

SO YOU WANT  
To Be A  
MINISTER  
(A sequel to THE LOVE DISCIPLE)

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## 1. SEEKING WISDOM

A double-minded person is unstable in all his ways and cannot expect to receive anything from God. The Bible says in James 1:6-8 that a double-minded person does not, and in fact, cannot receive from God. Every believer needs to receive God's wisdom for every given situation.

If you desire to gain wisdom, spend time in the book of Proverbs. I have been reading Proverbs since the age of eight, and still have not received it all; but praise God, I am gaining wisdom. And you will gain wisdom in the same way – by spending time in God's Word.

Gaining wisdom does not happen overnight. It takes a heart that is purposed. "I choose to follow You, Father God, for I know Your way is the perfect and best way and I need to find Your way. I am going to spend time with You and in Your Word and You will teach me by Your Holy Spirit. You are going to open up Your Word to me and reveal Your truths. When I walk in that truth, then I shall walk in life because Your way always leads to life."

"The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: For obtaining wisdom and discipline" (this is the purpose of the Proverbs), for understanding words of insight; For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life; doing what is right and just and fair; For giving prudence to the simple and knowledge and discretion to the young; Let the wise listen and add to their learning; and let the discerning get guidance. For understanding Proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and discipline."  
(Proverbs 1:1-7)

The beginning of wisdom is acknowledging God and putting Him first in our lives, reverencing and honoring Him. This attitude is expressed when we say, "Jesus Christ is my Lord in every area of my life. Every aspect of my life, in thought, word and deed, is going to come into obedience to my Lord God." The Bible says that is the beginning of knowledge.

Knowing the Bible backwards and forwards is not knowledge. Knowing the God who wrote the Bible is knowledge. The way we know Him is through

His Word and His Spirit. Many people know the Bible, but they do not have a relationship with God. They do not know how to make the Bible come alive in their lives. They have knowledge in their heads, but they do not have the knowledge that comes from walking with God. Every word in God's Word is spirit and it is life, and it will work for those who will receive it as such.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” Just because you are a Christian does not mean that you are a wise man or woman. There are many Christians who are like the fools that Proverbs describes. As I have studied God's Word, I've found that I was acting the fool in many areas. As I was disciplined by God's Word, I said, “This is the way it ought to be, Lord. Thank you for the strength to change.”

“...But fools despise wisdom and discipline.” All Christians need discipline. We need the wisdom of God and we need to act upon what God says. We can have Jesus as Lord for salvation and have the rest of our lives falling apart because we are acting foolishly. We do not want that to happen. We want to walk in wisdom, and then every area of our lives will be blessed of God.

Sometimes when the Word of God is being shared, a person takes offense at a reproof that comes forth from God's Word. What causes a person to feel offended? Pride. Pride rejects correction. Jesus said, “Blessed are they who are not offended for my name's sake.” Many people were offended by what Jesus shared because their pride did not allow them to receive the wisdom and discipline that went with it. They did not want to do it God's way, and they took offense. They did not humble themselves to say, “Yes, I am out of line according to God's Word. Father, forgive me and get me going straight again.”

Bless God for the humble heart. God says that He resists the proud, or the fool, as Proverbs says, but He gives grace, or ability, to the humble. (James 4:6) So if we have an area that is out of line, let us get it cleaned up and then continue on in abundant life. After saying, “Father, forgive me,” the past is done; it is gone, and praise God, we are going to learn wisdom for the future. This is what Proverbs is all about.

“Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy street she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed or attention when I stretched out my hand, Since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster and I will mock when calamity overtakes you, when calamity overtakes you like a storm; when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and troubles overwhelm you.” (Proverbs 1:20-27)

This does not say that God is mocking and laughing. It says wisdom is laughing and mocking. If we had paid attention to God’s principles, many of the things that have come upon us would never have happened. We opened the door!

“Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.” (Proverbs 1:28)

We know the Lord says that whoever calls on Him is not going to be ashamed. If we humble our hearts and come back to Him, He will receive us. So what is this talking about?

“Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm.” (Proverbs 1:29-33)

This is talking about a person in a hopeless situation who calls upon the Lord, wanting some way out; but he does not want to walk with God. All he wants is a way out. That is what is being dealt with in this scripture.

“You have not because you ask not, and when you ask, you ask amiss to consume it upon your own lusts.” (James 4:3)

This is what wisdom is discussing. People violate the principles of God and then the problems come upon them. In desperation, they cry out to God, “Oh, let me out of here, let me out of here!” All they really want is relief from their problems when the pressure comes. Wisdom says they are not going to find any until they surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ and choose God’s way, in everything. I cannot have one part of my life yielded to God and have thirty-six others that are not. If I have thirty-six yielded areas and one out of line, I want to get that one area cleaned up too. That is wisdom.

Look again at what it says: “But whoever listens to me, (God’s wisdom) will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm.” That is exciting! Whoever does things God’s way, whoever listens to His wisdom will live in safety and be at peace without fear of harm.

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding. (applying your heart to understanding)

And if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” (Proverbs 2:1-5)

Apparently, we have to purpose in our hearts to earnestly seek God to find His wisdom. The wise man is not going to disregard things just because he does not understand them. He is going to press on and check out everything because then God will give the understanding. He will reveal. He will help us in any given situation.

“For the Lord gives wisdom and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright. He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless. For He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair and every good path; for wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you.” (Proverbs 2:6-11)

You are not going to fail in any area of life with the wisdom of God! God will give us His wisdom as we set out hearts to diligently seek for all that He has, by His Spirit.

“Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse. These are men who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways: who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil; whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.”

(Proverbs 2:12-15)

In Proverbs 1, it says that somebody will call to you and say, “here, come on with us, we are going to do some evil.” (They are not usually that blunt about it. They are very cunning, and more subtle.) Proverbs 16:2 tells us, “A man’s ways appear right to a man, but God searches the intention of the heart.” If we purpose in our hearts to go with an evil person and do evil things, then God’s blessing is not upon us; nor can we receive His life, because we are acting the fool. A fool disregards what God has said to be true, and follows after his own lusts, passions, wants and desires. At that point, he cannot expect anything from God.

We must humble ourselves and say, “Lord, forgive me.” The best response when they say, “Come on, let’s go do evil,” is to say, “Forget it! I am a child of God and I am not going to be involved in that kind of thing.” This includes the subtleness of fear and worry.

“It (wisdom) will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth.” This may not mean physical separation; but that she no longer has affection for her husband. She may still be with her husband, or the husband may still be with his wife, but the affection has left. Wisdom says it will save you from that temptation.

“For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return, or obtain the paths of life. Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous, for the upright will live in the land and the blameless will remain in it’ but the wicked will be cut off from the land and the unfaithful will be torn from it.” (Proverbs 2:18-22)

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let

love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding; acknowledge Him in all your ways; and He will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.” (Proverbs 3:1-7)

This is where people mess up! They try to do things their own way and their own thinking. God’s Word says, “Do not be wise in your own eyes...” Do not think you know it all. Act upon God’s way and God’s Word. Do not act in any given situation before you acknowledge the Lord and get His wisdom.

“Fear the Lord and shun evil (put it aside, get away from it, run the other way. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will run over with new wine. My son, do not despise the Lord’s disciplines and do not resent His rebuke; because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.” (Proverbs 3:7-12)

How does He discipline us? He disciplines us with His Word. This is what wisdom is talking about. If we would have heeded the wisdom of the Word, we would not have encountered most of our problems. The problems came upon us because we did not heed the Word of God.

I thank God that there are consequences to sin. Praise the Lord for that because that keeps me from continuing to sin! I am disciplined by His love. I receive the reproof. I set my heart to do right.

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she (wisdom) is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.” (Proverbs 3:13-16)

Apparently, in getting wisdom, you receive many other things from God in addition. The person whose heart is set upon God and God alone, will then have everything else taken care of by God. It is a matter of getting our

values in order. The most important thing in this entire life is to gain God's wisdom.

“By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundation and by understanding He set the heavens in place. By His knowledge the deeps were divided and the clouds let drop the dew. My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment. Do not let them out of your sight. They will be life for you and ornaments to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid and when you lie down your sleep will be sweet.” (Proverbs 3:19-24)

You can rest in perfect peace as you are walking upright with God. God says He gives his righteous perfect sleep.

“Have no fear of sudden disaster, or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence.” (Proverbs 3:25-26)

That is why no evil nor any plague can come near me or my dwelling (Psalm 91). God is my confidence. God is my protection. He is my comfort. Rest under the shadow of the Almighty. The Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared. You will know when someone (or the devil) is laying a trap for you and you will not get caught in it. You will know when your own flesh is laying trap for you so you can escape, and it will give glory to God that you did what is right.

“Listen, my son, to a father's instruction. Pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender and an only child of my mother, He taught me and said, “Lay hold of my words with all your heart, keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you. Love her and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme, therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost you all you have, get understanding.” (Proverbs 4:1-7)

The Lord Jesus tells us that if a man saves his life he will lose it, but he who loses his life for His sake will gain it. This happens when we put aside all our own thoughts, wisdom, reasoning, ways, ability and learning to rely upon God's wisdom, God's ways and God's ability.

“Esteem her and she will exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. (This talks about royalty, being a king or queen.) Listen, my son, accept what I say and the years of your life will be many. I guide you in the way of wisdom and I lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered, and when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on now to instruction; do not let it go. Guard it well for it is your life.”  
(Proverbs 4:8-13)

Here are other scriptures which will give you insight into God’s wisdom:

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:30-31. Who is wisdom? This scripture tells us that it is Jesus Christ. He has been made our wisdom. Who is the Word? The Bible says the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The Word is Jesus. As we pay attention to God’s Word, we pay attention to God. They are one and the same.

“My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge.”  
(Proverbs 5:1-2)

James 3:13-18. Here we learn about wisdom that is from God and the wisdom that is from men.

Today, the call of God is going forth. We need to repent and turn from our own ways and acknowledge God to have life. That is where ministry begins. That is wisdom. It is wisdom to seek God in every situation. You need wisdom before you begin a ministry or before you do anything! God’s Word says if any lack wisdom, let him ask and God will give it. If you are about to make a decision in this life and you have not consulted the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in danger of trouble.

It says fools rush in, the fool is hasty of spirit. The fool acts without looking at God’s Word and finding out His instructions. Do not make that mistake. People have entered into relationships that were wrong for them because they did not seek God’s wisdom and God’s way. The result was trouble. People have entered into financial ventures not seeking God’s wisdom, and

ended up bankrupt. People have begun ministries and fallen on their faces because they lacked God's wisdom.

Life involves decisions. We choose, choose, choose. "Today I set before you blessing and cursing, life and death; the Lord says choose life." (Deuteronomy 30:19) We choose to associate with evil company, or we choose to associate with good company. We choose to gossip about our neighbors, or to speak well about them. We choose to feel guilty after confessing our sins, or we choose to be forgiven. God has provided a choice. We choose life, or we choose death; we choose blessing or we choose cursing. If we depart from God's ways, we choose cursing. If we decide to go God's way and be obedient to the Spirit of God, we choose blessings.

"Father, I want to be blessed and I want Your people blessed. I thank You, Father God, that as I walk in Your commandments, the blessings You promised will overtake me and Your people. Thank You, Lord."

