
Fulfill Your Ministry

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*"Take heed to the ministry
which thou hast received in the
Lord, that thou fulfill it"
(Colossians 4:11).*

1 Fulfill Your Ministry

At recent meetings where I have been speaking, the Holy Spirit has led me to take an unofficial poll. I have asked these questions: "How many of you know what your function is in the Body of Christ?" "How many of you know the work God has called you to perform?" Whether the gatherings have numbered fifteen people or a thousand people, the percentage of those who know their calling has been about eight percent! If only eight percent of a natural human body were functioning, that body would probably be asleep! Certainly it would be at ease, with most of its functions quiescent.

The Scripture makes it very plain that we are to minister to one another; we are to be faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God; we are to occupy until He comes; we are to give meat in due season; we are to watch. In addition to the Great Commission itself, we are to perform many more works in our Father's kingdom. We are to do greater works than Jesus performed while here on earth; we are to run a race, fight a good fight, complete a course, overcome—and win a crown. We certainly cannot accomplish any of these goals without an understanding of the will of the Lord concerning us.

What is our problem? Why is the Body of Christ functioning at such a low ebb? According to the parables of the talents and of the pounds, one main problem is *fear*; another obstacle is a wrong concept of God and what He is requiring. Lack of knowledge and teaching on the subject of ministry is partially to blame, as is the lack of opportunity or encouragement of personal ministry in most Christian congregations.

Once during a meeting I had a vision. I saw the people in a room praising and worshipping God, and I saw within each person a beautiful gift. The gifts were all wrapped in gorgeous paper with beautiful ribbons and bows and ornaments. I thought the gifts were lovely. The Lord spoke to me saying, "Yes, these people have had these gifts, some of them for years and years; but, son, they have never unwrapped them. They have never opened their gifts." In the vision I was seeing dormant ministries, potentials never realized, opportunities never explored, chances to experience the operational power of God in their lives never witnessed. Functioning in the proper place in the Body brings with it a unique sense of fulfillment that nothing else in this life can bring.

Throughout this booklet we will be talking about "your ministry," or "my ministry," and in one sense this is proper. However, at the onset let us understand that there is *no* ministry except that of Jesus. In Acts 1, Peter mentions "this ministry" twice. All ministry is part of "this ministry" which began with the apostles and is continuing today. There is only one ministry—that of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He began and which He continues through His Body, the Church, and through its various members.

By several stratagems the enemy has robbed us of something God has given us and, what is more, of something for which God is going to require an accounting. Each of us has been given a deposit of divine grace over which we are to exercise stewardship. Most of us think of "unmerited favor" as the only definition of GRACE; however, the word GRACE also means "the operational power of God." Each of us has received a divine enabling to serve the members of the Body. This portion of grace is unique to each individual. No other member of the Body can fulfill another's function. If any

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member defaults on his/her particular job in the Body, that job will not be done.

2 Calling and Election

Before we talk about specific gifts, specific functions, and parts of the Body, let us take a look at two stories Jesus told: the parable of the TALENTS (Matthew 25) and the parable of the POUNDS (Luke 19), and at II Peter 1:10:

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

What exactly is our "calling" and what is our "election"? Paul referred to his apostleship as his "calling" in more than one Scripture. Your calling is your ministry, whereas your election is your personal relationship with the Father. The parable of the TALENTS refers to our calling; the parable of the POUNDS corresponds to our election. Because of the obvious similarities between these two, many people think they are simply two accounts of the same teaching. However, a careful study shows their differences are just as striking and enlightening as their similarities.

3 The Talents and the Pounds

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods" (Matthew 25:14).

Jesus travelled into a far country called "earth," and He has delivered to us, His own servants, His goods. He has told us we are joint heirs with Him, that all authority is given to Him in heaven and on earth and that we are to **"go, therefore, and teach all nations...."** He has given us His authority. As He is so are we in this world. In Mark 4:28 Jesus said that **"the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself,"** and James 5:7 confirms this thought. Jesus has left behind everything necessary—all the seed and all His goods—and now the earth brings forth fruit of itself.

