
The Theology of Ministry

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Although the word "ministry" is often associated with the work of the clergy, in its biblical sense it properly denotes the work of the entire church, the body of Christ in the world. Ministry is what the church does, or is supposed to do. However, the church's understanding of ministry has varied considerably over the centuries and must be restated for each generation on the basis of a fresh study of the Scriptures.

Our English word "ministry" is commonly used to translate several words in the New Testament, and most prominent being diakonia and its related forms.¹ This particular word group is rooted in the humble service one person renders to another. It is often the work of a servant who waits on tables.

JESUS--THE MODEL FOR OUR MINISTRY

Ministry in the New Testament is clearly and authoritatively taught in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ and can never be understood or realized apart from Him. Therefore, any theology of ministry must begin with the life and teachings of our Lord as presented in the New Testament.

His ministry was first of all incarnational. In Jesus of Nazareth, God came to dwell among men. The Gospel of John sets out this truth in vivid terms, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Much the same understanding is found in Matthew's designation of the virgin-born Jesus as "Immanuel . . . 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23). The Son of God took upon himself full humanity in order to draw near to humankind and win their redemption through an atoning sacrifice upon the cross. As Paul later expressed it, "God was [in Christ] reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Jesus strongly emphasized the kerygmatic nature of His ministry. Drawn from the noun kerygma, "preaching," this term highlights the central place of the proclamation of the gospel. Nowhere is this more evident than in Jesus' Scripture lesson from the Nazareth synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news [euangelizomai] to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim [kerysso] freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim [kerysso] the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18,19).

Christ's ministry was carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospels strikingly depict the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at the outset of His ministry immediately after His baptism and before His public activity (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). Peter referred to that coming of the Spirit as an "anointing" which empowered Jesus for His work: "After the baptism that John preached . . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:37,38). Not infrequently Jesus himself made reference to the power of the Spirit at work in His miracles (Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:14,18).

His ministry was also one of humble service. In counteracting the self-serving instincts of the disciples, Jesus pointed to His own costly service to humanity: "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served [diakonethenai], but to serve [diakonesei], and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Luke's account reports Jesus' words, "I am among you as one who serves [diakoneo]" (Luke 22:27). Nowhere is Jesus' attitude more strikingly illustrated than at the Last Supper where He chastened His competitive followers: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

Finally, Jesus' ministry was one of shepherding. Jesus depicted himself as a faithful and caring shepherd who knows each of His sheep and leads them out for water and pasture (cf. John 10:1-18). As the Good Shepherd, He interposes His own body between the sheep and all dangers, whether thieves or wolves. Repeatedly Jesus made the point, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11,15,17,18). Elsewhere in the New Testament He is called the "great Shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20), "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25), and the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4).

The ministry of Jesus finally culminated in His death which He clearly saw as a substitutionary offering for the sins of humanity (Matthew 26:28; Mark 10:45). He gave himself, in life and death, for others.

THE CHURCH AS THE EXTENSION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

From the Gospels it is readily apparent that Jesus intended to extend His own ministry through the Church which He himself would found and build (Matthew 16:18). One of His earliest actions was calling designated apostles "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14).

After His death and resurrection Christ explicitly commissioned the apostles to carry on His ministry. In His final charge the risen Lord claimed all authority in heaven and on earth and in that divine authority commended them, "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" (Matthew 28:19,20).

The other Gospels emphasize the commission in other ways. Luke noted that Jesus predicted the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations. The disciples were to be His witnesses, and for that purpose they would shortly receive the promised heavenly power (Luke 24:48,49). John recorded that before Jesus breathed on the disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit," He told them, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

An awareness of a derived and continuing ministry is present in the Acts narrative as the disciples sought a replacement for the reprobate Judas. Casting lots to distinguish between Barsabbas and Matthias, they prayed, "Lord . . . show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs" (Acts 1:24-25). In selecting seven men to handle the social services of the Early Church, the apostles were conscious of the primacy of their ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). The central task of leadership in the Early Church was the anointed proclamation (kerygma) of God's word to His people.

