

Active Or Passive Lordship

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GOD - THE ORIGINAL MOVER AND SHAKER!

OUR GOD IS A GOD OF CONSTANT ACTION AND ADVENTURE! From Genesis to Revelation we see a God who *"neither slumbers nor sleeps."* (Ps. 121:4)

Whenever God shows up on the scene things begin to happen - and in a big way! Pillars of fire, parting seas, rivers turning to blood, earthquakes, floods - the Bible has got to be the most action-packed Book that has ever been written! That's because the Author is totally involved with His creation. He is continually interacting with His people to bring about His dynamic plans and purposes - not only for their lives, but for whole cultures and entire nations as well. *The clear testimony of the Bible is that everyone who submits his life to the Lord will be swept up into this whirlwind of action, excitement, and adventure that is a part of the very being of God.*

Abraham is a settled, "respectable" shepherd until he meets God. Then he has one adventure after another following the Lord's command to *"go forth from your country... to the land which I will show you..."* Moses stumbles upon a burning bush and embarks on a series of adventures so mind-boggling it takes four books of the Bible to tell it all. Joshua experiences miracle after miracle as he leads God's people to victory in the face of unbelievable odds. David, a simple shepherd in love with God, is suddenly thrust into the limelight - slaying a fearsome giant, leading victorious battles against enemy peoples, and becoming the most outstanding king that Israel has ever seen. Daniel kneels in prayer only to find himself face to face with a den of vicious, starving lions. Paul encounters Jesus while persecuting His Church. He's knocked to the ground, struck blind, given a dynamic preaching ministry, then continues on to world conquest for Christ - and to write much of the New Testament.

From the beginning of time the focus of God's activity has been on His most beloved creation - man. The Bible is a well-documented history of how God has always actively pursued us. From Genesis right after "The Jump" (we don't "fall" into sin we jump) down through the ages, God has never given up on us. The sad testimony of time is that while God has always aggressively pursued man, man hasn't always aggressively pursued God!

Action-Packed Adventures

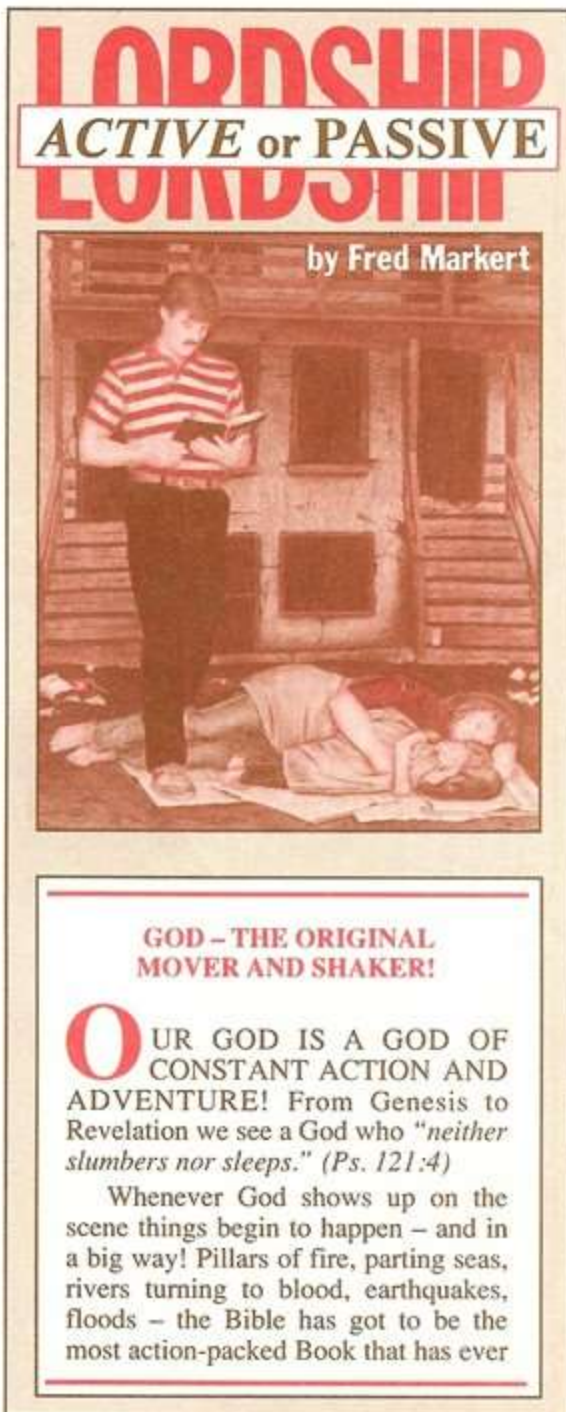
The New Testament is full of God's commands - and just like Him, they're all *active*. Jesus said *"follow Me and I will make you fishers of men ..."* *"go into all the world ..."* *"heal the sick..."* *"preach the gospel ..."* *"feed the hungry"* *"take up your cross..."* The list goes on and on. I've only found one - passive command in the entire New Testament. Right before Jesus ascended into heaven He commanded His disciples to *"... wait for what the Father has promised."* What had the Father promised? The empowering of the Holy Spirit! What would be the result of that empowering? *"...And you shall be My*

witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. "The only passive command that Jesus ever gave the disciples was wait - but only so they could be prepared for, and catapulted into, world-changing action! In light of God's action-oriented nature it's not surprising that the book recording this event and its dramatic results is called the Acts of the Apostles!