God loves to bless His people, and the blessings come with obedience to God's wisdom.

## **2. DISCIPLINE IN MINISTRY**

Each one of us has been placed in the Body of Christ to do a certain thing. The purpose for which God has set one part in the Body is not any less nor any more important than any other part. This is what the Bible talks about in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12. Each part needs the other parts if the whole body is going to work the way God intended. If one part is missing, what happens to the rest of the body? It suffers. That is why all the parts must be there, working together in unity and harmony.

The parts in the body must cooperate with one another. Each part has to accomplish what God has set that part in the body to do. There is no great part, and there is no little, insignificant part in the body. Each part is a special calling of God. And when each part is doing God's will, the body is lifted up, and that gives glory to God.

Who is the Head of the operation? Who gets all the glory for the operation? JESUS. No part can take any glory. All the glory goes to the Head – Jesus. We are called to be faithful to do the part that God has given us to do. Often we do not know exactly what part we are supposed to play. As we stay in fellowship with God and His people, before long we will know our part. The key is to work in the body.

The Spirit of God wants to remove the concept that says we are poor, miserable and wretched sinners, the “lowly old worm” kind of thinking. God does not want us thinking of ourselves differently than He does. He looks at us as holy and righteous; being in right standing with Himself, as sons and daughters of the King. The Bible talks about us as being a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a peculiar, set-apart special people, set apart for the praise of God. We are no longer poor, miserable, wretched, unloved and unaccepted. We are loved! We are accepted! We are forgiven! We are kings and priests! We are special! We minister in the Spirit helping people to see themselves the way God sees us: loved, forgiven, worthy, special, no longer weak, but strong. We endeavor to get that across because that is the way God intended His people to see themselves.

We must consider God’s balance in the Body of Christ. In Matthew 20, we find a situation where a mother comes in behalf of her two sons and says, “Lord Jesus, I want one to be on Your left and one to be on Your right when you enter into Your kingdom.” In other words, she wanted her sons elevated. That caused all kinds of trouble among the other disciples. They became envious and jealous about the whole thing. Whenever someone is seeking recognition or preference over others (as sometimes happens in the Body of Christ), before long someone becomes jealous and envious.

The Spirit of God says that except you become like a little child, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Now what does that mean? An attitude as of a little child, a faith attitude, accepting and doing what they are told to do. Thank God for obedient children. This is very, very important.

In Matthew 20, a big stir started among the disciples because some of them wanted preference over the others. Some wanted to have a little bigger role than the others, and that caused nothing but trouble. The same thing happens in the Body when parts begin thinking they are more important than

others. They start wanting to be something they are not called to be, or do something they are not called to do. The end result is difficulty and trouble.

When we ask Jesus into our hearts to be our Lord and Savior, He lives within us. We are a chosen people, sons and daughters of the King of Kings, and the Lord of Hosts. The Bible tells us there is nothing impossible for us any longer. Nothing is impossible to us as God's people, in the name of Jesus. Nothing is impossible!

In the Body, God has placed individuals for the equipping of the saints. We find apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints. The saints do the work of the ministry. All of God's people are ministers of reconciliation. All of His people are called to witness to others what they have seen and heard and know to be true. It is exciting! Everyone has a place and a function.

Some people have a service gift of Mercy and they go into places where other people usually will not go. They go because they love the people and they love God. All of us are to love those people, but not everyone is able to minister to them.

Some people are given the gift of Giving. All of us are to give. The Bible says to tithe into God's ministries and then to give to the poor, and God's blessing is upon it. Some people have the gift of extra Giving, and they give over and above. They are always giving. They love to give, especially when they know there is a cause or need they can help by their giving. Everyone has a niche; everyone has a place.

Some people are given administrative abilities. God gives some a gift of Administration through which His Body is organized and functions smoothly. There are different places for every one of us and all of them are important. Often, however, instead of loving one another and encouraging one another to do what God has given each one to do, parts start thinking that they are more (or less) important than other parts in the Body.

In Philippians 2, we read about the significance of having the mind of Christ, preferring others more important than ourselves, and loving one another. This is a part of love. We are children of the King. That does not mean we are any better than an unbeliever. Do you understand that? The flesh gets in

the way. Just because I am a child of God, I might tend to look down on an unbeliever. What right do I have to do that? None, according to the Bible. The only difference between an unbeliever and me is that I have received the mercy of God and they have not. But the mercy was given for them too. If I want to see them won to the Lord, I must quit looking down my nose at them.

In the same way, in the Body, this tendency to compare ourselves with others is expressed. “Well, I want to be used of God too.” Do you want to be used of God? You cannot be in the Body of Christ and not want to be used of God because he has something for every one of His children to do. We all want to be used of God. Do you want to be great in the kingdom of God? Of course! Everyone wants to be great in the kingdom of God. Now we must bring some balance into this.

Who made us worthy? Who has made us sons and daughters? Who has given us the abilities that we have? JESUS. IN John 3:27, John the Baptist makes a very interesting statement. He says that “Except it be given to a person, one cannot take to himself something from God.” In other words, unless God has given something, one cannot take it to themselves. And this is talking about positions. This is talking about gifts, and abilities that come from God.

Just because someone can prophesy, does that make them any better than someone who encourages? No, it certainly does not. Just because someone can lay hands on the sick and they get well instantly (gifts operation), does that make them any better than the person who lays hands on the sick praying the prayer of faith and they are healed weeks later? No, it does not! Just because someone is teaching and preaching the Word of God, does that make them better than someone who is out there telling what they have seen and heard and know to be true? It certainly does not in God’s eyes.

People who walk out of our meetings and tell others about the great things that happened by the Spirit of God receive the same reward I receive. Yet all they are doing is telling people what they have seen and heard. That is how the Body works together. So we ought to be thanking and praising God for what we see happening.

When someone is developing in the Lord we should be excited about it and thanking God. We should not walk up to the person and say, “Oh, boy, you did a beautiful job today. That was really wonderful what you did.” That is the worst thing you could tell someone who is just starting to move in a spiritual operation because you are encouraging them to take credit for what was done. No! All the glory goes to God.

If you puff people up, before long their pride may hinder them. That is why the Bible says not to lay hands on people for ministry too soon lest they be puffed up in themselves. They do not know how to handle it. God might be developing and starting something in a person’s life whereby He is going to use them in the future. He or she is just getting off the ground, and suddenly people start to take notice, praising the ability. Immediately, the enemy comes along to influence the person to think, “Yeah, I do have ability.” At that point, the person is actually going to lose what was begun because he got puffed up in himself.

What happens before the fall? Pride comes in, they fall on their faces, and things will be shown for what they are. At that point, they become discouraged and feel condemned and defeated. But all they need to do is say, “God, forgive me.” God will pick us up and move us right along.

I cannot be a toe (if I wanted to be a toe), if God called me to be a finger. Do you see it? I cannot be envious about being an ear if I am an eye. Quit trying to be an eye if you are an ear. Do not be envious of another part, but be as God intended you to be, and do what God has intended for you to do for His glory.

“Well, I want to be right out there on the front line. I want to do what Randy does.” Randy has learned from experience! I used to want to do what others did. God showed me what a waste that was. “Do what I have given you to do,” He said,. “Do not do what I have given them to do. Be diligent to do what I have given you to do.”

In John 21, Peter is walking along with Jesus. Jesus had just asked him, “do you love me?” The third time it dawned on Peter what was really going on, and he broke down. At that humble point, he was ready to move with God and do whatever God had for him to do. No sooner did that happen, then he saw John walking. The thought came to him, “Well, Lord, what about him?”

What is he supposed to be doing?” Jesus had told Peter what to do, “Feed my lambs.” Now Peter says, “What about him?” Do you know what Jesus told him? “Never mind about him. You do what you are supposed to be doing.”

Do you see? “Never mind about him; you do what you are supposed to be doing, and I will take care of him.” Who is the head of the operation? Jesus. Who knows what is going on in the Body? Jesus. He shows each part what is required of it. He does not tell an eye what an ear is supposed to be doing. He tells an eye how to work like an eye. He tells an ear how an ear is supposed to work. And when each part is diligent to do its job, then everything works together in harmony.

Jesus taught the disciples what it means to be great in the kingdom of God in Matthew 20:24-28: “And when the ten heard about this they were indignant with the two brothers.” (How dare you try to take a place better than us? How dare you do that?) Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. (Another version reads “minister.”) And whoever wants to be first must be your slave; just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

People nowadays want the glory. They want the credit. I have laid hands on many hundreds of people and they were made well, and I expect thousands to get well in the future. True, I laid hands on them, but who made them well? Jesus made them well. How do you handle that when you first begin to lay hands on somebody? The Bible says any believer can do it, and they will get well. How are you going to handle that? It is easy to start thinking, “Wow, I did that.” I did not do anything! Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing. You can do nothing except you abide in Me and My Word abides in you.”

Bless God, I am excited about what He is doing through you and me, but we cannot take credit for anything. As soon as we start to take credit, we get puffed up. When we get puffed up, we are preferring ourselves over someone else, and that is the flesh.

I am a king. I am a priest. I am called to a ministry of God, as are all of you. But not one of the offices is better than another. Not one of the gifts is better than another. Not one of the things you are doing is any better than what I am doing, nor is what I am doing any better than what you are doing.

I was praying over a pastor one time and the Spirit of God rose up and the Lord gave him a Word. The Lord said that He had not called him to any great ministry the way the world sees ministries as great. And He went on to say, “You have been faithful in that which I have called you to do, and it is great in My eyes because of your faithfulness.” The Lord plainly said that he was not called to a great ministry the way the world thinks of it.

Not everybody is called to a world-wide ministry. What John the Baptist said was true. “Except the Lord gives something, you cannot take it to yourself.” You cannot! It says, “Those that are faithful in little things, to them He will give greater, or much more.” What is little? God was saying in that Word that there is nothing great and there is nothing small; but when you do what you are told to do, then things get done.

It may be that God called you to pick up a chair and put it in the other room. If God called you to do it and you are obedient to do it, “Great is your reward in heaven.” The Bible says if you give a cup of water to a prophet in the name of the Lord, you will receive the prophet’s reward. The prophet’s reward simply for giving him a cup of water! You did not do anything to earn that reward really, but if God prompted you to do that, you will receive a greater blessing than for anything else you ever did. A prophet’s reward is priceless. Do you understand what we are dealing with here? There is no greatness and there is no smallness in God’s sight. What is important is diligence and faithfulness to do what God has given each of us to do!

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:1, Paul said that he did not care, basically, about what other people said about him, or about what he was doing. He did not even judge himself (speaking about his ministry). He said, “All that matters is that I (a servant) be found faithful.” Then down a few verses it says, “Do not regard men more highly than you ought. Because what is a man and what is a gift except they have been given to the person.” So the glory ought to go to God for being the giver of the gift, not to the person who has the ability or has the gifts.

I fully expect and I pray every day, “Lord, I thank You that in the Body, the gifts of Your Spirit are manifesting in fullness so that all of the gifts are operating through whom and to whom, and however YOU want it to be done.” I fully expect each one of us to start to operate in spiritual gifts because they work in the Body. They are intended for the Body and as a sign to unbelievers. Then, everyone gets blessed.