This consciousness of ministry was not limited to the original disciples of Jesus nor even to the larger group of apostles which included Paul and James and perhaps others as well. A fellow worker of the apostles was readily called diakonos or "minister": Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21, KJV); Epaphras (Colossians 1:7); Timothy (1 Timothy 4:6). Others are said to participate in diakonia or "ministry": the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 16:15, KJV), Archippus (Colossians 4:17, KJV), and Mark (2 Timothy 4:11). Qualified elders were soon chosen and prayerfully commissioned for ministry in each new missionary church (Acts 14:23). Ministry clearly was not the sole prerogative of an apostolic elite to be passed down from generation to generation by a rite of apostolic succession. It was a pervasive and vibrant reality wherever the church was to be found.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN MINISTRY

The necessity of a spiritual endowment for ministry may be seen in the lives of both Jesus and the apostles. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism was a prerequisite for His ministry. Similarly Jesus instructed the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until they had received the promised Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5). Only after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost were they decisively impelled into active public ministry. Then their ministry was carried out with a striking sense of the Spirit's power and wisdom rather than with mere professionalism and administrative skill. Therefore, a Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit and a subsequent Spirit-filled life are essential to the most effective Christian

ministry.

Paul's understanding of his own induction into ministry is highly significant. "I became a servant [diakonos] of this gospel by the gift [dorea] of God's grace [charis] given me through the working [energeia] of his power [dynamis]" (Ephesians 3:7). Paul was certainly conscious of being "called" (Romans 1:1). He also possessed excellent theological training (Acts 22:3). But in addressing the essential nature of his ministry, it was far more natural for him to speak of an inner work of the Spirit which in a supernatural way gifted him to be a minister of the gospel of Christ.

That same sense of sovereign supernatural action in the preparation of ministers is present in Paul's exhortations to the Ephesian elders, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). While in all probability Paul had been instrumental in the public ordination of these elders, he was deeply aware of a powerful prior work of the Spirit which their public ordination merely facilitated.

Historically the church has commonly spoken of the divine summons to ministry as a call to the ministry. Indeed the Scriptures frequently indicate that God does summon individuals to His service. Abraham (Genesis 12:1), Moses (Exodus 3:6,10), and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8,9) are good Old Testament examples. In the New Testament Jesus personally called the Twelve (Mark 3:13,14), and the Holy Spirit prophetically separated Paul and Barnabas for their missionary assignment (Acts 13:2).

The Scriptures also support the church's traditional concept of an inward call to describe the individual's personal awareness of a divine summons to ministry and an outward call which attests to everyone that the Holy Spirit has filled a chosen vessel. It must always be remembered, however, that those who are called to the ministry are supernaturally gifted by the Spirit to fulfill that call. Like Paul, they become ministers "by the gift of God's grace... through the working of his power" (Ephesians 3:7).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR MINISTRY

A primary function of the Spirit is the provision of specific gifts for ministry. The New Testament refers to these as "spiritual gifts" (Romans 1:11). These gifts are most commonly identified by the Greek term *charisma* which in the majority of its occurrences denotes "spiritual gift". "Spiritual gift" is also occasionally denoted by the terms *pneumatikos* (1 Corinthians 12:1,28; 14:1) and *doma* (Ephesians 4:7).

A wide range of spiritual gifts accompanies and effects the broad diffusion of ministry that has already been observed in the New Testament. In fact, a special touch of the Spirit has been given to every single Christian to qualify him or her for one or more special ministries: "To each one of us grace [charis] was given according to the measure of Christ's gift [dorea]" (Ephesians 4:7, NASB).

This revolutionary concept of every-member gifting is found in other passages dealing with spiritual gifts. "We have different gifts [charisma], according to the grace [charis] given us" (Romans 12:6). "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). There is a similar emphasis in 1 Peter 4:10, "Each one should use whatever gift [charisma] he has received to serve [diakoneo] others, faithfully administering God's grace [charis] in its various forms."

Several important lists of spiritual gifts, identified as such by the words *charisma*, *pneumatikos*, or *doma*, are included in the New Testament. There are the familiar nine gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Several of these gifts are also found in the lists of Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, and Ephesians 4:11.