Talk Is Cheap

Even though God has revealed Himself to us as the Father of action, very few of us reflect that aspect of His nature. We can say all the right words, but it's the way we live our lives every day that accurately measures our concept of - and commitment to - the *active* Lordship of Christ. I'll never forget an incident that marked my life forever.

I had just finished preaching a message on missions at a large church in Chicago. Afterwards about 75 people who had been touched by the Lord gathered in front for more information - but one man waited around until everyone was gone before approaching me. When I discovered he was a doctor



I challenged him to use his skills on a missions outreach for a week or two. He casually replied, "I'd really love to, but my practice keeps me so busy that I don't have time." Almost apologetically he added, "I really would do anything for the Lord if He ever asked me to." I felt uneasy with his statement but I wasn't quite sure why. Later, as I was trying to figure it out it hit me - *he had a passive concept of the Lordship of Christ!*

What Is Passive Lordship

Passive Lordship is best summed up by a statement I've heard from hundreds of sincere Christians: "My life, my time, my money, my house, my car, and everything I have is the Lord's. Anytime He wants any of it, all He has to do is ask." It sounds great, but it falls far short of the penetrating claims of Christ on all that we are and all that we possess. *It implies that the Lord has not already clearly revealed that we're to be using 100% of our time, talent, and treasure to accomplish the God-directed purposes of the Kingdom.* It also implies that some of us are "off the hook" and can pursue our own lives until we're interrupted by God. And it puts the entire responsibility on Him to intervene and redirect us "if" He ever wants anything.

In passive Lordship we view our time, talent, and treasure as "ours" - and under our control - until God *specifically* asks for something. But active Lordship says, "My time, talents, and treasure are *already* 100% Yours Lord - *how* do You want me to use them for Your glory?"

Since all sincere Christians believe in the absolute Lordship of Christ, the enemy had to come up with a subtle strategy to dull its piercing, practical demands on our lives. We casually slip into a mindset of enthusiastic *mental* agreement with Christ's Lordship, thinking that in itself is enough. We deceive ourselves with these mental gymnastics avoiding the hard work of pursuing God's will in every area of our lives - living a fantasy so close to the truth that we don't realize it's just a counterfeit.

A False Sense Of Security

Passive Lordship can lull us into a false sense of security. We think God is overjoyed and pleased with us because we're willing to do anything for Him. But Jesus said, "If any man wants to be My disciple, He must forsake all and follow Me." He didn't say we must be *willing* to forsake all - He said we *must* forsake all. *"So therefore, no one can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."* Who do we give them up to? To the total, daily, active control of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords because everything we possess is a sacred stewardship from God.

Passive Lordship is future tense - always *intending* to serve or give, just not at this particular moment. But active Lordship is present tense - "Lord, show me how to use all You've entrusted to me *today* - for Your purposes."

Active Lordship imparts a strong sense of destiny, but passive Lordship is vague - "someday" I might do "something" for God. The Lord isn't impressed with people who have good intentions of giving Him some of their spare time, or a few of their retirement years *after* the kids are grown and out of the house. He's only impressed by people who, like Jesus will say, "I must be about my Father's business" - people who will give Him first place in everything *right now!*

The Command Has Been Given

Having an attitude of passive Lordship makes us vulnerable to being like the religious men in the parable of the Good Samaritan - confronted daily with the needs of the world, but passing by without doing anything. Are we waiting for God to speak from heaven to tell us to help the lost, the wounded, and the hurting? God has *already* given us that command! *"Go ye into all the world..."* was meant to be every Christian's daily lifestyle and prevailing mentality. But we've limited this command by thinking it only applies to foreign missions - and to just a few extraordinarily dedicated people. The Priest and the Levite both failed to recognize their own neighborhood as part of "the world" - and that they were already called to compassionate service right where they were.

When your doctor gives you a prescription you don't wait around for him to phone you four times a day and say, "Take your pills now." The directions are already on the bottle. But those living in passive Lordship expect God to repeatedly reissue His clearly revealed commands before they will take any steps of obedience.