In Matthew 25:15 one servant is given five talents, another two talents and another one talent; *to every man according to his several ability*. This is the clue to the parable. A major difference between this parable and that of the pounds is that in the parable of the talents, the goods are distributed to the servants according to each servant's *ability*. (The portion of His goods which has been distributed to you is your ministry.) First Peter 4:11 says that "if any man minister, let him do it as the ability that God giveth."

The word TALENT in this parable does not mean a musical or artistic ability or a particular trait or adeptness. The word means "a weight of silver." One authority says the weight was about 75 to 80 pounds. So, a talent of silver is a considerable amount of capital. Certainly in Jesus' day it was wealth. Jesus' hearers understood Him to mean that the man delivered differing units of at least 75 pounds of pure silver

to each servant. It was a vast treasure with which to earn additional wealth.

The Lord's own goods have been delivered to each of us for our ministry. Herein lies stewardship. There will be an accounting for each ounce of this "silver"; He requires us to return to Him those goods. He receives all things that in all things God may be glorified by Jesus Christ. It all goes back to God. A steward must give an account. First Corinthians 4:2 says,

"So let every one of us give an account to God as a good steward; moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

Note in the parable of Matthew 25 that the greatest amount given was five talents. No saint has received more than five talents. Paul received five. Luther, Wesley, and other spiritual giants were probably five-talent men. However, any six born-again Christians in the local congregation will have a greater amount of spiritual wealth collectively than any one of these men, because *any* group of six Christians will have a minimum of six talents of Jesus' goods.

We see that the five-talent servant and the two-talent servant both traded and doubled the wealth they received, but he that had received only one talent dug in the earth and hid his lord's money. Verse 19: **"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them."** The Lord is so gracious! He gives a "long time" to develop our ministries. We not only know from this parable that there are differences in the amounts given to be accounted for, but we also know from James 3:1 that there will be different degrees or severity of judgment as well. **"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation (judgment)."**

Concerning the judgment of the first two servants, I believe that the doubling of the wealth is the raising up of other ministries. Note that the first two received the same words of commendation. The point obviously is not the AMOUNT of talents returned to the Lord at the accounting, but how well one did with what was given. The five- talent man duplicated the wealth; the two-talent man did the same. Had the one-talent man produced one more talent, he would no doubt have received the same word of commendation and an invitation to enter into the joy of his lord.

Another important conclusion to be drawn from identical commendations is that one cannot produce more than one has received. We conclude that the two-talent man could not have produced five talents and that the one-talent man could not have produced three or four talents. Paul said concerning the particular measure of grace given to us " . . . **But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ**" (Ephesians 4:7). He also said that he did not stretch himself beyond his measure (see II Corinthians 10:13).

Let us look at the one-talent man. Matthew 25:24:

"Then he which had received one talent came and said, Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou has not strawed."

Not a shred of evidence in the parable indicates that the lord of that servant was a "hard man." And, we certainly know this is not true of *our* Lord! This man had a wrong concept of God. If he believed that way about God, why was he not afraid to come without interest that had been earned on the money? In the context of ministry, that investing of our talent for interest is commitment to the

Body of Christ and at least doing what we can do. The one-talent servant in this parable was wicked and slothful and was judged out of his own mouth.

Verse 25: **"And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth ..."** Now comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we have already determined that the talent is "treasure," and we know from II Corinthians 4:7 that God has placed His treasure in earthen vessels. Earthen vessels are made from clay or "earth" and so are our natural bodies. So, we deduce that our Lord is saying that this man hid this divine enabling in his own "earthen vessel" or his "earth"—his own body. He just never did anything with it. He never responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to use the gift within him.

Another point to consider is the motive for this hiding. He reveals that he was AFRAID. The first emotion experienced by fallen man was fear. Adam was afraid of God. This slothful servant was afraid of his Lord, afraid of losing the talent, afraid of his fellow man. Fear is one of Satan's strongest devices and will be the cause of many being consigned to the lake of fire (see Revelation 21:8).