However, as soon as any part starts wanting to take more to themselves than what God has given them, then comes trouble; just as it came to those disciples. Two of them wanted a higher place than the other ten, and right away the other ten responded, “Oh, you can not get away with that on us. We are going to get in there too.” I believe the reason the other ten were so upset was because they did not think of it first!

It is time that we get the flesh (self) out of our ministry. I am writing to each individual here. Every one of you has a ministry. It is time we get self out of the picture so that Jesus can be glorified.

Strife and criticism are a reflection of a heart that is not humble before God. Strife comes in the Body when people are exalting themselves over others. The Bible says that we must have the mind of Christ. What is the mind of Christ? It says in Philippians 2 that He came and He humbled Himself and He became a servant to everyone. He became a servant.

I am a royal king, a priest, a son of God with the right to use the name of Jesus and the power and the ability of God. I walk in divine wisdom and protection and knowledge. All of heaven belongs to us who are in Jesus Christ. Now, what am I going to do with it? Am I going to say, “I am better than you?” Or, “You are ignorant. You do not know anything. I am special. My group is better than your group.” Or am I going to come as a servant in love and help others to take their places? That is our call today. That is our choice and privilege.

“Those that want to be great in the kingdom of God must become the servant, or minister, of them all.” (Matthew 20:26)

Let me tell you, in the flesh, that would be horrible. I could not stand to minister in my own ability. When we start to please people, all the pressures, the responsibility and compromise begin. When you try to please

people, you lose the anointing of God, and God's blessings. That would be the most horrible thing that could happen to anyone.

Jesus says that if we seek glory from people, we lose the glory that comes from God alone. We want to be found faithful to do and to say what God has given us to do and to say. We are told not to desire to be teachers because there is a greater responsibility that goes with it (James 3:1). But if God has called you to be a teacher, God will also equip you.

I am still growing in what God has in preparation for me. We are learning. One of the first things I learned was that we must walk humbly with God. One Bible translation says, "Humble yourself to walk with God." We must get ourselves out of the way. People frequently tell me, "Well, you are just too humble. You ought to tell people more. You should be out promoting the ministry." You know, I cannot! The Bible says that God will give the increase in God's time. We are going to start an all-out expansion of our ministry, but who told us to do it? The Lord did. We never want to move ahead of His time! We are all learning God's wisdom and timing.

The ministry of Jesus set many people free and crowds followed Him. The disciples wanted to go into Jerusalem but Jesus said, "I am going to stay behind. I am not going to go in." They fought among themselves and said, "Is not this strange? Should not a man want to be recognized? Should not He want to step out and show Himself for who He is?" The disciples were thinking, "Well, that is weird. Why does not He go and show everybody who He is? Why does He lag behind?" You can answer that for yourself on the basis of what we have been looking at in this chapter. God gives the increase. God has raised us up to our position. "We are seated with Christ in heavenly places." (Ephesians 2:6) We do not need men to lift us up, yet God will also give us favor with men (Proverbs 3:1-4).

Colossians 3:1 says, "Since you then be risen with Christ..." That is our position. We are worthy. We are holy. We are set apart by God. I do not have to prove anything to anyone, nor to myself. All we have to do is be found faithful to do what God has given us to do. God will show us as we ask Him what we are to do. All we need to do then is be faithful to do it. That is all. We are to do no more, and no less.

Jesus is God come in the flesh. He humbled Himself and became a servant. Even moving in all the gifts of the Spirit, did He selfishly keep them to Himself? No. He was busy night and day doing the work of God, doing the things that God wanted Him to do. The people wanted Him to stay in a certain area and He said, “No, we must go on because that is what I have been called to do.” You must do what you have been called to do in the way God has called you to do it.

The first step is to know that you have been called to do something. You have been called to tell what you have seen and heard and know to be true about the love of God in Jesus. You have been called to tell people how great God is, how God loves people, and how He is able to do anything in behalf of those who would just humble themselves and look to Him.

There is a great reward for being a witness. The Bible says there is a great crown in heaven for a witness who simply tells others what they have seen and heard and know to be true. Who is going to hand out the rewards when the time comes? It is going to be the Lord.

There is a parable about a fellow that hired some people early in the morning, and they worked all day long, the whole shift. Others were hired about noon. More were hired about 3 p.m. and worked only a couple of hours. When it came time to pay, they all received the same payment. Regardless of when we come to Jesus (as long as we come to Jesus), we are going to have the same reward, eternal life. “Well, I worked all my life for Jesus, and they got in on the last breath.” Well, praise God they got in on the last breath. We should be rejoicing that they came in. It is time that we start rejoicing for what God is doing through all of us.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 talks about rejoicing when others are rejoicing. When we see someone being healed even though we did not pray or lay hands on them, even if we had no part of it, we can rejoice in what God did. Not to rejoice when God is using others to accomplish His works is a sign of spiritual immaturity. Sometimes those just learning about faith can become proud in their faith and that is the flesh.

How about that person, the weaker part, to whom God gives more honor? Did you ever read in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:23-24 where it says God gives more honor to the weaker part? Why? If you have a chain with a weak link, that

chain is only as good as that weakest link. Therefore, what is God going to strengthen? The weakest link. We should be encouraging one another, building one another up, supporting one another in the things of God.

We do not have problems when each part is doing its own function. But may be that we need to encourage and support someone. The stronger ones have to encourage and support the weak by their faith until they are able to rise up and take their places. Then they become strong. The yoke is easy when we remember what Jesus has done for us. None of us started strong. And maybe many of us are still not as strong as we will be. Praise the Lord, He is tempering us. He is purifying us. Praise the Lord, He is doing a good work with us. (Philippians 1:6)

### 3. SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

We were created for fellowship with God, and that is why we are on this earth. God wants to walk and talk with us, to have that bond. He is our source of life as well as being our best friend, our source of joy and rejoicing. In God's presence, there is fullness of joy and every blessing. As our source, the Lord is able to supply anything we will ever need. God's will is to be the source of everything we need in this life. We do not look to people. We do not look to ourselves. We do not look to things. We look to God, and God will supply.

The reason people oftentimes do not have strength or direction in their lives may be because they are despairing, and are in a kind of yo-yo syndrome, up one day and down the next. Many times, when there seems to be no direction, it is because we have not spent enough time with God to get the direction. In many cases, the reason we are tossed to and fro is because we have not taken the time that is necessary to hear God's voice; and then not only to hear it, but to do something about what He gives. We often get so busy in this world that we do not take time with God to commune and fellowship with Him.

Families are often scattered here and there, going in different directions, husbands and wives are involved in their separate activities; and they do not take the time to sit down and talk and work things out. In the same way, how much more the heavenly Father wants us to fellowship with Him because He is the source of everything, and He is the One who gives us our direction. He is the One who gives us our life. He is the One who takes care of our every need spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically and financially. He takes care of everything. If you take the time to commune with Him and spend time talking to Him, God will talk back to you if you believe that; and you will get the direction you need. It will come like a still small voice inside. Sometimes it might be an audible voice. Sometimes it might be a vision or a dream. There are different ways that the Spirit of God will minister to us, but it will only happen when we take the time to fellowship with God. This is vital! It is truly essential for success in ministry.

In Isaiah 40, at the end of the chapter, it tells us that young men get faint and weary. When the Bible talks about young men, it is talking about strong men. They get faint and weary, but God never does.

“But they that wait upon the Lord (spend time communing, ministering to fellowshiping and talking with God), will renew their strength and they will rise up on the wings of the eagle, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and they will not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

This is God’s promise. As we spend that time with God, He will refresh us.

Jude 20 talks about praying in tongues which builds up or energizes our most holy faith. Praying in the Holy Spirit builds us up, energizing our faith. Another benefit of praying in tongues, or in the Spirit, is the refreshing that comes. A rest starts to come upon God’s people, and God will be able to give direction at that point. There are many things that will happen. Whatever you need at that time, God will start to minister and move to bring it about. This is why it is so important that we spend time with God in this manner. It enables us to receive from God.

There may be many times we are up and down, vacillating, unable to make decisions. We say, “What am I going to do?” Tossed here and there, not seeming to get direction, and it is just because we have not spent the time to get before God that is necessary to get His answer. It will come. It will come. Perhaps He may just tell you like He told me in one situation. I had been waiting on some facility arrangements and He said, “Be patient. I have it for you.” That was all I needed. He did not tell me where. He told me to be patient, that He had it for me. So, when the right time came, it dropped into my lap, just like it always has. He will do the same for you.

Let us look at some great men of God who knew the importance of spending time with God:

ADAM walked and talked with God. He communed with God. That is why he was created. God wanted to fellowship with someone. God wanted fellowship, so He created Adam. Later, we know that Adam sinned and disobeyed God, and it was not the woman who made him do it. God held Adam accountable for his sin because it was his choice. Adam lost that close fellowship that he had with God. I believe later, after he repented,

fellowship again was established, but not in the same manner as before the fall. In due time, when the new heavens and the new earth are established, we are going to have that same face to face fellowship with God that Adam had. Praise the Lord!

MOSES spent time with God. We know he was out in a wilderness area. It is interesting how God sometimes prepares us by events in our lives. Moses fled Egypt and went out into the wilderness area. Every great man of God has spent time in the “wilderness” with God. As he was out there, what happened? He saw a burning bush, but it was not burning up! God began to speak to him and described things that were to come.

Do you know what is very interesting? That area where Moses tended sheep was the same area where he later led God’s people, the children of Israel. This took a much longer time than was at first expected because of the unbelief of the people.

When Moses went up to the mountain to talk to God, He communed with God. Countless times as we go through the Bible, we find him spending time with God; getting direction for his life and for the people. God will give us direction for our lives the same way, individually, as well as for our families and ministries. Whatever the need, God will give that direction. But we have to spend time with God to get it.

What was evident to the people as Moses came down off the mountain? His face shone with the radiance of God (Exodus 34:29-30). In fact, the people could hardly look at him. When anybody spends a lot of time with God, you can quickly tell. You will see it. You will know it. You can always tell when people do not spend time with God. You do not need any great spiritual discernment. It is evident in their faces. Spending time with God will bring the refreshing that is needed. We will be encouraged and supported by God, and we will know God’s direction as we seek Him for it. In the presence of God is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

DANIEL was a man who spent much time with God. In fact, he had three prayer times every day. And it was not “God, I thank you for the new day. God, I thank you for my lunch. God, I thank you for bringing me through the day.” This was a man who spent time with God often during the day. He disciplined himself before God, and God gave him understanding of

spiritual things and showed him visions and dreams of things to come. Many of them are just now starting to happen today.

This was a man who knew how to spend time with God. When we start to spend time with God, He is able to show us things and use us for His work. Many times people have not prepared themselves to be used of God. They have not disciplined themselves. Daniel often spent time in fasting and prayer before God. “Well, I cannot do that. I have another job.” Nonsense! Daniel had another job too, but he spent that time with God, and God used him wherever he was. We have to start to discipline ourselves in this manner, spending time with God in fasting and prayer and getting God’s direction; seeking God’s plan and His ways. (See Daniel 10)

ELIJAH was another man who spent much time with God. We find that the birds actually came to feed him by God’s miraculous provision. God always takes care of those who put Him first. God always does.

