

Divine Ministry

The description of the ministry of Jesus is found in Luke 4:18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,¹⁸ to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”¹⁹

God’s Use of Man

From the beginning, God has relied on and used people to advance His work. After equipping Adam to cultivate the Garden of Eden and supervise the animals, God left the work of the garden in his hands (Gen 2:15-20). The pattern continued.

When God wanted a structure built that could house the animals of the world and protect them from the great flood He would cause, He instructed a good man in the art of building an ark. When God wanted to protect His chosen people from a famine that covered the entire Middle East, He sent a favored son of Israel into another land to set-up a place where they could go thrive. When God wanted a dwelling place on Earth, thousands of artists and craftsmen worked to fashion a tabernacle and temple (Exodus 35-38; I Kings 6). When the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the new reign of God’s kingdom on Earth, He invited human beings to help. He told His disciples, “Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt 9:38).

God welcomes us as ministers (divine partnerships) in His kingdom. In the Lord’s time they called it “sending you out.” In today’s modern world, we call it “ministry.”

- ❖ Some preach, some teach, some lead others in worship.
- ❖ Some type, some keep the church’s books, some fold & staple the Sunday bulletins.
- ❖ Some write books, some compose songs, some develop giving programs for the poor.
- ❖ Some operate food pantries, some house the homeless, some mentor youth.
- ❖ Some care for the sick or comfort the dying, some offer counseling to wounded hearts.

The Question of Reward

Why do we serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it because of Him or are we held to the task by the idea of rewards for our service? Scripture does promise rewards and blessings for obedience. The Lord extends the promise of rewards. As Christians, we are taught to identify the promises of God and to internalize them for recompense of great reward. These are not demeaning bribes, incentives or thought-guiding propaganda. The rewards described in the Holy Scriptures are outcomes; they are the results of a living a life pleasing to the God who “rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb. 11:6) and strive to perform His will.

Matthew 19:16-22 tells the story of a rich young ruler who asked Jesus what did he have to do to be saved because he had kept the basic commandments all of his life. Jesus told the young man, “Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Of course, the man decided he could not possibly let go of his wealth.

The scriptures describes the man’s actions as “sorrowful”. It is equally as sorrowful that Peter, having heard all that transpired between the young man and the Lord, asked his own question of Jesus: Peter asked, “*We have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?*”

That same Peter who walked and talked with Jesus on a daily basis, who saw how much of Himself the Lord gave ceaselessly to so many... and yet—his mind went there! Peter’s mind found itself stuck on “treasure in heaven...follow Me.” Obviously, he said to himself, “If that is true for him, it must be more so for us.” After all, Peter had made personal sacrifices in his decision to follow Jesus: he left behind family, he left his established fishing business; on a daily basis he faced fatigue, frustration, failure, and physical illness. Yes, he had seen the goodness and the greatness of Jesus. There had been those awe-inspiring, breath-taking, heart stopping, moments when the Lord had worked the most impossible of miracles...and still, that which was human in Peter came to the surface. The “what’s-in-it-for-me” feeling.

The Lord’s response to Peter was not one of rebuke. He did not correct Peter and tell him it was wrong to focus on rewards and eternal blessings. He did not say it was carnal to desire “treasure in heaven”. The Lord’s response was one of affirmation. He said, “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (Mark 10:30).

Following Jesus may not feel like it pays off. There will be losses if you follow Him and go into service for His cause. But, in God’s time and in God’s way, it certainly does pay.



The foundation of ministry is character.
The nature of ministry is service.
The motive for ministry is love.
The measure of ministry is sacrifice.
The authority of ministry is submission.
The purpose of ministry is the glory of God.
The tools of ministry are the Word of God and prayer—
The privilege of ministry is growth.
The power of ministry is the Holy Spirit
And the model of ministry is Jesus, the Christ.

Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe. The True Ministry Statement.
Making Sense of Ministry; Moody Press, 1983.

In the Divine Service of Jesus Christ

The Desire To Serve Him

There comes a time for believers—His believers—when there is a strong craving to do more than reading and studying and meditating and praying and repenting. The time spent alone with the Lord, studying His Word and worshipping with our brothers and sisters in Christ, leads us to want to *serve* Him. The natural outcome of knowing Him makes you want to do something that makes a difference for the cause of Christ.