The one-talent man was not profitable to his Lord. He was excluded from the Lord's approval and from the invitation to the Lord's joy. Instead (verse 30) **"... cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** This probably is not the lake of fire. "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" is an old Jewish idiom. Its meaning is similar to our saying "I could just kick myself" or our expression of "pulling my hair out." Many of God's people will have this great remorse—this weeping and gnashing of teeth—this "Why, oh why didn't I do things differently?" Now this is a hard saying, but I want to be faithful to give the whole counsel of God, and this is going to be the result for those whose works do

not stand the test of fire. They will be saved, but their works will be burned (see I Corinthians 3:11-18). Their souls will be preserved, but they will suffer loss. The loss will be real, and the loss will be eternal.

I have gone into the parable of the talents in some detail because this study deals with ministry; however, for comparison, let's look briefly at the parable of the pounds.

In Luke 19 we read about a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom; he later returned home. (Jesus left His abode with the Father, came into this earthly "far country" to receive a kingdom, and then returned to the Father.) Before the nobleman's journey, he called his ten servants and delivered to each one pound—a sum of money much smaller than the talent, a current value of probably \$15 to \$20.

Notice that in this parable each servant was given the SAME amount. One of the servants produced a total of ten pounds from his original capital; another produced five, and another produced nothing. The unprofitable servant in this parable, like the one-talent man in the previous parable, was afraid of his master and held a wrong concept of him. He hid the money in a napkin, not in the earth of his own bodily vessel, but in a special "religious" trapping. (The napkin was probably made from the same cloth as the garments of his own righteousness and not from the pure linen of Christ's righteousness.) The unprofitable servant also is labeled "wicked" and rebuked for not having at least earned some interest on his capital.

The parables contain differences, however. The commendations of the first two servants are different, and the rewards are different. The man who produced ten pounds achieved more with the same amount of capital

and received a greater reward than the man who produced five pounds. He even received the pound of the unprofitable servant. Another difference is that no mention is made of outer darkness and gnashing of teeth.

An additional class of people is mentioned in this parable—the citizens who would not have the king rule over them (v. 14). I do not believe that the citizens represent the same people as the servants. The citizens represent the Jewish nation, those to whom He came and who received Him not. Notice that in the accounting these citizens are called "enemies" (v. 27). We can surmise, therefore, that we have two alternatives: allow the King to reign over us, or eventually be consigned to die as His enemies.

So we see that one multiplied this trust sum by ten, the second man multiplied his by five, and each received one city to rule for each pound increase. In salvation each person receives the same initial amount—the same relationship with God, the same love and promises, the same power to become a full-grown son of God, and the same ability to become like Jesus in one's personal life. God is no respecter of persons. All stand on level ground in their relationship to Him.

Another way of looking at these two teachings is to consider the parable of the talents as our ministry to man and the parable of the pounds as our ministry to God. One is outward or "manward." The other is interior or "Godward." One is manifest. The other is hidden. As we will discuss later, it takes the GIFTS of the Spirit to fulfill one's calling (to be profitable with one's talent) and it takes the FRUIT of the Spirit to fulfill one's election (to be profitable with one's pound). You need both gifts and fruit. You can judge whether or not a man has found his proper calling in God by the gifts that are operational in

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the working out of that calling. A man's character is judged by the fruit of Christlikeness evidenced in that life.

4 Guidelines

Along with the grace of God to conform to His image and the grace to minister to others in His power, the Lord has placed within each of us our own particular work or ministry. The Old Testament prophets used to call it the "burden of the Lord," and this "burden" constituted a message God had given them for the people or a work He called them to perform. This "burden" can be a desire to serve God or His people in some particular area or way. It could be the abiding compassion to minister in a certain realm, or the fire in the bones to get a message to God's people. It could be a quiet determination to relieve the financial pressure on God's people or on a particular outreach work. This burden can, and indeed does, take as many different forms as there are members of the Body, for each of us has our particular, unique, individual, and special burden.

Have you ever noticed the apparent discrepancy in the Galatians 6:1-5 passage? In verse 2 we are told to bear one another's burdens, and in verse 5 we are told that everyone is to bear his own burden.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another for EVERY MAN SHALL BEAR HIS OWN BURDEN."

The first mention of "burden" is plural. We are to bear one another's burdens. The Greek word used here is *baron*, and it could be translated as "loads" or "weights." The second mention is singular. The Greek word here is *photion*, which means something to be borne without reference to weight.