There was a time when Elijah was experiencing deep depression. Why? Because he forgot his source. He was despairing to the point where he said, “God, take my life.” Why? Because he forgot to go to God. He ran. His life was in danger because he just had all the prophets of Baal killed, and God had revealed Himself as the true God. Jezebel was after his life. But what happened? God communed with him at that point, encouraging him. He said, “No, you are not the only one left. There are 7,000 others that still have not bowed. You are not the only one left.” Even if there were not 7,000 others, who was with him? God was; but Elijah had forgotten that. That’s why it’s so important to spend time with God. When you come out of His presence, you will not soon forget it.

When Peter, James and John were up on the mountain with Jesus, as Jesus was communing with Moses and Elijah and with God, what did they want to do? They wanted to build tents to camp out there. They wanted to stay in the presence of God. Each one of them shined as they were in the presence of God. This is important. When we take that time to be with God, people will know we’ve been with Him.

ISAIAH, EZEKIEL AND JERIMIAH were all used mightily of God because they spent time with Him.

Often when I have looked for direction in the past, I would run around here and there during the day, doing this and that, and then I would be awakened about three or four o'clock in the morning. One night I just became angry. I was upset. I said, "Lord, what are You doing this for? Why are You waking me up?" He said, "Because this is the only time when you are quiet enough that I can talk to you." That was a long time ago, but I have never forgotten it, nor will I ever. That was the only time when I was quiet enough. Why? Because I was sound asleep.

I learned to take time during the day to get quiet with God. You can do it on a lunch hour. You can do it at different times. If you want to, you can take that time. Praise the Lord! It was to my shame that only while asleep I was quiet enough so God could talk to me. He was trying to get through all day, but I was too busy – busy doing godly things. How much better to commune with the Lord and then do the godly things with His direction, wisdom, power and anointing!

JESUS spent a great amount of time with the Father. He actually spent more time with the Father than He did ministering to people. In many cases, He said, "Shove off the boat, leave the multitudes on the beach." Then He went off to spend time with God. He knew the importance of that fellowship time with the heavenly Father. We need to develop that fellowship with God. That is how we get His direction. That is how we get God's leading. That is how we get God's refreshing. That is how we get God's strength. When you spend time with God, that joy overflows you. "In the presence of God is fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:11) "he will keep them in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him." (Isaiah 26:3) When we fellowship with God in the Spirit, an interesting thing happens. As we spend time with God, our minds get settled down, relaxed and refreshed. This is important. Our minds are actually the source of confusion and frustration.

PETER was up on top of a roof spending time with God in fellowship when he had a vision. He saw a blanket come down with all kinds of animals on it, and he started to get upset because there were pigs among them, and pigs were considered unclean to the Jews. Then God ministered to him and explained the vision which pertained to preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Note that this came as he was spending time with God. When we spend time with God, God is able to reveal all kinds of things to us.

PAUL also spent much time with the Lord. In fact, many of these men, before they began their ministries, went out to the wilderness. What is significant about the wilderness? Nothing is there to distract or interfere with the time spent in fellowship with God. Paul went to Arabia for four years to spend time with God before he ever really began to preach to anyone. During that time he was being prepared by God for what was ahead.

After you spend time with God, the enemy will come along, and things will be proved. You will be tested, but you will become stronger than ever before. You will be refreshed by God no matter what the devil does to hurt you. Jesus basically said, "It is written, devil, buzz off!" The devil does not hem and haw when you say, "In the name of Jesus." He has to go! When you are strong in the Spirit after spending time with God, expect the enemy to be right there, but also expect to defeat him in Jesus' name!

John says in Revelation 1:10 that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. He was in the Spirit on the Sabbath and rejoicing in the Lord; and what happened? Revelation from God! If you are not in the Spirit, you cannot expect to get God's direction. You cannot really expect anything to come from the Lord. If you are in the flesh, no peace will ever come, no joy will ever come, no direction will ever come. Nothing that is from God will come. Only when we get in the Spirit will things start happening.

I want to emphasize that every one of these men spent time in the wilderness. It is a preparation time. I am still being prepared and groomed for what God has ahead. That is why people should not get in too much of a hurry about ministering. God may give you one gift to work with, to get it perfected; and it may take years before you even start to understand how it works. God will prepare you before He will use you. He will equip you and He will show you how the equipment works before He uses you. God is very cautious about using novices because of pride problems. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:6-7 and 5:22)

Note again that after all these men spent time with God, "their appearance shined." They physically shined. Besides what was going on inside. Praise the Lord.

Again, we want to emphasize the importance of spending time in the Spirit with the Lord, walking and talking with Him. We can walk and talk with Him right now in this earth as we commune with Him in the Spirit. The Bible says I cannot physically see His face and live, but there will come a day when He will walk and talk with us face to face, and we will see Him and we will know Him. Now, it says we see through a glass darkly, but soon we will see Him face to face.

Let us not be hearers only. When you spend time with God, and He gives you a Word or gives you direction, you need to act on what God gives you. Many people have received Words from the Lord in our meetings. As we spend time with God, worshiping and praising God, the Spirit of God manifests, ministers and moves in the gifts of the Spirit and He gives Words to different people. That is a Word from God. It is not a Word from any person. We know that there is not yet any Word that has been given to an individual that did not happen. That is the test of a true prophet. It must happen. It may happen at some later time, but it will happen. However, if you do not act upon the Word that has been given, you are just a hearer only, and cannot be blessed. We have to do what we hear, and act upon the leading that we get when we get it from God. (See James 1:22-25)

After you have heard God's voice, do not hang around on the mountain! Jesus never stayed on the mountain. He came down. What was down there? There were the people waiting, and He ministered to them. Then as He was drained physically from ministering, He had to go back up the mountain and get charged again; to be refreshed by spending time with His Father. Praise the Lord. That is wisdom!

#### 4. THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

Ephesians 4:11-16 deals with the fact that God has placed in the Body certain people who are known as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They are in the Body of Christ for one purpose, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Not all believers are called to those five offices. So if you are not called to be an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or a teacher, do not worry about it. In many cases you would not want the responsibility that goes with it.

We are not concerned in this chapter about apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers who are called to equip God's people. We are concerned about the work of the ministry that all believers are called to do.

What is the work of the ministry? What can I do as one of God's people? What is my place? What is my purpose? What is my part in God's plan? I want to point out that that kind of thinking in itself is all right if we are trying to determine what God wants us to do. Instead of asking God, "What do You want me to do?" people have a tendency to try to figure out and find their places by what they think. We cannot do that. We might say, "Well, I do not feel fulfilled unless I am doing this or that." Thinking that way is not of God! The motivation is totally and strictly of self, or the flesh. "What I want to do." "I get pleasure from this, and I enjoy doing that." That is all self. That is not God. That is not even the work of the ministry.

You could be doing things that are fine, good things, but they may not be of God for the simple reason that the attitude of the heart is wrong. The Bible says, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Galatians 2:20) We have to remember the fact that it is God working in us and through us, and we are not doing any of these works. When we believed on Jesus, we died to ourselves.

This kind of Christianity, where we try to be Christians, and striving to make things happen, is not the work of the ministry. When it's of God, the work of the ministry will just flow through a person. You do not have to wonder, "God, what am I supposed to do, what should I do?" All "I, I, I, I." That is

not God. God will just flow through His people when they are right with Him. Things will just happen and when they do, we cannot take any credit.

You may be sitting at your table and suddenly you are prompted to pray for an individual. You do not sit there and think, “Well, who should I pray for today?” God will just flow through His people when they are actually doing the work of the ministry, when we get ourselves out of the way. I do not want anything that God does not want. When it is God, it will just flow together, but we must be in that right place. The right place is when we can say, “Lord, I submit myself to You. I humble myself to walk with You. Lord, whatever You want me to do, I will do. I thank You, Lord, that when You want me to do something, I will know it because You are in me. I thank You, Lord, that I am not too selfish, self-centered and concerned about me; that Your desire and purpose will happen, and I will see it.”

When I am looking to myself and what I want to do, I will miss God. Many people have a lot of zeal and a lot of desire; they want to get out there and conform the world to their thinking. But God draws the world. He loves them into His kingdom.

Oftentimes, people attempt to do things too fast. They have not prepared themselves in the Spirit. Remember, all the great men of God spent time with God, and they knew God’s plan, purpose, decision and everything else He had for them because they had spent time with God.

It is not enough to know the Bible forwards and backwards. A person can know all the Bible and not have anything. It can all be just a show – long prayers and fancy verses, but it is not in the heart. That is not God. That is show. Now, I do not believe in judging people’s motivation and works. The works will stand for themselves. They will show themselves for what they are. Time will always tell what is and is not of God.

“All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting man’s sins against them and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are, therefore, Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf; be reconciled to God. God made Him who

had no sin, Jesus, to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:18-21)

We have been called to become ministers of reconciliation. Every one of us has been called to be an ambassador for Christ. What is a minister of reconciliation? It is someone who brings people together and makes peace. This is what God in His love did for us. Jesus was a minister of reconciliation. He came, and He gave His life on the cross and shed His blood in God’s love for us so that we and God could be at peace with one another. As Jesus was a minister of reconciliation, so God has called each of us to that ministry. This is the work of the ministry. It involves drawing people to look to God. Then, through the blood of Jesus, people are reconciled, or made right, with God and with one another.

All we are called to do is preach. Who are the preachers? The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are the preachers that you see ministering and equipping the people. Who are the preachers? The people who go out in the streets. Those who go out from the meetings are the preachers. You are the preachers! (Romans 10:13-15) You come to meetings to get equipped and to praise and worship the Lord. You go out in the world and that is where the actual work of the ministry is done.

What is involved in the work of the ministry?

1. The first operation of the ministry is to love the brethren.

God says that next to loving God, we are to love our neighbor. Those are the two great commandments upon which hinge all the Law and the Prophets. God considers love to be the highest form of ministry – to love our brother and sister, love our husband, love our wife, love our children, love each other. That is the work of the ministry. Who enables us to do it? I cannot love anybody on my own. You have to get in the Spirit before you can love anybody, then the ministry of reconciliation begins to happen. The ministry of reconciliation does not apply just to people and God; it also applies to people with each other.

God’s Word says, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” That is the wisdom of God, making peace, not compromise. You do not compromise your stand in Christ. You do not compromise what you know to be true. That is not

making peace. You stand on what you know to be true and then God will make the peace as you make your stand. There will not be any peace until you make your stand. This is what Jesus said.

Scriptures concerning loving the brethren are: Galatians 5:13-16, Romans 12:13-18, and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:2-8.

2. Bearing one another's burdens is another work of the ministry.

Galatians 6:2-6 talks about encouraging one another when one is wavering, worrying, fearful, and having problems, temptations and trials coming upon them. It says that another brother or sister comes up beside them like a tugboat along side of a ship in the harbor and guides them on in. They are stuck where they are and they need to be guided in to God. This is all we are to do. We are not to carry the burden. That means I am not going to take their burden and put it on me. What it says is that I come up along side of that brother or sister, take them by the hand and say, "Let's go to God with this." That is bearing one another's burdens. We go to God together. God says, "Cast your cares on Me for I care for you." God is the burden carrier. What do we do? We just encourage one another to go to God with it. The sooner we do, the better. Thank You, Jesus.