A young man approached William Booth, the on-fire founder of the Salvation Army, and said, "I'd really like to serve the Lord full-time, but I haven't had a call from God." William Booth looked at him in disbelief and replied, "What? You say you've never had a call? You mean you haven't heard The Call!"

You Lose What You Don't Use

Matthew 25 gives us a graphic example of active and passive Lordship. A rich man was going on a journey and entrusted his wealth to three of his own servants. Each one was given a different amount according to his ability and the freedom to use it as he thought best. When the master returned he found that two of his servants had been faithful - actively pursuing the best use of all he'd given them. I can just hear those servants thinking, "We know our master's goals, so how can we use all of these resources to further those goals?" But the third servant took the passive route. Why? *"And the one who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid...'"* (Matt. 25:24, 25) I'm convinced that fear is the biggest reason why most believers aren't aggressively pursuing the active Lordship of Christ.

Recently a group of 100 young Christians were asked to answer two questions honestly: "Are you afraid that if you totally submitted to Christ, He'd send you somewhere in the world that you didn't want to go?" and, "Are you afraid that if you totally submitted to Christ, He'd make you marry someone you

didn't want to marry?" *Would you believe 95 said they were genuinely afraid that God would send them somewhere they didn't want to go, and all 100 believed the Lord would make them marry someone they didn't want to marry!*

Just like the fearful servant in the parable, many have a distorted picture of our great God - that He's a harsh taskmaster who will make their lives miserable and take away everything they enjoy if they surrender completely to Him. But Jesus taught the exact opposite! The servant who didn't actively pursue the wisest use of all he was given was the one who had everything taken away as he was cast into outer darkness. The other two servants were called "faithful" and received even greater blessings from the hand of their master. Just like those servants, we're only stewards of anything the Lord gives us - and one day we'll have to account to Him for how we've used *all* of it.

Results Of Passive Lordship

If we have a passive attitude toward the Lordship of Christ we'll find ourselves grappling with some nagging problems:

1. We'll lack clear God-given direction for our lives

"Jesus, knowing that His hour had come. . . and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God (Jn. 13:1,3) These verses tell us that Jesus knew three essential truths about His life and destiny. He knew where He came from, where He was going, and that He was currently in the center of the Father's will. Because of this He completed His part in the Father's plan with purpose, drive, determination, and perseverance. Keeping His eyes set firmly on His God-revealed goal was the key that helped Him through the rough spots and spurred Him on to victory! *Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross... (Heb. 12:2)* Like Jesus, God has a unique destiny for each of us in His plan for winning the entire human race to Himself. But unless we actively pursue the Lordship of Christ we'll never fulfill the destiny that God has envisioned for us. Let's look closer at these three essential areas:

- **First: We need to know that we've "... come forth from God."** God has shaped our personality, intellect, talent, and everything else about us, so we're totally equipped to fulfill His will for our lives. David understood this well. *"For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb." (Ps. 139:13)* Since no one else on the face of the planet has your combination of giftings, you can never be replaced in God's master plan. If you don't fulfill your destiny, your part in the *Great Commission* won't get done!
- **Second: We need to know where we're going.** God has a specific goal for our lives. If we aren't careful, society can dictate our direction more than we realize. Our culture, educational system, parents, peer pressure, and the media all exert a powerful influence over our thinking. It's very easy to slip into the quest for the "American Dream" as we drift from high school, to college, to career, to marriage, to kids, to house and car payments - without stopping to really take the time to find out the Lord's overall strategy and direction for our lives. We may never even realize we don't have a clear word from the Lord about pursuing the things we're pursuing. Paul started nine of his eleven letters with this clear statement: *"Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." (I Cor. 1:1)* If we can't make the same type of confident statement about our calling, we're in a state of passive Lordship. We *must* be able to say, "Mary, called to be a suburban housewife, raising world-changing children for Christ by the will of God." "George, called to be a missionary carpenter to Africa." "John, called to raise finances to support the work of the Kingdom of God." Only then can we be launched into the world with direction, purpose, and drive. Otherwise we'll just drift from one small endeavor to another, always insecure in our plans and unsure of where we're going.
- **Third: We need to know that we're *presently* in the center of God's will.** The call of God on our lives is not enough to insure success. We may be absolutely certain of our calling, but fall short of fulfilling it because of the snares and sidetracks of the enemy. If the Son of God needed to pray all night before choosing His disciples, then we need to take the same care in deciding the details of our lives. We must do whatever it takes to be sure we're in the center of God's will - asking Him for course corrections along the way so we'll know we're still on target. Every decision we make, added together, funnels us towards our final destiny. We can't afford to let our daily lifestyle and habit patterns pull us along in an unthinking way.

