

## MINISTRY

In the modern Christian Church, there are many kinds of ministries. And as 1 Corinthians 12.4 states, that there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

It's the manifestation of the Holy Spirit that qualifies as ministry.

It was the same in the first church. Peter stood up among the first 120 believers and spoke God's word by the empowering of the Holy Spirit and 8,000 people were redeemed into the family of God in the first two days.

He and John spoke God's word by the Holy Spirit and healed the lame man at the beautiful gate, who rose up walking, leaping and praising God, and created a testimony for God among the people of Jerusalem.

Stephen and Phillip and 5 others were commissioned to serve soup to the widows in the church. But they were all filled with the Holy Spirit such that many miracles happened among the people that they ministered to.

Although these ministries varied in scope and effect, they were initiated and empowered by the Holy Spirit and the results were supernatural.

Let me share a few scriptures with you. Let's start with John 1.1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

God's word isn't merely a teaching. It's God's life being expressed through a person by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

What God wanted to say to the whole world, He didn't give us an academic teaching, He sent Jesus to express and manifest His word. Jesus was the Word that became flesh and dwelt among men. He was the Light and Life of the Father for all men.

The next one is 2 Corinthians 3.2.

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The people that Paul and his brothers ministered to, became letters from God. The content of those letters was Christ, the expression of God's light and His Life, so that unbelievers could experience what was written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit and come to know God.

Paul and his friends were aware that their effectiveness wasn't from themselves but from God. They were equipped and made adequate by God to be capable ministers of a new spiritual covenant with God. They weren't just spreading a new teaching, they were expressing and imparting this new spiritual covenant with God, that God had for all people.

In Hebrew 8.10. God explains what the purpose of His new covenant is.

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. They will not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother saying, "know the Lord", for they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

Please note the operative words in this New Covenant. They are I WILL, I WILL, and I WILL.

Again, this is not just the transfer of information or a teaching about God. It's the supernatural work of God on the hearts and minds of people and produces a supernatural effect in their lives that no natural effort or religious teaching could.

The Greek word translated in this verse as "know", means to know experientially through first-hand experience, not just a mental acceptance.

In John 17.3 Jesus explained what eternal life actually is. He said, this is eternal life. That they "know" you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

In John chapter 16, Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to us and the Spirit would glorify Him and that He would take everything that belonged to Christ and impart it to us.

In 1 Peter 4.11, Peter declares, whoever speaks let him speak the utterances of God and whoever serves let him do so by His Holy Spirit, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

When ministry is done by the empowering and direction of the Holy Spirit the Father is glorified and produces God's results. Secular programs and religious efforts originated by men without the Holy Spirit, although they may be compassionate and caring do not glorify God. Man originated them and man receives the credit for them.

The Gospel, which is God's plan to redeem all men back into His family and into His Kingdom, is not a religion. It's the supernatural power of God on our behalf. Religion is done by men, and for men. The Gospel is done by God, and for God. He's the only One in the universe who can do it, in us.

One of the main ingredients of spiritual discernment is being able to determine what is of God and what is not. The source of the thing is always the determining factor.

Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3.5, that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. In John 6.63 He said, it's the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are Life. The Greek word translated as "life" is zoe, which means "life as God has it".

In Acts 1.8, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will BE my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth. Please note that Jesus did not command His disciples to stay in Jerusalem so that He could teach them to DO witnessing for Him. He said My Spirit will come upon you and YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES. It's the Holy Spirit's presence within men, expressing God's will through men, that is God's witness, and not their self-motivated efforts to DO witnessing for Him.

The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 2.4 that, my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

In our society today, many people are "ministering" with the wisdom of men and without the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's ability to write God's word on people's hearts and minds, causing them to know and experience God's presence in their lives.

1 John 5.11 states God's witness concerning this. He testifies that,

He has given us His eternal life and the life is in His Son. He who has the Son, has the Life....

Jesus said in John 16.13, that when the Holy Spirit comes, He would lead us into all the truth. He did not say that the Holy Spirit would teach you all of my teachings. The Greek word translated here as truth, meant reality. The Holy Spirit was sent to lead us into the reality of oneness with Christ.

Jesus said. I AM the way, I AM the truth, and I AM the life. John 14.6

Let's look at a few more scriptures.

In Matthew 22.35, Jesus was asked, which is the greatest commandment from God. He quoted to them Deuteronomy 6.4-10. Which spelled out the relationship that God wanted with His people. It reads,

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day, had developed an all-consuming, life-long dedication to the study of God's words. Unfortunately, they missed the love relationship that God wanted with His children. They turned every one of God's requests into an outward display to be noticed by men.

In Matthew 23.5 Jesus said, they do all of their deeds to be noticed by men. They broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels on their garments and love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. The entire chapter is a scathing rebuke of their self-serving "ministry".

Paul also warned his young disciple to avoid men who use ministry as a means of gain and to lay hold of the eternal life to which you were called. 1 Timothy 6.

Please note that the only people Jesus ever rebuked were religious people.

There is a deception in our society that all religion is good, and everyone should choose one and get involved in it. God actually hates religion, because it's a man-made substitute for a relationship with God by His Holy Spirit, and faith in His supernatural work to redeem us back into oneness with Him.

In Jesus' parable, in Matthew 25.14, about the man who entrusted 3 of his servants with 5, 2, and 1 talent. He did not ask them to pawn their most valuable possessions or empty their bank accounts for his work. The scripture says that, "he entrusted his possessions to them." He empowered them with HIS substance and expected them to invest it for HIS benefit.

I'll conclude with a couple final scriptures.

1 Peter 4.10 from the amplified version reads,

As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as befits good trustees of God's many-sided grace, as faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor.

## 2 Corinthians 5.18

But all these things are from God, who through *Jesus* Christ reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself] and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him].

It was God [personally present] in Christ, reconciling *and* restoring the world to favor with Himself, not counting up *and* holding against [men] their trespasses [but cancelling them], and committing to us the message of reconciliation (of the restoration to favor).

So, we are Christ's ambassadors, God making His appeal as it were through us. We [as Christ's personal representatives] beg you for His sake to lay hold of the divine favor [now offered you] *and* be reconciled to God.

For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in *and* through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness].

It's God's presence in us that enables us to express and fulfil this spiritual calling and ministry of reconciliation.

This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that will impart the knowledge of God, eternal life, to all who will receive it.

God bless you.

Jim Fuller

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