

Ministry

Introduction:

Jesus engaged in ministry and continues to do so through those who follow him. He has made us ambassadors of reconciliation. We are God's work of art, designed to touch the world around us with His love. We are going to explore the joys and challenges of serving others in Jesus' name. We will discover that ministry is always relational, an expression of love, and done in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ honoring ministry emerges from our weaknesses and pushes us out of our comfort zones. Disciples are always available for assignments from the Lord.

Scripture Focus: Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
Scripture Memory: 2 Corinthians 5:18

Define Ministry / Minister

When you hear the word minister who comes to mind? Is it a mental picture of the Pastor, Missionaries that you have known or well known Evangelists like Billy Graham. If you were asked to create a list of ministries, what activities would be on your list (Preaching, Sunday School teacher, sharing the Gospel door to door, singing in the Choir, serving as a deacon or elder)? All of these are indeed ministries, but not everyone is gifted in the capabilities needed for these ministries. If God has gifted you to teach, evangelize, sing, serve or oversee, but there are no opportunities to minister in these capacities, what are you to do? The problem with this picture is it is much too narrow.

Look at Ephesians 4:11-13:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

to equip the saints for the work of ministry,

for

building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the
faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the
measure of the full stature of Christ. NRSV

We tend to view the equippers as the ministers while those of us who are called to be ministers - sit and watch the "show". I heard someone once compare this situation to a football game. Out on the field there are 22 people badly in need of rest and in the stands, 22,000 badly in need of exercise. The equipping ministers:

- The Foundation Laying Messengers (Apostles)
- The Representatives of God's Message to World (Prophets)
- The Spiritual Mid-Wives (Evangelists) and
- The Shepherds (Pastors & Teachers)

are called to prepare the saints (all believers) for ministry. No one is exempt. All have a job to do that is critical for the health of the Body of Christ. What is the underlying objective of our ministry?

Building up the Body of Christ

Until everyone

- a. consistently relies on Christ moment by moment
- b. knows Him intimately
- c. functions like fully capable spiritual adults
- d. exemplifies the character of Christ Jesus.

In other words until everyone **Walks** with Jesus, becomes **Like** Jesus and lives **For** Jesus.

The Greek word frequently used in the New Testament that is translated as minister is diakonos (δίακονος). The transliteration of this word is deacon. The foundational meaning of diakonos and the primary role of a deacon is servant. The job of the saint is to serve others in a manner that helps them grow in Christ.

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What can you do to help people grow in Christ? The short answer is: love people enough to get involved in their lives, model Christ like character of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control and serve them sacrificially in Jesus Name.

Minister in Jesus Name

What is associated with a name?

- Identity – when I say the name Carla Davison, Russ Buchanan, Shirley Buchanan, who am I talking about? Their name identifies them. When we operate in Jesus Name, we are so identified with Him that it is as though we are Him to those we meet.
- Character – particularly with respect to the God, names point to some aspect of His character. (El Shaddai – Almighty; Yahweh – Eternal; Jesus – Salvation). Operating in Jesus Name means we reflect His character in all we do.
- Relationships – I belong to the Garrison family. As designed by God, family is the haven from the problems of the world, the harbor from troubled seas. All believers belong to the Family of God. My favorite name for God is Abba Father! It identifies a very special relationship. None of the angels of Heaven have that close of a relationship to Him – just us!
- Authority – why won't the Bank cash your check unless you sign it? Your name gives them the authority to distribute your funds on your behalf. Doing something in Jesus Name gives you the authority to distribute His love and power on His behalf.

What is meant by “in Jesus Name”?

Matthew 18:5

And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. NIV

Translation: We are to love others as Ambassadors of Jesus. That is to say we are the image of Jesus to those we meet. We take His identity into every encounter.

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." NIV

Translation: When we gather together because we belong to Jesus, He joins us.

John 14:13-14

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. NIV

Translation: Whenever we ask for something in line with Christ's plan & character, to be accomplished in His power and done for His glory, He will do it.

Matthew 24:5

For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, and will deceive many. NIV

Translation: This is a case of identity theft. It's fraud to say you are serving in Jesus Name, but actually doing it for your personal benefit.