When you love, it's hard to sit still and do nothing when that loved one is near. You find yourself constantly jumping up to get something, to help them in some way, to figure out how to meet their needs or entertain them, to fill their stomachs with good food...there is great pleasure to be found in doing something for the ones you love. It's the same with Jesus. When you love Him you want to do something for Him.

Being a Christian isn't about leaving behind what the world had to offer. It's about embracing the abundant life the Lord has to offer, and entering into service to the Lord. It is, and it always will be, work. Serving is to work. But serving the Lord does not make us employees working for wages. We are not servants. We are children, delighting in our Father's work and trusting in His generosity. The mistake most people make is counting the cost of service and computing the reward without considering the *privilege* of being in His service.



It is a privilege to allow the Lord to use us to show others His great love for them.

Is It a Sacrifice?

People talk a lot about the personal sacrifice involved in devoting our lives to ministry. But can ministering to others be called “*sacrifice*” if we think of the service we perform as giving back to God a little of what we owe Him? Can we really call ministry a sacrifice if it gives us deep satisfaction, develops our best talents and skills, and gives us the greatest hope and expectations?

Regardless of the divine service we choose to perform, all that we do is for the gospel. In our service and in our mission, we are motivated not by a sense of duty, not by pride or privilege, not by our reputations or responsibilities. We have a relationship with the Lord and we work for Him simply because we love Him.

The office of the minister is given by the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord that lays on the minister the burden of souls, and equips him for His work. How inspiring, exciting, and yet, solemn the responsibility! Shame on us if we exercise our ministry only for the eye and ear of our fellow-men. Let the glory of Jesus Christ be the supreme consideration with you.

The Dangers Hidden In Ministry

Yes, the Lord seeks laborers for His vineyard. He wants us to go out into the field; and sow, water and harvest His crops. Even more important to Him than the service you perform is the attitude of your heart while you are performing it. Serious thought should be given to our motives and the spirit with which we enter His Service and perform within it. Service to the Lord will always expose what is in our hearts.

There are three (3) dangerous spirits to be on the look-out for when in the service of a disciple:

1. **The danger of a commercial spirit.** Workers think wages should correspond to the amount and type of work done. As humans we understand that line of thinking. It is called the “equity principle”. Kingdom of God economics are very different.

As Bible-believing followers of Jesus Christ, we rejoice in knowing that we are the Father’s children. We are glad to know that we depend upon His generosity and no other source. We understand that all He gives us is a gift and cannot be earned. His provisions do not put us in His debt. Our service does not mean He owes us anything. But—our greatest joy is in knowing that He is aware of all that we do, and that if we leave the reward to Him we will be overwhelmed by His generosity.

2. **The danger of a competitive spirit.** Nothing is less appropriate in the followers of Jesus Christ, in those who minister to others on His behalf, than the acts of comparison and competition. How sad it is when someone sets his eyes on what the Master has given to another! It doesn’t matter what it is all good gifts are from God. God has given them to “whomsoever” He will for whatsoever purpose He (Almighty God) has in mind. Failure to appreciate and accept that God’s provision is individual, creates confusion, chaos and disunity. When we take the time focus on His bountiful generosity and tender care towards ourselves...our heart fills with joy, the joy that comes with being loved and accepted. It is then that we can clearly see the talents and aptitudes He has given us. And, if we look a little closer, we will see His purpose for our lives.
3. **The danger of a complaining spirit.** Grumbling is an attack on the goodness and generosity of God Himself. Complaining is an infectious social disease that robs us, and all those around us, of our motivations for being in service to the Lord. Motivations are seldom ever entirely pure, but when people begin to complain it makes our reason for being in service seem small. It makes people begin to do their own thing, to do whatever they think is best. Those who focus on their supposed deprivation and complain about the personal cost to them imposed by their ministry have missed the wonder of the grace and generosity of our God. How do you stop a complainer? Simply tell them that complaining exposes the corruption in our hearts.



Read more

Explore the subject of the Christian perspective of ministry in Barbara Gordon’s book entitled DIVINE MINISTRY. Check it out on the website: www.thewordartists.net/bookshelf