A warning is given in Galatians 6:3 about not thinking too highly of yourself so that you do not have a condescending attitude toward that brother or sister in their time of need.

3. We are to pray for one another: Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2-4, Thessalonians 5:16-18.

We are to pray always, in all manner of intercession and prayer, for all the saints, and for God's ministries. A) For all the saints, or all believers; B) For God's ministries. Prayer is the work of the ministry. People have not begun to understand what can really happen when God's people pray by the Spirit of God. When we pray by His Holy Spirit through our spirit, through our mouths, much will be accomplished. The work of the ministry involves diligence; it involves a "sticking with it." God says this is the work of the ministry, and we need to be committed to it. Then we will see God's results.

Faith works by love, and prayer makes things happen. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full, that the Father gets the glory. This is when things happen. That is the work of the ministry, and it is very important.

4. Witnessing: Colossians 4:5-6, 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:1-4.

What is involved in witnessing? A witness shares what they have seen and heard and know to be true. Witnessing does not involve preaching the Word of God. Witnessing involves simply telling people what great things God has done, what you have seen, what you have heard, and what you know to be true. That is the work of the ministry. What are we doing when we witness? We are giving glory to God. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” (Psalm 107:2) Tell the people what great things God has done and is doing. Tell them what you are learning from God’s Word. Tell them what you have seen God do for somebody else. You can get in on somebody else’s testimony. Praise the Lord! This is the work of the ministry – witnessing, telling the people what great things God has done.

In our everyday lives, we need to be ready to share when God gives the opportunity. Sometimes you can take an opportunity. A witness actually takes the opportunity sometimes to sow a little seed. You can simply say, “I was at a meeting the other day and I saw God do this.” Or, as you are listening to someone talking, and they become a bit critical, or they have a little anger or hostility in them, you can say, “You know, I used to be the same way as you are, and sometimes I still fall back, but I have found an answer to my problems, and this just might help you. Jesus is the answer to the problem.”

All a witness does is point to the star. We point to Jesus. The sun is the source of the light, the source of the power, the source of the energy. All the moon does is reflect the sun. That is what we do. All we are called to do is reflect the Son, Jesus. He is the source of the energy. He is the source of the power, and it is His light actually going out through us. This is the work of the ministry.

5. To encourage one another, and rebuke one another when we are out of line with the Word of God. See 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:7-14 and Galatians 6:1.

These scriptures deal with the importance of encouraging one another in God's Word to keep on going, not to doubt and not to fall behind, not to get discouraged, encouragement is all that people need many times. Just someone to say, "It is going to be all right. God still reigns on His throne." God is a God of hope. When we are about the work of the ministry, we are going to bring hope into people's lives because we are going to be speaking thoughts that come from God. It is God who actually lifts the person up. All we do is speak what He gives.

"Brethren, if there be any among you who are overtaken by a fault, let them who are spiritual (those who are not caught in the trap) correct them, or instruct them in the spirit of meekness, lowliness and gentleness; lest you too fall into the same trap." (Galatians 6:1)

One minute a brother or sister is pulling another one out, and the next minute, the one who got pulled out is helping the ones who pulled him out. That is Body ministry. That is the Spirit of God. That is the work of the ministry to which God has called His people. This is exciting! Praise the Lord! That person needed that encouragement, that telephone call, that visit, perhaps a smile. People need to know they are not alone in their problems.

You may not realize how often people are blessed by testimonies. People hear somebody sharing something and think, "Oh, that is good! If God can do it for them, He can do it for me too!" Sharing your testimony encourages people.

#### 6. Caring for the needy. Read Isaiah 58.

When we talk about the needy, we are not just talking about the poor. We are talking about the people who are poor in spirit and poor in goods, those who are down. We have to reach out to them, and that is part of our caring for one another. It is forgetting ourselves and looking around us, seeing what needs to be done, and then saying, "God, what do You want me to do?" The work of the ministry means you are under the leadership of others. Jesus is the head. Ask God, "God, what do You want me to do in that situation?"

I used to think that I was supposed to help everybody who ever came along until I started asking God, “God, what do You want me to do?” Then God started showing me better ways in which to help people. Ask God. It begins with extending ourselves to care for people and not being too busy about ourselves and our own lives.

Again, every time we are about the work of the ministry, going out the front door about God’s business, God takes care of us through the back door. He will do it for you!

## 7. Assemble together.

“Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting or encouraging one another even the more, since the Lord’s return is at hand (near, close).” (Hebrews 10:25)

Why do we assemble together? We do this in obedience to God’s Word. We assemble together not for ourselves, but to encourage one another. We need to get together with God’s people for encouragement and to worship God. Some would say, “Well, I can read the Bible on my own!” But the work of the ministry is not intended to serve yourself! The work of the ministry is directed towards the needs of others.

“Well, I go and just sit there and I am not doing anything.” Whose responsibility is it to do something? Yours! You can make something out of that time, or you can make nothing out of it. We are a team. We share. We testify to one another. We may hug someone, we encourage one another, and we share in the Word of God together. We are getting equipped together. We are praying for one another. Everyone is a part of what is going on, and who is getting the glory for all the wonderful works that are happening? God is getting the glory.

Team work! Remember what the whole ministry of the Body is about? The eye is not better than the ear and the ear is not better than the knee, etc. One cannot do without the other if everything is going to work the way God intended. In the work of the ministry, there are no stars in God’s order. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are actually servants under everybody else! There is no room for superstars in God’s ministry which is in the Body of Christ. As soon as one starts to feel more important

than another, division is created, and that creates strife in the Body of Christ. That is pride! We need to put that ugly pride where it belongs; buried with Jesus; and we are going to rise up from the bottom as servants. I do not ever want to rise above a servant. Thank You, Jesus. There is only one God who reigns on the throne and I serve Him. Even though I am a child of God, a royal priest and king, I still serve one God, and so do you.

We stand equal. Whether fulfilling an office which God has called me to, or you doing your part in the work of the ministry, we stand together, equal as far as God is concerned. Nothing has been given to anyone but that which God has given. We cannot take credit for any of the gifts that God has given to His people. We are called to do our part, and to be faithful. That is all we are called to do. Thank God for faithful people who are not seeking to be exalted in the Body of Christ, or seeking to go off and do their own thing. Thank God for those who want to be about the work of God and be a blessing to others to the glory of God!

8. We are to lay hands on people.

Notice I said, “we.” God has put different gifts within different individuals, and as the Spirit wills to move, those gifts will manifest. All believers are called to lay hands on people and believe God for the work in Jesus’ name. In our meetings, I often ask the people to extend their hands out to pray. Everyone present cannot lay hands on the people. That would create confusion. What are they doing by extending their hands? Power is going out under the Holy Spirit and they are laying hands on that person!

We once laid hands on an individual who was 1300 miles away. We extended our hands, and in the name of Jesus, God healed the person’s ear! I know my people and I know their hearts. I know they desire to be faithful to do their part. When it comes time to pray, I know they are praying; I can feel when there is a break. I know because the Spirit just kind of lifts when we are not in unity with the Spirit of God. We do not come to fellowship for ourselves. We come for God’s glory, to do the work of His ministry.

9. Instruct one another. Colossians 3:16-17, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:1-2.

The work of the ministry involves no glamour or prestige. It just involves being faithful with what God has given you to do.

“Be thankful. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:16-17)

First, we have to let the Word of God dwell in us richly as we read on our own, and as we share together. A lot of people just come to a meeting and that is the only time they open their Bible all week.

God’s Word says, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly,” every day. Then we rejoice together in what is going on as we come together singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs out of thanksgiving in our hearts to God. We do these things because that is the work of the ministry. Actually, as we are singing and praising God, we are allowing and enabling the Spirit of God to move so that God can do whatever He wants to do. A sacrifice of praise, the offering of our lips going up to God is what sets the motion. As we are loving God, God is loving us, and our worship sets the climate wherever we are for God to do His work in us.

God loves to hear His people praise Him. He loves to hear them worship Him. That is the work of the ministry. We are actually ministering to the Lord. Did you ever think about that? God wants to be ministered to. When we worship and praise God, we are ministering to the Lord. God desires and needs, loves and wants our praise and worship.

Instructing one another: when you bring people to a service and they do not understand all that is going on, who is going to instruct them? You are going to instruct them. This is the work of the ministry. Thank You, Jesus.

Our effectiveness in the work of the ministry depends a great deal on our attitudes. Wrong attitudes definitely hinder God’s working and our own spiritual growth. It is important to search our hearts concerning our attitudes and motives if we are to be used of God.

Colossians 3:23-24 deals with the fact that what we do is not for people; we are not to be men pleasers. We are to do everything as to the Lord, and our

reward comes from God. And whatever we do in thought, word or deed, we do it to the glory of God. In other words, we are not seeking to be recognized. We are seeking to do what God has given us to do, for His glory. As soon as people start getting into it for the show, for themselves, that is the end of it as far as the ministry is concerned. It has stopped. There is no work of the ministry going on. It must be God's ministry, as He is working through His people.

In Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees, was saying that they loved being up there teaching. They loved the show. They wore long garments so that everybody could know that "there goes a reverend or a rabbi or a doctor," or "you have an anointing," or "you are so special." They loved people's praise. They did things deliberately so that they could get attention in order to get people's praise.

Jesus talks about the Pharisees as whitewashed tombs. On the outside all goody-goody, but Jesus said they were rotting on the inside. There is nothing to that kind of person; there is no work on the ministry going on through them. Even their desire to be used is not a desire to be used of God. It is a desire to find their place so they can be fulfilled in themselves.

God resists the proud and He gives grace to the humble. He says, "Humble yourself therefore, under the mighty hand of God that in due time, He will exalt you." Get your eyes off yourself and your own needs and desires, and minister as a servant of God to others wherever you are. This is the work of the ministry.

Jesus said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so they do of the false prophets. Woe to you when you seek the glory of the people. You are going to lose the glory that comes from God."

People involved in the work of the ministry are under authority. They are under the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (who are accountable to God), because they are responsible for organizing the work of the ministry. When people do not want to work in ministry, they should look for a Body where they do want to work, because they are under authority. No fellowship of Christ around the world will take anybody in who is rebellious in attitude and wants to do their own thing. They will not be recognized. If you are not willing to clean the toilets or set up chairs, do

not expect to teach. “Lord, enable us to humble ourselves that in due time,  
You will exalt us.”

## 5. DIFFERENT MINISTRIES AND WORKINGS

1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 12 tells us about the gifts of the Spirit, what they are and what is available in the work of the Lord. In this chapter, we are going to look at some things concerning the different kinds of ministries that God has working in His Body. We note that there are several things which God considers an abomination to Him:

1. Unbelief
2. Sin (missing the mark)

Pride, or self, is the root of all sin. Anything that would separate us from the Lord is sin. People who have not confessed Jesus as Lord with their mouths are in a state of separation from God. A believer may separate himself from God by willfully thinking about things that are not of God, and disobeying some of the commandments of God in His Word. That is called sin, and God hates sin. He hates it so much that it separated us from God. God, in His love and mercy, sent our Lord Jesus to give His life, to give His own blood for us, putting all of our sin on Himself that we might have His right standing with God. Glory to God for His gift to us in Jesus.