In Matthew 6:9-13, we find the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. How does that prayer end? For thine is Kingdom (authority), and the power (all that we ask can only be accomplished by your capabilities) and the glory (you Lord get all of the praise, because it is you who brings it about)... It's an extended way of saying – “In Jesus' Name we pray.” Amen.

Ministry done in Jesus' Name is done for His glory, under His direction & authority and in total reliance upon His power.

Using your Spiritual Gifts

Have you ever sensed Jesus was calling you to do something that you felt completely inadequate to do? Have you agreed to do something that you knew He was asking you to do and then rapidly became completely overwhelmed with the enormity of the task? If so you are in good company!

- Noah
- Joseph
- Moses

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- Joshua
- The Apostles

Jesus' strength is made perfect (complete) in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9) The Lord never asks you to go out on your own. He doesn't give you an assignment and then leave you to your own devices to complete it. The Holy Spirit comes bearing gifts that enable us to accomplish all things through Christ who strengthens us. Let's spend a moment opening some of the gifts He gives to us.

There is a lot of confusion and controversy surrounding these priceless gifts.

1. Some say many of the gifts are no longer in stock because they've never experienced them.
2. Others seem to think that their gift is the best, and those that don't have it are somehow disenfranchised by God and have become second class citizens of the Kingdom.
3. Some are just confused by the plethora of gifts.
4. Some would say, why spend time identifying your Spiritual Gifts; it only leads to needless introspection and we need to be outward focused. If something needs to be done, you don't need to be concerned with your gifts; just do the work.

The first two attitudes are a result of interpreting Scripture based on our experiences. We are in fact supposed do just the opposite. Scripture interprets our experiences. Just because something has or hasn't happened to us personally, doesn't validate or invalidate Scripture. You may not have experienced everything God has to offer.

I offer this thought for consideration for those who hold to the 4th attitude. If you received a top of the line acoustical guitar, could you pick it up and immediately play like José Feliciano? In the same way, we may need to learn to use our spiritual gifts effectively. If you don't identify and open the gifts you have been given, they may lay dormant or become an obstruction.

With respect to the large variety of gifts, you may find it helpful to place the spiritual gifts identified in Scripture into categories. The categorization is identified for us in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. NASB

The three categories are 1.) gifts, 2.) ministries and 3.) effects. The terms in the original language are:

- 1.) Charisma (χαρισμα) – The transliteration of this Greek word in our language has to do with our personality and motivations for interacting and influencing others. These gifts tend to affect how we approach our “ministry” assignments. They include those found in Romans 12:6-8. There is a reason that there are seven of them. Seven is the number denoting completeness:
 - a. Prophecy – Declare the truth of God and hold people to it. Those with this charisma rarely mince word when it comes to sin and particularly heresy. An immature expression of this charisma is harsh and unforgiving. In its maturity, it protects the body from sin sickness. Everything prophets do is designed to help people understand and hold to the Truth.
 - b. Service – These people are driven to make sure people are freed up from the minutia of life so they can effectively perform the work God has given them to perform. They have unique ability to become the wind under someone's wings. Their support causes the Body to function at peak performance. Caution, don't assume you have this gift because you're hesitant to walk into the spotlight. The charisma gifts are not born out of fear.
 - c. Teaching – This charisma is drawn to study. These people dig into Scripture and provide the details that are essential for fully understanding God's Word to His people and the world. Ironically, those with this gift can be unteachable. They won't listen to someone until they certify their credentials and decide they are acceptable vessels of knowledge.
 - d. Exhortation – Everything an exhorter does is motivated by a singular objective - encourage others to grow in Christ. Immature exhorters tend to view people as

projects and will drop someone like a bad habit if they are hesitant to commit to spiritual growth

- e. Giving – Seeing and effectively meeting the resource needs of others. Like the charisma of service, this gift has the uncanny ability to give precisely what is needed and in a way that does not cause dependence.
 - f. Leadership – Planners, administrators and guides. Give this person a tough problem to solve or a big opportunity and hang on because they will define a plan and stop at nothing to see it to completion. Interestingly enough those with this charisma are rarely bossy. Their charisma seems to cause people to want to follow their lead.
 - g. Mercy – Reconcilers who lovingly forgive. This person's charisma gives people the ability to truly model unconditional agape love. This gift in its immature state, like the giver can circumvent the lessons that God is teaching others. They are very quick to relieve suffering and only the mature discern the difference between suffering and growth opportunities.
- 2.) Diakonia (δῆλονια) – We derive the word deacon from this Greek word. More broadly translated here as ministry. Every task God assigns is a “diakonia”.
- a. The ministries fall into either doing tasks or
 - b. equipping tasks.