These nine gifts may readily be recognized as supernatural and spontaneous, always under the immediate control of the Spirit who will use obedient and spiritually sensitive believers, often on a regular basis. But sprinkled among the gift lists, and equally identified as *charisma*, *pneumatikos*, or *doma*, are other very important spiritual gifts for carrying on the work of the church. They are serving (Romans 12:7), teaching (Romans 12:7), encouraging (Romans 12:8), giving (Romans 12:8), leadership (Romans 12:8), showing

mercy (Romans 12:8), helping others (1 Corinthians 12:28), and administration (1 Corinthians 12:28) (all refs:). These gifts are not so readily recognized as being supernatural but nonetheless clearly have their origin in the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes them available to believers to be used regularly, energetically, and conscientiously as they depend on Him in the service of the church.

Although the gifts that are listed probably cover most of the ministry needs of the church, there is no reason to think that the New Testament writers intended to be totally comprehensive. For example, there is no reference to gifts of music, though the New Testament does mention "spiritual [pneumatikos] songs" (Ephesians 5:19). The Old Testament ascribes gifts of craftsmanship to the Holy Spirit (Exodus 31:2,3). It is entirely reasonable to think there are other gifts granted to the church by the Spirit to meet specific needs. In fact, Paul seemed at great pains to show a variety of gifts: "There are different kinds of gifts . . . different kinds of service [diakonia] . . . different kinds of working [energema]" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

In every case these gifts are set within the context of the church and are designed for ministry to and through the body of Christ. Before noting the "different gifts" of Romans 12:6, Paul stressed the church's interdependence, "We who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5). The gift list of 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 is prefaced by a similar statement, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). The rationale for the gifts of Ephesians 4:11 is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12).

The purpose of spiritual gifts is most clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Spiritual gifts are intended for the upbuilding of the congregation at large. Their only justification is to serve the purposes of Christ in His church, a lesson that was lost on the immature Corinthians who demeaned the gifts by their own proud exhibitionism.

MINISTRY BELONGS TO THE ENTIRE CHURCH

An examination of the concepts of ministry and spiritual gifts makes it abundantly clear that ministry is the work of the entire body of Christ, not just of a special priestly or clerical caste. Even the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher do not exist as ends in themselves, or as rewards for a special elite. They are expressly given "to prepare God's people for works of service [diakonia, "ministry"]", so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12).

A part of the ministry of the church is given to every single member of the body of Christ. All are called in some way to be ministers. To be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into the ministry of His church. No group of leaders alone can embody the full spectrum of spiritual gifts and provide all the wisdom and energy required to do the work of the church. Therefore, the ministry of the laity is integral to the accomplishment of the mission of the church.

Spiritual gifting for ministry is also without regard to race or sex. Wherever the church exists, the Holy Spirit pours out His gifts "and he gives them to each one, just as he determines" (1 Corinthians 12:11). They are bestowed as widely as the blessing of salvation in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Consequently there is no scriptural basis for excluding any believer from the gifting of the Holy Spirit. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17,18, from Joel 2:28,29). Both the didactic teachings and the historical examples of the New Testament show that women and men of various ethnic backgrounds were granted spiritual gifts for the ministry of the church.

ORDINATION AS RECOGNITION OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

A strong biblical doctrine of the ministry of the laity may at first appear to diminish the necessity and importance of an ordained clergy, those who are specially set apart for the leadership of the church. But to

the contrary it actually heightens the need, for the laity must be trained and led on a massive scale if the work of the church is to be accomplished. Ministerial leaders are Christ's gifts [doma] for the explicit purpose of preparing the people of God for their ministries of building up the Church (Ephesians 4:7-12).

Spiritual leadership is a crucial issue throughout the New Testament. Jesus' appointment and nurture of the apostles was clearly to provide servant-leaders who proclaimed and modeled the faith. The apostles exercised a vital leadership role in the early Christian church. They were aided by men like Stephen (Acts 6), Philip (Acts 8), and Barnabas (Acts 13), whom the Spirit singularly marked out for ministry. These and others are to be found among an expanding leadership group in the New Testament.