God's desire is that we not sin, but if we should, we have an advocate with the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1). We know that if we are faithful to confess and acknowledge our sin to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, just like it never happened. Praise the Lord for that. We see a lot of God's cleansing taking place in our meetings. People are dumping the garbage out of their lives and being set free by the Spirit of God to experience the fullness of joy and the abundant life that Jesus has promised. We cannot experience it though, if we have areas in our lives that are willfully out of line. It does not matter whether we have deviated from God's way a little or a lot. We must get those sins under the blood of Jesus and get them forgiven and covered; then forsake those ways and obey God. Otherwise, God cannot use us in the way He desires.

3. Ignorance (Ignorance of His Word and His workings)

Hosea 4:6 tells us that “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” He is not talking about unbelievers. He said, “My people” perishing because they do not know the authority that is theirs in the name of Jesus Christ, and because they do not know of God’s abundant provisions spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially. “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” God considers ignorance an abomination. It actually allows the devil an opportunity to work in people’s lives.

You remember Peter when Jesus was telling him, “I am going to the cross and I am going to give my life.” Peter stood up right away and blurted out, “No, Jesus, You do not have to do that.” Remember that? Then Jesus, looking directly at Peter, said, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” (Matthew 16:23) That is a very interesting remark. What opened the door to Satan in Peter’s life? Ignorance of God’s will and God’s purpose. Jesus continued on, “Thou savourest not the things of God, but the things of men.” In other words, “You have your way of thinking, but God has another way.”

God forbid that we let our own ideas get in the way of God’s working. God’s planning and God’s purpose. That is another abomination which actually hinders people.

People will never move in the gifts of the Spirit if they do not know what the gifts of the Spirit are and how to operate in them. It is a learning process. It is a teaching process as the Spirit of God instructs us. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:1, we read, “Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” In other words, “I want you to know about these things.” Why? Only if you know about these things can you begin to operate in them. If you do not know about them, you will never operate in them. We are to desire spiritual gifts (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:1).

I remember in times past, I was in a good Bible believing church that loved God and taught me to walk in obedience to the Word of God. I was taught the love of the Lord and that His Word is true, but they never taught me about the gifts of the Spirit. They never taught me about speaking in tongues and what a blessing God has for us in using that gift as part of our spiritual warfare. As a result, I did not use it. If you do not know about it, you cannot very well move in it.

You will find that spiritual gifts cannot just be turned on and off when you desire. They are a special impartation of the Holy Spirit, and they operate “as the Spirit wills.” You cannot make it happen, or demand, “God, release the working of miracles now.” No, you cannot do that! However, you may see some very interesting things happen as you start to pray in faith. God may just release the working of miracles!

We have seen God turn fire and storms completely around. The wind would suddenly blow in the opposite direction, reversing its course. We have seen God do things like that. We have seen God change the weather. We have seen God do miracles in people’s bodies when they actually did not have the working parts, and God made them work! There is no explanation in the natural realm, but God worked something out there. God’s people are being set free!

The main thing is that the person can see or hear, or the person’s mind returns to him. How is it done? We do not really know. My concern is how the results came because that is what people need to learn. They have to learn what God has for them and how to receive it.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, Paul taught the believers at Corinth about the Spirit of God and spiritual gifts. He wanted them to recognize the Spirit working in their midst. They had a problem with people coming into their meetings who were saying that Jesus was accursed. Paul instructed them that anyone who said that, was not of God. It was not the Spirit of God speaking thorough them. Anyone who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and is giving glory and honor to God, that person is true. Verse 3 says that “No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

Those who seek to bring glory to themselves or those who are doing works and signs in any other name than Jesus are not true. I do not care what miraculous things they are doing. Get far away from them. If the glory is going to Jesus, and people are being set free by the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, then we ought to give glory to God. Thank You, Jesus.

Verse 4 tells us “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” There are nine different gifts but there is only one Holy Spirit. He is not divided. He is the One who gives the gifts to God’s people.

Verse 5 says, “There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.” In other words, there are different ministries that God has put in the Body. That is why you may go to five different places and find five different people ministering, more than likely, in five different ways. Possibly every now and then, you may run across a few who minister in the same manner.

Verse 6, “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit.” The spiritual manifestations are present so that we can profit by them, and the Body of Christ becomes spiritually mature. The gifts of the Spirit are often signs to the unbelievers to wake them up to the reality of the presence of God. Who says we do not need this happening today? People will fall down on their faces like they did in the Book of Acts. After ministering healing in the name of Jesus, Peter said to the people, “Why do you look at us so funny? We are just men like you. We did not do anything, but let me tell you about the One who did.” Then he proceeded to lead 3,000 people to Christ. Praise God. The gifts of the Spirit are intended to be signs to the unbelievers and to build up, or edify, the Body of Christ.

So we find that there are different gifts of the Spirit. There are different ministries. There are different operations, but the same Spirit. The same Lord is doing all the work, and it is intended to give Him glory and to build up His church. Then spiritual growth becomes evident in the Body of Christ.

For instance, discerning of spirits is a gift which allows one to see into the spiritual realm. One can see and discern what I call “critters.” The Bible calls them demons. Seeing into the spirit world is very helpful because we can use the name of Jesus and blow that enemy away. It is part of the spiritual weaponry that God has placed within His Body for His people.

“Wherefore He (Jesus) said when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

Now that He ascended what does it mean, but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fulfill all things.” (Ephesians 4:8-10)

This is why Jesus is Lord of all, King of Kings. The Father, God, has exalted Him and given Him that name above every name. Jesus is the Head of His Church. No one can take anything to themselves unless the Lord Jesus gives it. He gives the gifts and apparently sets apart people in His Body for different purposes and ministries. What are these ministries?

“And He, Jesus, gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers.” For what purpose? “For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the Body of Christ. Till we all come up into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Jesus is our example. As we grow in God’s Word, the Bible says that we can grow up to the fullness of His stature. In other words, to move in this earth as Jesus moved. We know it is possible because the Bible says again and again that Jesus is our example. We are to grow up into the fullness of Him.

One time as I was meditating on this, the Spirit of God spoke in my heart. He said that when people think about attaining the fullness of Jesus, they usually think about love, forgiveness, joy and peace and goodness and mercy. Then He said, “If they want to be like Me, then they must also move in the gifts of the Spirit as I moved in them.” We know that Jesus moved in the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit without measure.

I believe that by the Spirit of God, His people will rise up in the same Spirit of Christ and move in the fullness of the gifts. The gifts will manifest in the Body. They cannot be neglected. Paul spends three chapters dealing with the gifts. They are important. They are going to help us in our battle here in this life. The purpose of the gifts is that we may grow up spiritually.

“That we henceforth be not as children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may we grow up into Him, Jesus, in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 4:14-15)

This shows us the importance of the Body growing in the gifts and in understanding of the Word of God so that we may enter into all that God has for us in Jesus.

As we noted earlier, there are five offices, or five ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. For what purpose? To equip God's people for the work of the ministry. It is your responsibility to find out what is the work of your ministry, and then do it. Did you ever ask your pastor, "What is the work of the ministry?" You should ask him. Let him help you that way. It is important so you can take your place in the ministry. If he is doing his job and if I am doing mine, we are going to help you by showing you what it is and how to do it.

God has put these people in the Body of Christ. He calls them up. You cannot decide, "Well, I am going to be an apostle." It will not work. Just be faithful in the little things, in loving your brothers and sisters, loving your husband or wife, loving your children, loving your neighbor, loving your pastor, loving God's people, and loving the unbeliever. Simply be faithful doing these things and before long, God will use you in bigger things.

There was a fellow named Philip who rose up in the ranks. He was just your regular son of God (if you can call a son of God regular), and he grew in wisdom. He studied the Word of God. He believed God. The Body of Christ at Jerusalem started to notice. "Hey, this guy has something special." It is not surprising that they then appointed him to be a deacon. About ten years later, he was known as Philip the evangelist. He started out as a person who simply loved and sought out God, and was faithful. Then in due time, God called him into the ministry of an evangelist. We cannot take that unto ourselves. Jesus has to give it. No one can receive any ministry except that which God has given. (John 3:27)

An apostle is someone who is "sent forth." Apostles go into areas and basically "plow the ground" and begin the work of God there. The Bible speaks of them, and we know about twelve of them. Often, people are so foolish as to think there were only twelve apostles. Did you ever search the Word of God enough to learn if there were any other apostles besides those twelve? Many people think that the gifts of the Spirit stopped with the twelve apostles. If we can find even one other apostle in the New Testament, then we cannot accept that conclusion. Right? Did you ever

think about that? I believe by the Spirit of God that the gifts did not stop back there. I believe that the same Jesus is moving in His Church today, and He is still calling up apostles.

Take a look at Romans 16:7 which says: “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles who also were in Christ before me.” Apparently there were a couple more of them. Thank You, Jesus.

“Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:5)

“Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:6) By inference here, Paul was basically associating Barnabas with himself as being an apostle. We know Paul was called an apostle, but he was not one of the twelve. Apparently, we need to look at some things a bit more closely.

Prophets minister to God’s people as well as to unbelievers. Evangelists, if they are true New Testament evangelists, will not usually be found in the church. They will be out on the highways and in the stadiums, about the Work of God among unbelievers. Pastors are called to minister, shepherd and care for a local group of believers. Teachers may travel around more, ministering in the Body of Christ. They do not usually go outside to the unbelievers.

All have a teaching function, a teaching purpose. However, God has given to these various ministries different abilities and different gifts. We see this in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:17, 28: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, second prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings.” Who is being revered to concerning miracles and gifts of healings? The evangelists are workers of miracles and healings.

We find Philip in Acts 8 going to Samaria working mighty signs and wonders. Demons came screaming out of people. People were healed in their minds and in their bodies. They repented and came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior, and were baptized. That was all Philip did. Then he would journey on.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about all that happened, they were so excited that they sent Peter and John to Samaria. For what purpose? So that the people could be filled with the Holy Ghost. When they put their hands on the people, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). Now, why did Philip not do that? That was not a part of his ministry. It was the ministry of Peter and John, so they laid hands on the people.

People often ask, “How do all of these people who come from other places and have never received the Holy Spirit, come to you and receive?” I tell them that is a part of the ministering gifts that God has given to us. It is the gift of faith whereby the Holy Spirit is imparted. Everywhere in our meetings people get filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking in new tongues. That is just part of the working of God’s Spirit.

Were Peter and John doing greater works than Philip? Certainly not. They were each doing what God had given them to do. This is why it is so wrong to compare one minister with another. It is so terribly wrong! The Bible says that is carnal and it is not of God (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3). Thank You, Jesus. Each part is doing what it is supposed to do.

God’s Word tells us that there are different ministries, and in those ministries God gives different abilities, different gifts for the work that He wants to accomplish. This is why, if a pastor does not seem to be moving in all these gifts, people should not get upset and think that he does not know anything, or that he is not moving with God. He is there to shepherd and to teach. In addition, I believe that every pastor should also lay hands on the sick and expect them to recover. (Ezekiel 34:3-5) I love pastors. They are men of God, and they stand with me, and I stand with them. We cannot be divided one from another.