2. Our circumstances will control and limit our usefulness for God's purposes

"No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." (II Tim. 2:4) This scripture doesn't say we should never be involved in the affairs of everyday life-but to be sure they don't do *entangle, dominate, and control us*. The question you need to ask yourself is this "Am I being controlled and limited by my circumstances, or am I controlling my circumstances in accordance with the revealed will of God for my life?"

The result of passive Lordship is that the cares of this world - our careers, payments, college schedules - limit and restrain our usefulness in ways God never intended. Do we buy a house and a car only to find we can't give like we should? Or do we determine God's will for our finances first, and then buy the house and car that fit into His financial plan for us? A failure to pursue active Lordship results in a lack of freedom to follow the Lord's call. We may become just like the people in Luke 14 who were invited to dinner but said, "Sorry, can't make it. I'm buying a house. I've just married a wife. I've got to take care of my livestock."

3. Guilt and lack of fulfillment will haunt us

If we don't have the deep conviction that what we're doing is in the will of God and furthering His Kingdom, our joy will be edged with a sense of guilt. I have some dear, committed, faithful Christian friends who feel guilty every time I visit. Inevitably at some point during my visit they'll hang their heads and say, "We know we should share our faith more. We know we should probably give more. We know we should have gone to the mission field. Maybe we will someday..."

With passive Lordship we'll always have a gnawing sense that we're not measuring up to God's standards - especially when we meet people who are confident in their calling and direction. Paul felt no guilt when he was abounding - or loss of joy when being abased - because he was an active pursuer who was sure his current circumstances were ordained by the hand of God. (*Phil. 4:11, 12*)

Knowing our Father's will for our life - and being faithful to live it out - is the *only* thing that will bring us peace and fulfillment. But if we're unsure of His Will, we have no way to tell whether we're pleasing Him or not. This makes us easy targets for the enemy, who loves to exploit our insecurities by hitting us with a mid-life crisis, an identity crisis, or a host of other emotional, mental, or spiritual ills that hinder us from being fruitful and fulfilled.

The parable of The Sower in Matthew 13 teaches us that the "good ground" - those that are truly saved - produced fruit in varying degrees: thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and hundredfold. *We presently have the ministry we're willing to pay for in spiritual discipline.* I've met many anxious, unfulfilled, competitive Christians who were not willing to discipline themselves enough to find out God's will for their lives. Or if they knew His will, they were too undisciplined to carry it out. Many unfulfilled Christians are living a thirtyfold life - but coveting hundredfold results! "... *For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*" (*Gal. 6:7*)

The Bible says signs and wonders will follow all who are believers. If you're unfulfilled because you're not seeing God's power following your life and ministry it's probably because you're not going anywhere. You can't follow a parked car.

The Most Serious Result

Besides the devastating toll passive Lordship takes on our lives personally, there's another result that's even worse. The most serious effect of passive Lordship is that the plans and desires of the Lord for winning the world to Christ are hindered. It's far too easy for us to get comfortable with our lives and forget that we're in massive guerrilla warfare - for the nations of the world and the eternal souls of men and women everywhere. We forget that every single one of us is called to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission as ministering soldiers of reconciliation - leading lost men to a loving Father. (*II Cor. 5:18,20*)

Imagine what kind of war would be waged if the commanding general was giving orders and no one was listening. What would it be like if every soldier was casually pursuing his own goals - instead of clearly understanding the objectives of his commander? The war would never be won! Our strategic forces would be scattered and focused in different directions, and our enemies would rule the land! For the most part, isn't that a picture of the world we live in today? The forces of darkness are dominating billions of people - along with the major power structures of the world - and much of God's army is wandering aimlessly around the countryside.

Winning the War

The greatest obstacle facing the Church today is the timidity and inactivity of those caught up in passive Lordship. Prayer is absolutely necessary - but the Lord's command to "occupy until I come" demands that we also take *action!* There is only one call of God in Christ Jesus - and that's the upward call. There is no such thing as the downward or the standing still call of God. If you're standing still, then you need to know that the troops have pulled out and you've been left behind.

We cannot afford the luxury of not knowing how our lives are to be lived in light of the Great Commission. We must fulfill our individual duties as Soldiers of the Cross - laying down our self-centered desires so we can fulfill our destiny *unhindered* for the sake of His Kingdom. One day we'll stand before God to give an account for how we spent our time, talent, and treasure. Let's commit ourselves to pursue His active Lordship in every area of our lives so we can be found "good and faithful servants" on that awesome day.

One Final Question

The Bible tells us that the people who know their God will be mighty and do exploits. The Apostles never would have conquered the world if they hadn't done the work of heroes and martyrs. We have the privilege of being in the oldest, most dynamic, and victorious army that's ever marched against the forces of darkness in the history of the universe! But God is not preparing an army for some future battle. His army is warring with the forces of darkness *at this very moment!* The only question is, "Are *you* part of it? Are you on Active Duty - or in the Reserves passively waiting for a call?"

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