Christians from time to time come under various heavy loads, and we all need help at times to bear up under the pressure. But Jesus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. While brothers and sisters can and should help us bear our "*baron*" burdens, no one else can, or should even attempt to, assist us in bearing our "*photion*" burden.

The passage quoted directs us to prove our own work. Every man is to do this proving. "Man" here is the generic word for the race, of course, and is used in the sense of "every person." (It does not exclude women.) As we prove or fulfill the call of God in our lives, we have rejoicing in ourselves alone. There is no longer any need for imitation of another member of the Body. No need for copying another or attempting to find fulfillment in another's ministry. This, of course, does not mean that one does not appreciate another ministry or support it or pray for it, but the sense of purpose and the fulfillment God intends for all of us to experience will be realized only in doing our own work.

This burden is the desire within you to perform the service that God has called you to. Only you can bear that burden. If the burden is already placed in you by God Himself, He will show you what your burden is and will guide you into its fulfillment.

If you do not know what this burden is within your spirit, the first thing to do is to complete the Romans 12:1-2

instruction. We are promised the understanding of His will when we have presented our bodies a living sacrifice. We are told to tie the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar in Psalm 118:27. We are to do the presenting; we are to do the binding. As we present this living sacrifice, we are told to continue by not being conformed to the world, but by being transformed by the renewing of our minds. The renewed mind knows the will of the Father, the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. There are not three wills of God, but these three adjectives all modify the one will of God. He has one good, acceptable and perfect will for our lives.

Another guideline in ascertaining God's will for your life will be in the principle that one begins in a humble place, usually a place of physical, natural service, before progressing into a full-fledged recognizable "ministry." Both Stephen and Philip began as deacons serving in the natural realm. Both were promoted by God to a spiritual place of service (see Psalm 75:6-7).

I began serving God as janitor in a church my father pastored. I knew God had called me to that work, and I did it gladly and as unto the Lord. The precious sister who had done the work before I took it over had been older, and some of the work had not been accomplished with "spit and polish" for a long time. The work was hard, and, yet, it was very fulfilling and rewarding. I knew it was the work the Lord wanted me to do at that time. God had put within me a burning desire to preach, but to begin with, HE wanted me washing windows and woodwork, sweeping, mopping, etc.

The promotion and the elevation God brings after service in the natural realm is not an elevation to prominence where one is lifted up before men. Or, if that is the result, that is not the primary promotion. God lifts

us in the spiritual realm. There is a greater anointing, a greater revelation, a greater fellowship with Him, a greater precision in the use of the gifts for the benefit of His people. The call to "come up higher" is ALWAYS a call to come closer to Him, and never just a call up some ecclesiastical ladder.

Another scriptural principle for determining your burden is that God gives you the pattern He wants for you. God told Moses to see that he built the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him in the mount (see Hebrews 8:5).

Paul tells us that we should be careful how we build upon the foundation: whether we are using gold, silver, and precious stones or wood, hay, and stubble. We must prove our ministries. One guideline is what God Himself has spoken to our spirits "in the mount." Those are the times of special closeness and communication with your Father, what He has shown you that He would like for you to accomplish with Him. Notice that God told Moses to build as shown to HIM in the mount. You build as God shows YOU in the mount. You do not want to build according to the pattern shown to your pastor, or to some famous preacher. God will show you the pattern for YOUR service when you, like Moses, obey the call to **"come up to the mount and be there"** (Exodus 24:12).

Oh, the church has yet to see the beauty, the precision, and the harmony of each one's working together in his or her prescribed area. Joel talks of the army of God where each is in his own place and none pushes or gets out of rank (see Joel 2:7). This message on your ministry is one of the most important God has ever given to me. How I long to see all the unopened gifts unwrapped! How I long to see each member of the Body functioning in his or her God-ordained task!

Guidelines

Before leaving the subject of guidelines for ascertaining your burden, I would like to bring to your attention a scriptural pattern in Enoch. Remember that our primary understanding of "ministry" is the ministry of Jesus Himself. As that is the case, we have nothing whatever to give out in ministry that we have not received of Him. If we make a composite of Genesis 5:22-24, Hebrews 11:5-6 and Jude 14-15, we see that ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD.