Often people have a tendency to limit God, to box Him into their way of thinking and the way they feel things should be done. I cannot emphasize enough how horrible that is! Do not bring God down to your level. Rise up by the Spirit of God to the place that God would have you to be. Get hold of Ephesians 3:20: “Now to Him who is able to do far more exceedingly abundantly, more than anything that we are even able to ask or think.” Do not limit God by your thinking. Don’t do it!

We know, according to John 14:10 that Jesus did not say or do anything against the will of His heavenly Father. He spoke what God had given Him to say and He did the works that God had given Him to do.

God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-38). We know that it is God's will that "no one perish and that everyone come to the knowledge of the truth," (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9). That is God's will. It is God's will that no one be lost, but that everyone come to the knowledge of the truth.

"And He (Jesus), went about healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

"When the evening was come they brought to Him (Jesus) many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His Word and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness." (Matthew 8:16-17)

This is a direct reference back to Isaiah 53:4: "Surely He has borne our griefs..." In Hebrew, "griefs" means sickness and disease and malady. "And carried our sorrows..." deals with the emotional realm: fear, doubt, worry, etc. Clearly, Jesus on the cross, carried all our sickness too.

What is God's will concerning healing? Apparently, it is God's will that everyone be healed. Jesus healed everyone who came to Him for healing.

"There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one." (Acts 5:16)

It is evident from this scripture that the works that Jesus did continued with the apostles. They healed every one of them. Is it God's will to heal everyone? It sure is! Is it God's will to save everyone? It sure is! Is it God's will that people be free in their minds? It sure is! Everyone! I thank God that in a prayer line I do not have to try to decide which one God is going to heal. He takes care of all of them! Thank You, Jesus.

Many times people limit God by saying, "Well, it is God's will that I not be healed." The fallacy of this kind of thinking is readily understood when we

relate it to salvation. People come to know the Lord Jesus, but then start to doubt their salvation and head back to the world. Does that mean that God does not want them saved? No. Does that mean that God did not save them? No. We need to understand God's will and provision for healing in the same way.

It is very interesting to look at the way Jesus ministered healing. We can observe Him moving in the gifts and the many different ways in which He ministered. Although we notice many diversities of operations, the desired result was always accomplished.

In Mark 7:29, a woman who was a Greek, a Syrophoenician, came to Jesus. She wanted her daughter delivered from a devil; but Jesus said to her, "It is for the Jews. I came for the Jews." In other words, He was not going to do anything for her. Notice how she persisted. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." That woman was not going away without it! And what happened? And He (Jesus) said to her, "For this saying go your way. The devil is gone out of your daughter."

Now, what did Jesus do? What did the woman do? Keep this in mind and we will come back to it.

And they brought to Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he signed, and saith unto him, "Ephphatha", that is, "be opened". And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plain. (Mark 7:32-25)

Here we see a different working. In the first one He said, "Go on your way, Lady. You have it. It is done." No prayer, nothing, except honoring what she believed. In other words, it was done unto her as she wanted it done. This was a different operation than in the second one where we see Him spitting on His fingers and putting them on the man's tongue. Although they were ministered to in different ways, both received healing.

Many people think, “Well, God is going to do it in His time, His way,” and “God may do it, or He may not.” Such people do not really know what God is going to do. They do not know the will of God, and the result is that many of them go away empty.

Mark 8:22-24 shows us Jesus dealing with the blind man. This time, He spit on the man’s eyes. Then He put His hands on him and asked if he could see anything. Now I want to make it clear here that Jesus did not pray once, let alone twice, as some think. He just put His hands on the man, after spitting on his eyes. Then He asked, “Do you see anything?” Verse 24 says the man looked up and said, “I see men as trees walking around.” Apparently they were not in clear focus yet. Some people have the mistaken idea that if complete healing does not instantly happen, they have not received anything.

As we study the gifts, we will see the difference between the prayer of faith and the gifts of healing. When the gifts of healing are operating, the healing is instantaneous. Quite often, we see that working in our ministry. The majority of people though, receive by the working of the prayer of faith. They will always receive their healing, but not necessarily right there on the spot. The healing manifests later. In either care, they are healed.

In Matthew 8:5-9 we find a person sick of the palsy and grievously tormented. Upon hearing about him, Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion responded, “You do not have to come. All you have to do is speak the Word.” This was a man who understood and exercised authority for he said, “I just speak to my servants and they go.” Apparently this man also knew about the authority of God (all we have to do is speak that Word and it is done). The centurion said, “Speak the Word only and my servant shall be healed.” In other words, “Jesus, you do not even have to go there; just speak the Word right where you are and it will happen.”

When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in all of Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”  
(Matthew 8:10,11)

And Jesus said unto the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done to you.” (Matthew 8:13) As you have believed, so be it done to you.

Many people have the idea that God is a sovereign, holy God Who is unapproachable. They see Him as an impersonal, sovereign God Who rules independently of man’s desires or needs. Their uncertainty about God’s will and actions is often expressed, “Well I do not know if it is God’s will that I be healed or not. I do not know if it is God’s will that I be saved or not.”

Once, an individual came to me and actually said that she thought she was predestined to go to hell! She did not know God’s Word. She did not know the will of God. That is not God’s will. The Bible says that God wants everybody saved. God wants everybody to come to the fullness of the truth. God wants everybody healed; but if you are waiting for some sovereign God out there, in His time, to heal you, you will never be healed. The blood of Jesus at the cross has already done the healing, and all we need to do now is to step out and take it, receive it. It is already provided.

I love those words, “Go your way, and as you have believed, so be it done to you.” It was not, “God, Your will be done.” It was, “As you have believed, so be it done to you.” The centurion had come for healing on behalf of his servant, and as he believed, it was done. Praise God! Be it done to you as you want it! Thank You, Jesus. If it is not God’s will to heal, you could not do that. If it is not God’s will to heal everyone, you would have no right to come before the Almighty Lord God of Hosts, and King of Kings and say, “I want to be healed.” But God, in His love and mercy, has already provided it so that we can have it.

Jesus said unto him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:23-24)

A father had come to Jesus with his child who had a devil. Wanting this devil removed, he said to Jesus, “If you can, Lord, take the child and deliver him.” Notice how Jesus responded. Jesus actually turned it around and said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” All things are possible to him that believes! God can do anything! All things are possible to them that believe!

Now, who are we to say, “Well, I do not know whether I can have that or not.” God says, “All things are possible to them that believe.” The impossible is provided. It is available. How do we receive it? By faith. If we can believe, all things are possible.

Matthew 17:20 says the same thing. The disciples had been unable to deliver the child and so they asked Jesus, “Lord, why could not we cast the devil out of him?” And He said, “Because of your unbelief.” Then He proceeded to say, “If you would speak to that mountain to be moved, it has to move if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed.” Not a lot of faith, just faith that knows it has to happen. Nothing shall be impossible to you, in Jesus name!

What I am trying to help you see here is that waiting for God to do something in His timing is not scriptural. You will not find it in the scriptures. Our faith determines when we receive what God has already provided for us (salvation, healing, etc.). We can see this clearly in Matthew 15:28 when Jesus said, “O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will.”

I am fully convinced that if it is not God’s will to heal everyone, then one lady stole from God because she purposed in her heart, “If I could just touch the hem of His garment, I am going to be made well.” This lady had an issue of blood, and in their society that meant she was unclean, not permitted to go out in public. Although she was in a weakened physical condition, this lady fought her way through the crowd to get to Jesus. We know there had to be a big crowd because when Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” the disciples responded, “Oh, Master, look around You at all this big crowd. What do You mean saying who touched Me?” But Jesus had felt the power of God go out of Him. He knew someone had tapped in to the power of God. Well, if it was not God’s will to heal everyone, then that lady stole from God!

She received what she had determined to have. Jesus told her: “Daughter, be of good comfort, your faith has made you whole; go in peace.” (Luke 8:48) He said, “Daughter your faith has made you whole.” It does not say that God made her whole. What was it that tapped into the power of God? It was faith. In all of these accounts, what is the common denominator in every one of them? Faith!

Matthew 13:54-58 is the account of Jesus going back home to Nazareth, and what happened there. It says, “Is not this Mary’s and Joseph’s son, the carpenter? They did not recognize Him nor His anointing.

What ministry did Jesus operate in as He walked this earth? He operated in a Prophet’s office. Flowing with a prophet are the working of miracles, deliverances and healings.

Now notice in verse 58 what actually stopped the power of God from flowing. Unbelief! It says that Jesus could not do any mighty works there because of the unbelief of the people. Not even the gifts of the Spirit worked in Nazareth. God could not do the works He wanted to do because no one believed to receive!

Apparently there is something operating here that we need to look at a little more, because all of the gifts of the Spirit operate by faith. You will never prophesy if you do not step out in faith. Do not think, “Oh, those are my thoughts.” No, they are not your thoughts! Speak them out and let them be proved. That is the only way you will learn to develop in the gifts that God has given. Let it be tested. The spirit of the prophet will be tested by the prophets. It will be proved through testing.

I open my life to everybody. You can look at my life if you want to. It is an open book, and I intend it that way. A person cannot walk in holiness and not have his life an open book so people can read it, prove it out, test it. If they are of God, speak well of them.

Some said that Jesus cast out devils by the spirit of Beelzebub, the spirit of Satan. Jesus called that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, for which there is no forgiveness. Be careful not to speak against things you do not understand, and be slow to judge them. To do otherwise is heading for trouble, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They were saying that Jesus was of a cult and that He was casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus tells us if they said that about Him, they are going to say that about you and me. (Matthew 10:25)

Hebrews 11:6 states that “Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God). For he that would come to Him must first know that He exists.” For what

purpose are the gifts of the spirit? To help people see that God exists. He is real. He is alive. He is here in power. Faith is not just something for people to salve themselves with, not is it a crutch. We are talking life and power in the mighty name of Jesus. We must first know that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

You have seen in every account we have been studying that not one of those individuals thought, “Well, let us try it and see what happens.” Instead, their attitude was, “We are going to go get it and we are not going away without it!” Diligently seek Him; He is a rewarder. That is exciting! Praise the Lord. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It says those that call upon the name of the Lord will not be ashamed. It is God’s will to save. It is God’s will to fill all believers with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues. It is God’s will to heal everyone in their minds and in their bodies. It is God’s will that His people prosper financially as well. I am not talking about getting hung up on financial prosperity and making riches a god. However, I do not see in the Bible any of the great men of God begging for bread. (See Psalm 37)

It is sad that many people do not know they can come to their heavenly Father and receive what they need in the mighty name of Jesus, right now. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen. Faith is always right now. The moment you come and ask Jesus to come into your heart and be your Lord and Savior, at that very moment you are saved. Now is the day of salvation of the hour of salvation. Now! Not three weeks from now. Now!

Mark 11:24 tells us, “When you pray believe you have received.” If you have it, you have it. It is done. You have it now. You receive the moment the prayer is done. It is important to understand this. Don not say, “If it is God’s will.” Do not do that! The Bible says that it was God’s will for Jesus Christ to give His blood on the cross and carry our sicknesses, our diseases, and our infirmities with Him. It is done! That is God’s will!