Paul and Barnabas were very careful to appoint elders for leadership in each new church. These appointments were made with prayer, fasting, and some kind of public ordination service (Acts 14:23). The congregations may well have had a part in the selection, as in the choice of the "seven" in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6). Paul's letters to Timothy certainly reflect a formal ordination for both Paul and a body of elders laid hands on Timothy to set him apart for the ministry (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Ordination was done with great care. "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands," Paul commanded Timothy who was responsible to oversee the appointment of elders (1 Timothy 5:22). Titus was specifically commanded to "appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5).

Both Timothy and Titus were given basic qualifications for the elders/overseers to be appointed. The stated qualifications have to do with spiritual maturity and godliness, public credibility, a faithful marriage,² a well-managed and respectful family, personal temperance and discipline, hospitality, and teaching ability (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Elders and overseers were to be godly leaders to whom others could look for examples. Clearly the Scriptures show that certain people were marked out by the Spirit to be set apart, or ordained, for the leadership of the whole people of God in their ministry.

MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

The New Testament makes very clear that ministerial leadership is of divine origin. Thus Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "In the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." A similar order exists in the gifts Christ gave to the Church: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). These ministries are not provided by human initiative but by a gracious act of the Lord Jesus Christ who works through His Spirit in the Church.

Apostles. The foundational importance of the apostles [apostoloi] is reflected in Ephesians 2:20, where the Church is said to be "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." The New Testament does not directly answer the question as to whether the apostolic office survives today.

Contemporary discussions should note that scriptural qualifications for the office of apostle were: (1) personal training with Jesus during the whole of His earthly ministry (Acts 1:22), and/or (2) a personal appearance of the risen Christ to them and a summons from Him, as in the cases of Paul and James, the Lord's brother (1 Corinthians 15:3-7, cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1).

The apostles were to be personal witnesses of the life and teachings of the historical Jesus and especially of His death and resurrection (Luke 24:48; Acts 2:32). To fulfill this important function, they were given a special promise: "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit . . . will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Quite understandably the apostles became the authoritative teachers of the Early Church, conveying and safeguarding divine revelation which came to be written down as the New Testament canon. If apostles were to be named in the church today, their similarity with the first apostles lies in their specially gifted leadership among the people of God. Unlike their biblical forebears, they would have seen neither the risen Christ nor written Scripture.

Prophets. The prophet (prophetes) also had a very important foundational role in the Early Church (Ephesians 2:20). Some, if not all, of the apostles were numbered among the prophets (cf. Saul in Acts 13:1). So were Judas and Silas who "said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers" (Acts 15:32), indicating a ministry that was positive, upbuilding, and encouraging. The writer of the Revelation, traditionally understood to be the apostle John, identified himself only as a prophet (Revelation 1:3; 22:9, etc.). Barnabas, Simeon, and Manaen were also among the prophets (Acts 13:1). But the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10) was much more broadly diffused in the Early Church, including Philip's four unmarried daughters and Agabus (Acts 21:9,10). As a gift of the Spirit, prophecy was apparently a common experience of laypersons within the early congregations (1 Corinthians 14:1,5,39) and should continue, with proper biblical guidelines (1 Corinthians 14:29-33), in the modern era.

Evangelists. The ministry of the evangelist (evangelistes, Ephesians 4:11) as mentioned in the New Testament, is not well defined. Philip was known as "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8) and Paul commanded Timothy, clearly an elder and pastor, to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5) as one of the duties of his ministry. The term itself implies the proclamation of the evangelion, the good news of the saving acts of God in Christ for the benefit of sinful humanity. The New Testament evangelist was probably more akin to a missionary who preaches regularly among unreached peoples than to an itinerant minister who preaches regularly to the converted.

Teachers. The ministry of the teacher (didaskalos) is listed as third in importance in 1 Corinthians 12:28, superseded only by apostles and prophets who certainly themselves were teachers (Acts 2:42). Teaching is first of all a spiritual gift (charisma, Romans 12:7) granted to ministers and laypersons, the Holy Spirit himself being the divine teacher who anoints the people of God to comprehend the truth (1 John 2:20,27). So teachers were those uniquely equipped by knowledge and spiritual charisma to instruct the congregation in doctrine, ethics, and Christian experience. Elders, whose work was teaching as well as preaching, were especially highly esteemed (1 Timothy 5:17). In Ephesians 4:11 pastors and teachers are linked together, many scholars referring to them as "pastor-teacher." New Testament teachers were not mere purveyors of ideas. They taught with pastoral needs in view.