First, this shows his fellowship with God, for if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God. How can two walk together unless they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). Second, ENOCH PLEASED GOD. We cannot please God without faith. By faith he was translated that he should not see death. He had this testimony "**... that he pleased God.**" So we can see that the first stage is walking with God. When we do that and bring our lives into alignment with God, we please God.

Finally, after these two steps, OUR MINISTRY COMES FORTH and flows from the fellowship. Enoch gave the first prophecy recorded in the Bible. We are not aware of this fact until we read about it in the Book of Jude, but we know that he prophesied or gave forth the Word of God to his generation. The pattern here is: first, fellowship; second, approval of God; and third, ministry. The ministry is an outgrowth of the fellowship with God and the understanding of His ways that the fellowship brings.

Having used terms throughout such as calling, measure of grace, spiritual ministry, burden of the Lord and divine enabling, we see clearly that our ministry is something only God can begin, develop and fulfill. These are the works of God—His own ministry in the earth—that we are talking about. As such, there is a supernatural quality to both the works and the equipping or enabling to

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perform the works.

5 Enablings

"Now there are diversities of GIFTS, but the same SPIRIT. And there are differences of ADMINISTRATIONS but the same LORD. And there are diversities of OPERATIONS, but it is the same GOD who worketh all in all" (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

The Greek word for DIVERSITIES and DIFFERENCES also mean "varieties." The Greek word for ADMINISTRATIONS means "ministries." The word OPERATIONS comes from the same Greek root as the word meaning the workings of miracles, that is "supernatural results." Notice these coupled words:

Verse 4 contains the dual words "gifts/Spirit."

Verse 5 contains the dual words "administrations (ministries)/Lord."

Verse 6 brings our "operations (supernatural results)/God."

We see a progression here, not in the usual order of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," but in the order in which we recognize their work in our lives—Holy Spirit, Lord (Son), and finally, God (Father). We must have the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and to show us the Son. We then must have the Son's atoning work and His reconciling us to the Father.

In John 5:19 Jesus said that He could do nothing of Himself, but that it was the Father working in Him. He did the works of Him who sent Him. Jesus did the works of God. In each of our individual expressions or portions of the work of Jesus' ministry, we must have the gifts of

the Spirit to fulfill our ministry, and we must have a ministry to perform the works of God. It takes Christ-ordained ministries to do the works of God, and there are no expressions of ministry without the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, going on in verse 12 we find **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."** (Here again, "man" is inclusive of women as well.) There is a manifestation of the Spirit or gift of the Spirit given to every one of God's born-again children. And for what purpose? To profit! What was the sad condition of the one- talent man and with the one-pound man? They were both *unprofitable* servants. We have a gift given to us in order that we may be profitable!

As there has been a great deal of teaching in recent years on the spiritual gifts, we will not treat each of them in detail; but it is important to distinguish the ascension gift ministries from the nine gifts of the Spirit, so we will look at all of these and distinguish them from each other.

6 The Gifts

The gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 are the gifts of Christ to His Church, as contrasted with the gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:8-10, which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the individual members of the Body. The gifts in the Ephesian list are divisions of Christ's own ministry to His sheep. He divided his personal ministry into five portions and laid portions on certain men. These men are gifts to the Body of Christ. Not all are apostles; not all are prophets; not all are evangelists; not all are pastors; not all are teachers. But some are. And those upon whom Christ has thrown His mantle are gifts to the Body to minister to the Body and bring it to the full stature of Christ.

This "five-fold" ministry has frequently been called the "hand" ministry—the hand of the Body of Christ. The hand is the only part of the body which can reach and touch and minister to every other part of the body. It is the part of the body that feeds, cleans, dresses, binds up, and generally cares for the rest of the body. We adorn the hands with rings. The hands are seldom covered but are visible for all to see.