Every believer is a minister. The core of every ministry is serving people to enhance their relationship with Jesus. This can be giving a cup of water in His name all the way to giving your life for another. The manner in which we perform the ministry assignments will be driven by our charisma.

- 3.) Energma (ἐνεργμα) – From which we get the word energy. These are the supernatural capabilities that enable us to effectively perform the ministry assignments He gives us. They are tools of ministry. They are not given for us to feel more spiritual or in any other way better than others. They include, but are not limited to:
- a. Wisdom
 - b. Word of Knowledge
 - c. Faith
 - d. Healing
 - e. Prophecy
 - f. Spiritual Discernment
 - g. Tongues (languages)
 - h. Interpretation of previously unknown languages

Love Motivates Ministry

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. NASB

That's pretty clear! Everything we do that is not motivated by love is of no value in God's sight. What other reason could there be for exercising our gifts to minister to others? Well I can think of a couple. We all tend to want people to think highly of us, and because of this very natural, healthy desire we are susceptible to both guilt and flattery. Have you ever been on the receiving end of the Nomination Committee's "hard sell"? It goes something like this, "We're just gonna have to discontinue Children's Church if we can't get a couple more volunteers to help out". Or, "You're so good with kids, I just love listening to your stories, would you fill in for Barb next Sunday for the Children's sermon?" Another version, "They asked me to be an elder, now I'll get some respect around here."

We are called to ministry not because of capability or even availability, but simply because God has a job for us to do. We say yes to his call because we love Him and we do the task because we want to express His love to those we serve.

If you have any other motive for doing ministry other than your love for God and your love for others, you will encounter problems and your work will be meaningless in God's sight. What are some of the problems we encounter when we attempt to minister out of a motive other than love?

Motive	Result
Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will suffer burn out Even if the work gets done, it will not draw people to Jesus. We rob others of a blessing God is offering, but we don't receive it either. We miss the joy of seeing Jesus in the power of the Spirit flow through us to change the heart of another
Personal Glory	
Personal Agenda	
Pragmatic – It just needs to be done	

Building Relationships with Non-Believers

Jesus has given every believer the same mission.

Matthew 28:19-20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV

There are many ways to carry out this mission. You can tell people about Jesus. You can show them His love by lovingly reach out to help them resolve a need. You can show interest in the things that interest them. You can be the first Christian they have ever met that didn't condemn them for their lifestyle, habits or language. Jesus schedules Divine appointments for us every day. If you never show up where unbelievers hang out, you will miss these appointments. If your primary interaction with unbelievers has to do with changing their behavior rather than introducing them to Christ who will change their heart?

Matthew 9:9-12

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.

When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. NIV

If we resist spending time where those who need Jesus spend their time, we will be like a doctor who will only see you if you are well. Like this doctor, you may be concerned that you'll catch the sin sickness that people are dying from. Sometimes we avoid spending time with "sinners" because – "Birds of a feather flock together" and we don't want others to think we are a part of that lifestyle. When we are told in the Word to avoid even the appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22), it doesn't mean we are to avoid those who need Jesus. We are to avoid appearing evil to those who are unbelievers. When we avoid appearing evil to our fellow believers, it's so they don't think badly of us – and that attitude is sinful in itself.

"So remember,

*You go nowhere by accident.
 Wherever you go, God is sending you.
 Wherever you are, God has placed you there.
 God puts you there for a reason.
 The good news is that Christ goes with you and empowers you.
 His Spirit ministers through you
 wherever you go or wherever you are.
 Simply believe this and then go confidently in His Name,
 Knowing that the love, joy and grace of Almighty God,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 Will be with you always."*