Pastors, Overseers, and Elders. The term "pastor," found only in Ephesians 4:11 in the English translation, is the Greek *poimen* and means "shepherd." The shepherding role (verb *poimaino*) is often attributed to ministers (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2), following the model of Christ himself (John 10:14; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4).

Two somewhat interchangeable terms used for pastoral leadership roles in the Early Church are "overseer" (*episkopos*) and "elder" (*presbyteros*). Note that the "elders" of Ephesus (Acts 20:17ff.) were told that the Holy Spirit had made them "overseers" (*episkopoi*) to "shepherd," i.e. "pastor" (*poimaino*), the church of God. The two terms appear to be synonymous also in Titus 1:5-7 where Paul spoke of the appointment of "elders" and gave the qualification of "overseers." Elders, overseers, and pastors, then, appear to be essentially equivalent terms, with each term stressing some unique aspect of the leader's role. In every case, however, the terms apply to those set apart as leaders of the church, not to laypersons.

As to derivation, "overseer" (*episkopos*) emphasizes the function of leadership or supervision. The verb is commonly rendered by such terms as "see to it," "care for," "oversee," "see after." "Elder" (*presbyteros*) signifies greater age, hence greater wisdom and more extensive experience, and was a common title for Jewish civil and religious leaders. Ministries encompassed by these terms may well include the spiritual gifts of "leadership" (*proistemi*) (Romans 12:8) and "administration" (*kybernesis*) (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Deacons. The word deacon (*diakonos*) is used widely in the New Testament to denote the ministries of leaders and lay persons alike. Therefore, the special role of the deacon as implied in the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-10 is somewhat difficult to identify. This ministry is often traced to Acts 6:1-6, though the seven appointed there are never called deacons and at least two of them quickly assumed major roles in teaching and preaching. However, their task was "to wait [*diakoneo*, the verb form of 'deacon'] on tables," a work of practical administration in dispensing the charitable gifts of the church. The word "deacon" (*diakonos*) was also used for a woman, Phoebe, who was well known for her service to the church in

Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). Our modern application of the term to laypersons serving with pastors in local churches may not be far from the New Testament usage.

In making an application of biblical leadership roles to the modern era, we conclude that pastors carry out the functions of elders and overseers in the local congregations. The teaching and preaching of the Word lie at the heart of their ministry of building up the body of Christ.

In view of the wide ranging administrative and spiritual oversight of the early apostles and their associates, it also seems legitimate to extend these ministry functions of elders (presbyteroi) and overseers (episkopoi) to district and General Council levels. Yet we must acknowledge that in the providence of God there are many unanswered questions about the polity of the Early Church, and it is unwise to assume that any modern system of church government perfectly replicates it. If a single system were necessary, surely the divine revelation would have been more extensive, and we would have little difficulty understanding the details of New Testament church government.

A WORD TO CREDENTIALLED AND PROSPECTIVE CLERGY

You have been called! And if you have been called, you have been gifted. Use those gifts for the upbuilding and edification of the church, not for personal gain or acclaim. The ministry in which you are or will be engaged is God's ministry, not yours. You will be held accountable for the integrity with which you fulfill your great commission. Your call is a great privilege and honor. But never forget, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Integrity, morality, and holiness are not faces that are worn in public. They are character traits that must permeate the private and personal life of the spiritual leader.

While every believer should be a minister in the broadest sense—for we all belong to a holy and royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9)—you have been set apart for a special ministry among the many ministries that edify the Church. Your communion with your Lord and Master must be frequent and regular; you will lead others into deeper commitments and devotion by your example. Though every believer has direct access to God, in a special way you must be God's voice speaking His word with conviction and anointed power.