Frequently the five-fold ministry is given more honor than other parts of the Body. The fingers of the hand function as a unit, the thumb being used with each of the other four to complete the other four and assist them in their function. The apostle has been likened to the thumb because of his helping ministry to the other ministries and because of his foundational work. The index finger is likened to the prophet because it is the pointing finger. The prophet's ministry points in direction and conviction,

and it points us Godward. The middle finger represents the evangelist because of its longest outreach. The fourth or wedding-ring finger is likened to the pastor because of his duty to present the church as a chaste virgin to her bridegroom. His responsibility is to carry the engagement ring and espouse the bride to the Lord. The little finger represents the teacher inasmuch as it is the only finger small enough to reach into the ear and to open it up. The teacher puts forth the bread of the Word, and it is through hearing that we receive the Word, bringing faith to our hearts.

So we see that these ascension gifts are portions of Jesus' own ministry which He placed in certain men. Then, as He ascended up on high, He gave the men as gifts to the church for its guidance, training, correction, guarding, equipping and caring.

Now, look at the list of the nine gifts of the Spirit found in I Corinthians 12:8-10. These are termed "manifestations" of the Spirit, and they are given in some measure to every member of the Body to profit. The person operating in a gift of the Spirit is not necessarily a gift to the Body (unless that person is also set in the Body in one of the ascension ministries), but the manifestation is the gift. The Greek word translated "gift" is the word *charisma*. It is derived from the Greek word *charts* which means "grace." As mentioned before, GRACE is not only unmerited favor with God, but it also refers to the "operational power of God." We each have within us a grace gift, a potential for the operational power of God to work through us. This enablement is not for our amusement or enjoyment; it is given to us for the benefit of the Body.

First Peter 4:10 says,

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

This verse plainly states that we have received the gift and that when we minister it, we are ministering the grace of God. Notice Peter says **"as every man HATH received...."** Past tense. Every man already HAS received a gift.

The word MANIFOLD in this passage means "many-sided." All members of the Body must minister all the various gifts so that Christ will become evident in the Body. His perfection and beauty are too vast for a mere few to reflect His glory, but when each is exercising his gift under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the beauty of our Lord will show forth like the beautifully blended colors of the rainbow or like light reflected through a prism. All the gifts of the Spirit, the ministry gifts and all gifts that function within the Body of Christ, are grace gifts. They are received by grace (the unmerited favor of God) and they are operated by grace (the divine enabling or operational power of God.)

Peter says that ministering one to another is being a good steward. If a friend gave you a twenty-dollar bill and said, "Please put this in the offering for me," and you kept the bill in your wallet, would that not be a horrible breach of the trust your friend placed in you? Even if you never spent the money, you would still be stealing from God's people, because by your default you diverted the sum from its intended purpose and use. The same condition exists with respect to the deposit of grace within you. It is not for your own spending or holding. It is for the benefit of the Body. We know from various Scriptures that there are many areas for which we will account.

There are many things over which we are to be good

stewards in this life. Certainly our money is one big facet of our stewardship. We will be held accountable for every idle word, so we have a stewardship over our speech. We have a stewardship over our children. We are to be stewards over this grace of God in our lives. The word STEWARD comes from a Scottish root "*styeward*." The "*stye*" means a pigpen, and the "*ward*" means the person placed over the care of the pigs. The prodigal son was not a good steward of his father's goods; his own inheritance was demanded before the proper time, and he ended up in a literal pigpen, feeding literal pigs. Stewardship is responsibility over something of value that belongs to another. At this point none of us has anything of lasting value that actually belongs to us. Our inheritance is laid up for us, and we are here as stewards. If a man is faithful in caring for another's goods, he will then be trusted to receive his own true riches (see Luke 16:11-12).

We have looked at the ministries comprising the HAND of the Body, and we know that Jesus Christ is the HEAD of the Body. Those two portions of the Body are easily recognized and neither is ordinarily covered. In contrast, however, most of the rest of the Body is frequently covered, and some is always covered. The FEET are usually covered and in contact with the earth. They are the members of the Body who come in contact with the world—this present age. They work in the world, earn money, give to the Body, and thereby effectively "carry" the Body where it needs to go to do its work. The HANDS cannot minister where the feet do not carry them. From I Corinthians 12:21 we find that the head (Jesus) cannot say to the feet "I have no need of you." The feet of the Body frequently believe they have no ministry to the rest of the Body and that they are of little importance; we know, however, that they are "beautiful" (Romans 10:15).

