth refreshed most people, for they had never heard a rabbi speak with such authority. But some didn’t want to hear the truth. Jesus offended them when He exposed their hypocrisy and self-serving motives (2:15–22). Rather than repent, however, these hateful men vowed to snuff out the Light of the World, and they would not rest until they saw Him hanging on a cross.

The hectic, exhausting, unrelenting, draining demands of ministry pressed in on Jesus from all sides—from those who loved Him to those who loathed Him. Such is the good and bad of an effective ministry. How did Jesus handle it?



Observation: Jesus’ Response to Ministry Success

Begin with a careful observation of Jesus’ response by reading [Mark 3:7–19](#) in various translations.¹ Notice how Mark describes the scale of Jesus’ ministry and how Jesus manages the pressure.

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Seeking Quiet Solitude on the Sea—Mark 3:7a

What does Mark 3:7 say Jesus did after He healed the man with a deformed hand on the Sabbath? While His enemies were secretly plotting “to kill Jesus,” what did Jesus do?

Meeting Many Needs on the Land—Mark 3:7b–12

Look at the size of the crowds! Locate the regions the people came from. Use a map in the back of your Bible or one of the two online maps at insight.org: “*Ministry of Jesus*” and “*Bethany, Jerusalem, Emmaus, Mount of Olives, and Bethlehem*.” What words or phrases did Mark use to indicate the demands that Jesus faced in His ministry according to Mark 3:7b–12? How did He respond to them?

This is an immense gathering, some having come well over 100 miles. They're thinking, “Make this worth my trouble.” “Heal me.” “Speak truth.” “Minister to me.” And they're pressing on Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Appointing Twelve Disciples on the Mountain—Mark 3:13–19

Note how Jesus appointed His disciples in Mark 3:13–15. What detail did Mark give about the setting? How did he describe Jesus' choosing the Twelve? What did Jesus want them to do as disciples?

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Mark lists the names of the disciples in Mark 3:16–19. See the chart comparing Mark’s list and the lists in the other gospels and Acts in [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org. What do you observe in Mark’s list?

Look at the order: first, “that they might be with Him” and second, “that He could send them out to preach” and third, “that they might have authority to cast out demons.” Being with Him is first, preaching is second, doing supernatural work is third. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Jesus’ Ministry Essentials

As Jesus’ popularity grew, He withdrew to the sea with His disciples. Look carefully at [Mark 3:7](#) in the MSG, the NET, and especially the J. B. Phillips translations. What is the meaning and significance of Jesus’ retreat to the lakeside with His disciples?

The sound of the surf, the waves slapping against the hull of a boat. Perspective is gained. A renewal of our private world takes place. Something about the sound of all of that provides us with a kind of therapy. The sea escorts us to the center of ourselves and allows us to see truth that we would have otherwise passed by. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What can we learn from Mark’s emphasis on the pressing needs of the crowd in [Mark 3:7–12](#)?

So, He speaks of their pressing around Him and He’s dealing with those demons that have been in the lives of these individuals and believe me, written between the lines, humanly speaking, is a growing exhaustion. Crowds can be exhausting and draining. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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While on the mountain, Jesus summoned the apostles or called them to Himself. Review the article “[Disciple](#)” in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com. Jesus chose His disciples so that “they would be with Him” (Mark 3:14 NASB), declare His message, and minister with His power in [Mark 3:13–15](#). What is the significance of this order of duties in Jesus’ training His men?

The easiest thing for those who are gifted to preach is to give up the study and to go for the crowds. Jesus says, “You’re going to be with Me first. We will, on occasion, branch out, but for the most part we’re going to share life. You’re going to learn how to do it, why to do it, and what to do to minister deeply.”

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Examples of Jesus’ Ministry Essentials in Scripture

We can find examples of Jesus’ essentials for ministry in other Scriptures. Overwhelmed by the burden of leading the Israelites, Moses was rescued by his father-in-law’s wise counsel. Facing a death threat from Queen Jezebel, Elijah, afraid and depressed, needed rest. Compare our passage with [Exodus 18:1–23](#) and [1 Kings 19](#). Why are solitude, rest, wisdom, and balance ministry essentials? Which of these Old Testament accounts spoke most directly to you and why?

There’s nothing great about burning out. Very few of us are effective in a hospital, having gone through a breakdown. So set your limits. Jesus went up on the mountain and called to Himself the twelve disciples, even though He could have had twelve hundred by walking down to Capernaum. But He walked away from that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Compare our passage with [Psalm 20:6–9](#) and [John 15:1–5](#). Why is trust essential in ministry?

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You can trust your God with the things you cannot handle. If you could not, He is not God. He can handle it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Focus on the Essentials

Now back from the first century into your world. Invite the truths of God's Word to enter your most personal spaces.

When life crushes in on us. What principles did you learn in this passage that will help you resist the temptation to quit when life gets tough? Note some “resting areas” that you have scheduled to replenish the pitcher of your soul. Ask God to use that time to fill you with wisdom, joy, and new strength.

We need to seek quiet solitude. Never apologize for taking time off or getting away. You who are workaholics, we all know you need the rest, so don't feel you need to apologize for taking a little rest. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

When people expect more. What strategy can you use to help you walk in balance and wisdom as you meet people's demands?

When people expect more, we need to say, “That's enough.” Practice that because for some people enough is never enough. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

When we feel overwhelmed and need to apply ruthless trust. How can you trust God more deeply in your present difficult circumstances and let God's peace wash away the cares and constant demands?

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Ruthlessly trust Him. And the more impossible the situation, the more ruthless the trust. Just bring it before Him, leave it before Him, place it there and return to that trust and He will honor that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your Word. I take this time to pause and rest. Fill me with Your insight as I withdraw by the sea or take a walk at the park. Give me strength to accomplish Your purpose. And help my soul to be still and remember that You are God. You are my Father and I am forever loved by You. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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