Do not despise the gifts and ministry you have been given. But just as important, do not despise the gifts and ministry God has given those you serve. Let there be no competition to prove that one ministry is more significant than another. If God has given gifts to all believers for the edification of the entire Body, He must intend those gifts to be used for His glory. A jealous competition which treats gifts and ministry as evidence of honor rather than as opportunities for humble service cannot bring glory to our Lord. In a growing, evangelistic church the many gifts and ministries, of both clergy and laity, flow together under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

If you have heard God's call to full-time ministry and are now preparing to fulfill that call, learn these lessons early and learn them well. You can be God's vessel and an anointed catalyst to revive fainting hearts, to inspire ministry to those you serve, and to reach a lost world through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Like Timothy, serve a faithful apprenticeship to a spiritual leader who embodies the high standards of God's most holy calling. Immerse yourself in the Word, spend time at the feet of our Master, and join the ranks of those committed to fulfilling the charge of the Great Commission.

WE ALL HAVE A MINISTRY

Having seen the importance and necessity of an ordained clergy, set apart for leadership in the church, we return to the biblical truth that all believers are called to ministry. This is not a time for laity to sit back and watch leadership perform. We are all called to use our gift(s) in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Paul's testimony must be the witness of every believer/minister: "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:1,2).

We call on every believer to expect and then cultivate a ministry of edification and service for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom. He who is faithful in the exercise of few gifts will be made custodian of greater gifts and greater service.

Rise up, O [Church] of God! Have done with lesser things;
Give heart, and soul, and mind, and strength to serve the King of kings.
Lift high the cross of Christ! Tread where His feet have trod:
As brothers [and sisters] of the Son of Man, Rise up, O [Church] of God!

--William P. Merrill

BIBLICAL TERMS FOR MINISTRY

The noun, *diakonía*, "ministry" or "service," is used over 30 times (Luke 10:40; Acts 1:17; 6:4; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 16:5; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:5, etc.). The verb, *diakonéo*, "to minister" or "to serve," is also used over 30 times (Matthew 4:11; 8:15; Mark 10:45; John 12:26; Romans 15:25; 2 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12, etc.). *Diákonos*, "minister," "servant," or "deacon," is used nearly as often (Matthew 20:26; John 12:26; Romans 13:4; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 3:7; 6:21; Philippians 1:1, etc.).

The ministry concept is also present in the verb *leitourgéo* (Luke 1:23; 2 Corinthians 9:12; Philippians 2:17, 30; Hebrews 8:6; 9:21) and the noun *leitourgós* (Romans 13:6; 15:16; Philippians 2:25; Hebrews 1:7; 8:2). In early Greek thought, these terms had to do with service rendered for the public good. Significantly they were used almost exclusively in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament widely used in the New Testament era) for the service of priests and Levites in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple. The New Testament uses the word group with both its public and priestly sense.

The third important word group comes from the verb *hype-rétéo* (Acts 13:36; 20:34; 24:23). The *hype-réte-s* (Matthew 5:25; Luke 1:2; 4:20; Acts 13:5; 1 Corinthians 4:1) is a free person who willingly accepts a subordinate role to serve a superior, the key thought apparently being that of willing subordination.

The work of the ministry is often graphically depicted in the verb *poimaíno* (Matthew 2:6; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Jude 12), which means to do the work of a shepherd. Here the idea is that of feeding, watering, and protecting the flock.

Another important word for ministry is the verb *oikodoméo* (Matthew 16:8; Acts 9:31; Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 14:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Peter 2:5) which means literally "to build a house" but is usually used metaphorically in the New Testament in the sense of "upbuilding" or "edification." The noun *oikodome* frequently appears in that sense also (Romans 14:19; 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 26; 2 Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 4:12, 16).

Summary: *Diakonía* and its related forms make up the single most important word group having to do with ministry and is rooted in humble service for others. The *leitourgía* grouping draws from both Greek public life and Old Testament temple service and thus stresses both the public and priestly aspects of ministry. The *hype-réte-s* is one who willingly accepts a subordinate role to serve someone else. The *poimen* is a shepherd willing to give his life for the nurture of the sheep. All ministries effectively build up the body of Christ.

¹ A brief overview of *diakonía* and other biblical words related to "ministry" can be found at the end of this paper.

² Not all early ministers were married, e.g., the apostle Paul.