We often use the expression "so and so is a pillar of the church"—meaning that the church is supported and encouraged by that person's faithfulness in attendance and giving. We know from Revelation 3:12 that some are pillars of the church (temple of God) and we know from the Song of Solomon 5:15 that these pillars are the LEGS of the Body. These are the members of the Body who offer firm support for the other members, including the hands.

The HEART of the Body is the hidden intercession without which there would be no life flowing in the Body. Whatever your function, you are essential to the remainder of the Body and there is no portion of the Body who can say to you, "I have no need of you." If you are needed by all the rest of the Body and if you are not functioning in that Body, the whole Body is then deprived of the essential element you are to be giving.

7 Hindrances to Functioning

Let us look at some of the things that hinder the members of the Body from functioning in their respective ministries. Some of the hindrances are in the individuals and some are inherent in the church conditions as they exist today.

First, there is fear. Many are naturally timid and hesitate to speak out or to step out in faith. Some are natural followers and never take a lead position. Frankly, some have never even dreamed of being used by God to accomplish even a small work. Fear of failure, fear of being out of order, fear of man, fear of being "in the flesh," fear of being judged by the other members—all these fears can come rushing in to prevent the step of faith. Fear is always a spirit, and it is never from God! (Request my book *Free From Fear* for more instruction on this point.)

Second, there is a lack of information as to what God is expecting and how to operate in the gift, even when one has done so already. Operating in the gifts of the Spirit is not limited to the time spent in the assembly. (Our tape "Don't Neglect Your Gift" has more instruction on this point.) Jesus healed in the marketplace. A word of knowledge or a word of wisdom can come just as easily during a time of washing dishes or driving a car as it can while one is singing in the assembly.

Third, there is a misunderstanding as to the meaning of "ministry." We have been led to believe that a "minister" is someone in full-time work for the Lord. In the Greek the word MINISTER is *diakoneo* and is rendered "deacon" in many places. It means to serve in a physical or natural

way. When we think of "minister," we think of the word "pastor." They are not the same Greek words. A pastor is a minister, but not all ministers are pastors. In the Old Testament the word MINISTER meant "a servant, attendant or aide." Joshua 1:1 reads,

"Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' MINISTER, saying ..."

Joshua certainly was not Moses' pastor; he merely attended to the natural things in Moses' life.

In Luke 4:20 we see that Jesus closed the book and handed it to the MINISTER. This person was more like our church janitor than like our church pastor! In Ephesians 6:21 Tychicus is referred to as a beloved brother and **"faithful minister in the Lord ..."** and at the end of that epistle we find that it was written by Tychicus. In other words, he was Paul's secretary. So there is a lot of ministry performed in the power of God with the love of God flowing in that ministry that is often unrecognized as ministry.

Fourth, traditions of men have been laid in encrusting layers upon the Word of God, and these traditions also hinder ministry flowing as it should. Jesus told the Pharisees that they had by their traditions made the Word of God of no effect. Colossians 2:8 warns us against traditions of man which will ensnare us and take us captive. Traditions—ideas of propriety, church order, decency, reverence, even doctrine, many of which are not supported by Scripture, and, indeed, can be counter to Scripture—can effectually nullify our ministries.

The enemy has even used a punctuation mark in the King James Version to give a wrong impression and perpetuate a wrong idea. In Ephesians 4:12 the Word says

that the ascension gift ministries are given to the Church for the purpose of perfecting (or equipping) the saints for the work of the ministry. These ascension gift ministries discussed previously were given to the Church for equipping the SAINTS to perform the work of the ministry, but a comma placed between "saints" and "for the work of the ministry" gives the idea that the five-fold ministry was to perfect the saints and to do the work of the ministry. Actually, the five-fold ministry is given to equip you to function and to minister in your place in the Body. **"For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry"** is the literal translation.

This erroneous comma has lent credence to a doctrine rampant in the church today—the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. This is probably the single most effective hindrance to the flow of the gifts within the Body. We find this word twice in the Bible, both times in Revelation 2 in the letters to the churches. Jesus commended the Ephesians for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans and said that He, too, hated those deeds. We can conclude that this pollution of the true doctrine occurred very early in church history and has been with us ever since. In writing to the church at Pergamum, God rebuked them for allowing some that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and again He said "which thing I hate." So the Ephesians properly recognized and hated Nicolaitan deeds, but Pergamum apparently did not. Pergamum not only allowed the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but allowed the doctrine as well!

