

ISHMAEL MINISTRIES

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Most ministries are Ishmael ministries. I think you know what I mean by this although perhaps you've never thought about it this way. They may do some good, get some people saved and even help some people but, if they are a genuine ministry (and most aren't today for various reasons) they will never be the strong spiritual force in the world that the Lord intended in His plans for them. We see examples of this every week.

About 12 years ago the Lord spoke to us about destiny – our destiny; later He gave me a message with this title for the church in Montana. I gave my wife a card about destiny and our destiny together. She told me while she was reading it that the Lord spoke to her and said, “All my people have a destiny *in* God and a destiny *for* God. They will never fulfill their destiny for God if they don't first fulfill their destiny in God.”

I met Brother Hagin 30 years ago through my pastor, John Osteen, and Brother Hagin used to minister at our church 5-6 times a year. He was a great Bible teacher, one of the best, as was Brother Osteen. The Lord told Bro. Hagin something I've found out is very true, He said, “Most ministers live and die without ever entering into the first phase of ministry that I have for them.”

I believe this very principle He spoke to Evelyn about in 1997 is the main reason why the Lord said what He did to Brother Hagin many years ago. You see, if you don't fulfill your destiny in God by becoming intimate with Him and being not just on the same page but also on the same line and word then you can never fulfill your destiny – your ministry – for God.

In our ministry and churches in Africa one of the biggest problems we face in training young ministers is the mindset that “I want to be known as the President and founder of my own ministry.” The Book of Luke speaks to this issue in chapter 16 and probably most of you know this Scripture well: “And if

you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" – Luke 16:12

This verse is one of the chief ways the Lord works to establish and promote people in their "phases" of ministry. In *The High Calling of God* I devote an entire chapter to this principle of qualification for ministry because most Christians today are not taught this principle about ministry – God calls and chooses based on our spiritual qualifications. One of the main areas God looks at in you before He will promote you is *faithfulness*.

Don't ever forget this as long as you live, you may have a whole folder full of personal prophecies that God's called you to be an apostle but that doesn't mean you will ever be one – it's up to you! Because there are so many *false* prophetic ministries today – more than at any time in the history of the Church – you may never have learned that a personal prophecy is an *invitation*. If you demonstrate faithfulness, character, knowledge of the Word, the fruit of the Spirit, etc., then God will promote you but if you don't wait long enough – if you don't fulfill your destiny in God and don't qualify yourself in these areas then you will never fulfill your destiny for Him.

I was sharing with a friend in Wales today how often I've seen people very anointed for a ministry like worship leave it because they wanted to pastor and run a church. Normally, they end up losing their ministry completely. The anointing is God's stamp of approval. If God is anointing you in a certain area then that's a pretty good indication of His will for your life. He may change that anointing later like He did Evelyn or He may add to it like He did the Apostle Paul by moving you into another Five-fold office like Prophet while you retain the Five-fold anointing as a Teacher but you need to find out where you are anointed and follow the Holy Spirit in that area and not get side tracked and lose your focus on what God's called you to do.

I often wonder why more pastors don't just get flat in the floor and pray for however long it takes, "God, I've noticed there's no anointing on any portion of our services; not the worship, the word or anything else we do and we don't see any miracles or healings. Lord show me why this is so I can change it." Yet as most of you know, most churches in the world aren't even looking for the anointing or God's "approval"; they're more interested in running a small business and increasing their numbers. Another problem is that most Five-fold ministers can't see the anointing so they have difficulty recognizing it when the Spirit of God manifests.

Much of the problems we now see in the Middle East is due to the birth of Ishmael. IF you have *The Eye of the Eagle* you will know that often physical things happen in the world because of a spiritual root cause. Can you see how this Ishmael of the flesh is paralleled in the Church and the spiritual fighting, confusion and rebellion that occurs because of it?

Remember, this was no novice in the area of faith who failed in this area; it was the Father of Faith, Abraham. Ishmael was born 14 years before Isaac, the *true* child of the Promise. As someone who knows a great deal about the Dark Kingdom and the strategies of Satan I can tell you that I see this type thing all the time today – the devil will send something that looks like your Promise just before God is going to fulfill it – that’s why we always tell people, “The good can be the enemy of the best God has for you.”

Someone recently shared a testimony with me about this very thing in the area of marriage – two people who’d been waiting on God for a long time for their Promised spouse only to give in, marry, and then when these two met face to face they both instantly realized that each was the one Promised from God but it was too late; they were already married to somebody else. They may have perfectly good marriages but it was an Ishmael marriage when if they’d only waited a bit longer they could have married Isaac and been in God’s perfect will.

When God appeared to Abraham at age 99 and told him that the Promise He’d given him at age 75 would be fulfilled in a year Abraham said, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!” (Gen. 17:18). In other words, God, you can just go ahead and fulfill your Promise through Ishmael because I thought he was the fulfillment of your Promise to me.

The great Apostle Paul speaks to this issue in the book of Galatians (ch. 4) when he likens those who are trying to go back to the Law as “Ishmaels” who are “bearing children for bondage” (4:24) while those who rightly continue as “Isaacs” Paul says are “born after the Spirit.”

The Scriptures are replete with examples of this principle, e.g., Moses who tried to begin his ministry 40 years too soon “in the flesh” as an Ishmael ministry. It took Moses another 40 years in his personal desert experience to develop the humility and other character traits that he required before God could truly bring him out to stand before Pharaoh.

Have you been waiting on your ministry for a long time? I want to encourage you this week to make a quality decision to become more disciplined in the

area of intimacy and quality time with the Lord so that you spend more time working on “your destiny in God” so that He will release you at the appropriate time to fulfill your destiny for God. And don’t ever forget this very important fact about God: He loves you and you are more important to Him than anything you can do for Him in ministry. Can you say, “Praise the Lord?”