Commentaries are remarkably silent on the subject of this strange doctrine. But the very meaning of the word itself shows us what the doctrine was (and is). The first part of the word (nico) means "conqueror," and the latter portion of the word (laitan) means "the people." The name

Nicholas comes from this root, and the word laity is derived from *laitan*. The Nicolaitans were conquerors—rulers—of the people of God. Christ Himself specifically taught that He was going to build His Church and that those who would be greatest in His Church were to be the servants of all. He said that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded it over their subjects, but that it was not to be so among His people (see Matthew 20:20-28). In Acts 20:28-30 Paul warned the Ephesians that the wolves would enter, not sparing the flock, and that men would arise speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them. This was the beginning of the present-day denominational system with its clergy and laity, which is the modern outworking of the doctrine which Christ hates.

The present-day Nicolaitan doctrine and its elaborate system places some men as heads over other men, contrary to Scripture which states that Christ is the head of every man. The present-day Nicolaitan system appoints as pastors and shepherds men whom God has not called, thereby committing the same sin as Jeroboam when he made priests of those who were not of the tribe of Levi (see I Kings 13:33).

In the system are many godly people who have been called of God, but the cry of God is to **"come out of her, my people."** God loves those within the confines of the denominational system, but He hates the system. God can and does work in spite of the system but never because of it. God can use a man who is ordained of men, but never because he was ordained of men.

At the judgment seat of Christ (I Corinthians 3) we will have to account for the grace given to us. No judgment to damnation will occur at this "bema-seat." Our works will be judged that we may receive rewards for the things done in the body. An assignment of position in the kingdom

will be made. A designation of awards will take place. While our eternal salvation is assured without works, our reward or placement in His kingdom is dependent upon our stewardship of His grace in this life (see II Timothy 2:11-13).

Paul admonished Archippus (Colossians 4:17)

"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it."

Let us take heed—look out—pay attention—watch diligently—that we fulfill those precious ministries God has entrusted to us. Then we will finish our course and hear the blessed commendation,

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant.... Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

A Special Prayer to Be Used of God Today!

Father, I come to You in the incomparable name of JESUS CHRIST my Lord.

I pray today that whatever my hand finds to do I will do it with my might, which is Your power that worketh in me.

Help me to see the opportunities all around me to glorify the fragrant Name of Jesus to those who need to catch a glimpse of His smile today.

I ask to be an aroma of life to those who believe in Jesus and that the Life of Jesus be lived through me today.

Release the treasure within this vessel of clay to those who are poor in spirit. Let them see a deposit of Heaven's wealth in me.

Let me be to the praise of Your glory in all I do and in all I say.

The words that I speak are spirit and life. They are pleasant words and I am fruitful unto every good work in the Kingdom today.

Father, I take my stand against Satan and against all his demons.

I boldly declare them inoperative and ineffectual against me, in Jesus' Name.

No weapon that is formed against me shall accomplish its intended purpose.

But I will follow after the good works which You purposed in Christ Jesus for me before You created the world. Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity to serve You heartily today.

Fulfill Your Ministry

I look at the future with joyful anticipation that You will increase the work of my hands yet more and more.

I am Your extension in the earth TODAY.

I purpose in my heart to take heed to the ministry which I have received in the Lord Jesus in order that I may fulfill it and be in full understanding of Your will in all things.

IN JESUS' NAME!!!

AMEN

Deep inside the inner chambers of my heart abides a permanent conviction that God desires to use each of His children in a special (or should I say "specialized") way. I believe the Holy Spirit led us in the publication of *Fulfill Your Ministry* and I also believe He will lead many Christians to write for extra copies to share with others. You may not think you can use more than a few, but, even a few can be well placed into the hands of those eager to be used by the Lord in this hour.

You can minister to your brothers and sisters in Christ by sharing a copy of this book with them. I am sending them at our cost of production (actually, we are giving away thousands of these books ourselves) which is almost fifty cents per copy. Your donation is tax-deductible and will be used solely for the literature ministry. THANK YOU!

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