When do we pray, “Lord, if it be your will?” There is a time. People sometimes get those prayers confused. When is the time? The time is when we do not know whether to turn left or right, when we are seeking direction for our lives and making decisions. Then we should pray, “Lord, I relinquish this to You, and in the name of Jesus, I ask that Your perfect will

be done in my behalf. I do not know which way to go. I thank You now that I do know which way to go.” As I speak that forth, then God will lead me into His perfect way. (Proverbs 3:5-6) Isaiah 30:21 says that when you are walking along and are heading the wrong way, you will hear a voice behind you say, “Turn left.”

There is a time to say, “Lord, Your will be done,” but let us not confuse it with what we call the prayer of faith. The prayer of faith is always based on a promise of God. “Has He not said it and will He not do it?” (Numbers 23:19)

Prayer in tongues brings God’s perfect will concerning situations for which we do not have a promise of God. Pray, “Father, in Jesus’ name, give me utterance concerning this situation,” and then begin praying in tongues. (Romans 8:26-28)

John 14:12 says, “To them that believe, the works I do you will do, and even greater works than these will you do, because I go to the Father.

And whatever you ask in My name I will do it that the Father might receive the glory in the Son.”

“To them that believe.” To whom? To us today who believe. You may be a Christian and love God with all your heart, but because you do not know about these things, technically, you are not a believer. You believe God for salvation, but you do not believe for healing. You do not believe God for finances.

People say, “Well, I can believe God for finances, but why do I have such difficulty believing God for healing?” It is because they have not spent enough time meditating in the Word of God to learn about God’s plan and purpose for healing. Do not condemn yourself because you are having difficulty with something. Instead, build yourself up in the Word of God. Let the Word of God produce that faith in you. And you will receive! Thank You, Jesus.

We find different ministries rising up because not everyone is believing God for the supernatural. Do you know when I started moving into the supernatural? When I started believing the Word of God. When you

received Jesus, you moved into the supernatural. Why is it so easy to receive Jesus and believe for salvation, a hope (the hope of our calling) that you cannot even see, and not believe God for a physical healing? Have you ever thought about that? It is the same faith that receives physical healing as receives salvation.

I truly believe that many people need to examine their faith, whether they are really in Jesus Christ. That is what the Bible says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourself. Prove yourself whether you are in Christ. He is talking to believers. That is not intended to shake you up, but to encourage you. If you can believe God for salvation that you cannot see, you can certainly believe God for healing in your body; or deliverance in your mind. The Word of God works!

We know that Jesus is going to come back in glory and take His people to Himself! God has said it. He said it! He said it! Now if we can believe that, with no evidence whatsoever to support it except a little book, the Book of Life, then we certainly should be able to take God at His Word (out of that same little book) and believe for what He said in these other areas. What we need to do is get it inside. Live it. Eat it. Sleep it. Work it. Before long, we will be able to say, "I walk in divine health. I walk in divine life. I walk in divine provision. I walk in divine protection. I walk in the divine blessing of God. I am blessed going in and I am blessed going out. I must take God at His Word, and as I do, His Word will begin to work for me because it is alive and I am a diligent seeker."

Never confess, "Oh, God, I am a failure." Jesus is not a failure! Remember, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Galatians 2:20) I have God's faith. It is good. I am not going to undermine it. I am not going to talk badly about it, or say I do not have enough of it. All I have to do is activate what the Lord has put in my heart; and I do that by acting on the Word of God.

This is why you see different ministries. I fully believe that the reason you do not see apostles and prophets moving in the Body of Christ today is because people have not really stepped out in the supernatural realm. It says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 16:9, "God searcheth throughout the world looking to and

fro, back and forth, looking for somebody in whose behalf He can show Himself strong.”

“God, I want to see your supernatural power flow through my hands the same way it flowed through Jesus!” It takes boldness. It takes confidence. That means we are going to be ridiculed by many people. It means we are going to have people bad-mouthing us, saying, “You are of the devil.” (They said that about Jesus. Praise God, we are in good company.) Why? It is because we are different and we are doing the works of God. We are moving in the supernatural realm and people assume if someone is operating in the supernatural, they must be of the devil. They think only the devil does that kind of stuff. That is not the way I read the Bible. Jesus was trying to hook us into eternal life and every blessing of God! Abundant life, right now! That was part of the gates of hell. We are taking back what the enemy has stolen. It does not belong to him. It belongs to God.

Now you can understand why they were talking so badly about Jesus. The devil wanted to cover up that work. He did not want people to know that the Holy Spirit power of God was there to set people free because they might start getting freedom. So what did the devil do? He ran a counter-attack.

It is ignorance of the Spirit of God and how God moves and what God says that hoodwinks people into not experiencing the abundant life that Jesus Christ has promised. Basically, it is because they do not know what God says in His Word. The apostle Paul’s ministry was also misunderstood. He says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” Paul was defending his ministry. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians he did much of that. He had to defend his ministry to believers! That is a shame! When an apostle moves in the Spirit of God and has to defend his ministry, the believers are in a sorry state. It is happening today! I learned a long time ago to commit my cause to the Father Who judges justly. I tell people that I do not care about their judgment of me; I do not even judge myself. I commit my cause to the Father God Who judges justly. Some day I will stand accountable before Him about the ministry He gave me, and what I did with it. Paul did that in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4. All I know is that Jesus is real. Anyone who reaches out to Him is not going to go away empty. I do not care what it is you need. He will do it. He will do it because God is faithful to perform His Word in behalf of those who believe.

In Luke 13:32-33, Jesus boldly declared, “Go tell that fox (Herod), Behold, I cast out devils and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

Jesus actively went about saying what He was going to do. “I am going to cast out devils; and I am going to work cures. I am going to heal the sick in mind and body.” Well, if you are saying it, you are going to do it before long. If you believe it, you will see it. Do the works! Do what you are given to do and give the glory to God!

Many times people will say, “Well, Jesus did not spend much time talking about the devil. Why do you?” They do not read closely what Jesus was doing. In every other verse Jesus is delivering somebody from a devil. Jesus did much more teaching about the devil than most people realize. Anyone who is moving in the Spirit of God is not ignorant of Satan’s devices (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:11).

Luke 11:24-25: “when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says I will return to my house from which I came out. And when he comes back he finds it all swept clean and in order.” You know what the demon is saying? “I have a better place now than I had to begin with.” What happens?

Verse 26: “Then he goes and takes to him, seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Many people say, “Well, that is talking about an unbeliever.” It is not. What change took place when that person was delivered of that devil? What happened to the man at Gadarene when he was delivered from that legion of devils? He became a believer! (If anything is going to make someone a believer, that will.) He confessed Jesus as Lord and wanted to follow Him, but Jesus had other plans for him. He told him, “No, go back and tell the people what great things God has done for you.” He then proceeded to tell the people in a region of ten cities what God had done for him through Jesus. The result was that Jesus’ fame spread and more people were able to come and get God’s help through Jesus.

Telling others what God has done will help them as well as help you to stay delivered and healed. God is glorified through our testimonies of His workings in our lives and ministries. Others can get help because they will come to where they know God is moving in power. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” (Psalm 107:2)

The devil does not want people telling others about the works of God, or where they received the touch from God that set them free. By stopping those testimonies, the devil hinders people from going to a place or a ministry where they can receive from God. You are not glorifying a minister when you tell of a work of God. God works through ministers today in the same way He worked through Jesus (John 14:12-14). People need to know where God is working through ministers in power or wisdom so they can get help also.

“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” (Psalm 107:2)

## 6. FINDING YOUR MINISTRY

Besides the five ministry office gifts which Jesus has given to the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11), there are also various ministry service gifts. In this chapter we will discuss briefly these ministries which are found in Romans 12:4-8 and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:7-11. These ministry service gifts are vital to the proper functioning of the church.

An exhorter is one who invites people to do things God's way. They are always amongst the people encouraging them. They are the ones who will come along and say, "Oh, that is a nice dress you have on today," or they simply show love and encourage others with "You are not a failure. God has made you a success." That is an exhorter. This is a service gift in the Body that I thank God for because it is something that really keeps people moving along. There may be a person who is down, flat on his face, and an exhorter comes along and picks him up, encouraging him by saying, "God loves you and it is not all over. God has a plan and a purpose for your life."

"If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously." (Romans 12:8) This is what we would call the gift of giving. The people who have this gift of giving are always looking for ways that they can give into God's work, give to others, and meet situations and needs. This is a tremendously important service gift because the ministries of God would shut down if they were not supported. (We are not talking about the tithe here, the 10% of gross income which all believers are to give to God's work according to Malachi 3:8-12.) These people give wherever there is a need. In fact, they may be giving as much as 40 to 50 percent of their incomes. They are willing to give wherever there is a need. They will ask, "What do you need in the ministry?" Then they will just give it. That is the gift of giving. Giving is a service gift. It is a ministry in the Body of Christ. Often a person with the gift of giving, or the ministry of giving, will wait until there is a need. In other words, they know that there are always needs, but they will just wait until they are approached or they learn about a specific need before they will even consider giving. That is the flesh. There is a flesh side in each of these ministries. People with the ministry of giving should ask what they can give towards God's work.

"If it is leadership or administration, let him govern diligently." (Romans 12:8) This is referring to the person who just seems to know how to

organize things, order it and get the best. Usually in good administration you never see any of the wheels turning. It appears that everything just flows. As we stated before, in each of these service areas there is a flesh side. The person with the gift of administration may sit back and watch everybody else fail before they step up and say, “Well, I think it could have been done this way, etc.” If you have a gift of administration, do not sit back. Step up and offer your suggestions and let it be worked out.

“If it is showing mercy, let them do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:8) This is the person who loves to go into nursing homes and to the outcasts; the people nobody else really cares about. This kind of person with the gift of mercy will just come and love them along. The Word says, “Do it cheerfully.” If you get into the flesh and do not do the caring cheerfully as unto the Lord, before long you will begin to think you are being used.

These are the service gifts. They are all ministries. The ministry of encouragement, the ministry of helps, the ministry of mercy and the ministry of giving are all just as important as any of the office ministries. Those who support and work with the five-fold office (Ephesians 4:11) receive the same reward as those in the office ministries (Matthew 10:40-42). All of these gifts have to be operating in order for the offices to operate the way God intended.

Hospitality is another gift. This is demonstrated by those who are always taking in people. They minister to others through opening their homes and themselves.

Now, we are all to give. We are all to show mercy. We are all to encourage. We are all to be hospitable, but we are looking at a particular ministry that God has put in a person’s heart on a continual basis. People with the mercy gift will actually look for people who need mercy. Those with the gift of giving should be looking for projects to give to, asking the Lord for His direction. People with the gift of encouragement are going to be out encouraging others. The Word says, “Do it.”

If you have been given a ministry like this, and that is the desire of your heart, it is not something you have just conjured up. If God has put a desire in your heart, prove it out. If you go to a nursing home and you just love it, and your heart goes out to the people, that is mercy! Remember though, the

Word says “Do not think more highly of yourself than you should.” (Romans 12:3) Do not get puffed up when God allows you to minister to others.

There is also a music ministry. Those who are called to a music ministry will use their musical talents. In the flesh, it is called entertaining. In the Spirit, it is ministering. Those with the ability and this gift can minister through music. Their music should be performed unto the Lord so that God (and He alone) may receive glory. Many people do not really appreciate the ministry of music. Look at what Elisha said in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 3:14-16, “As surely as the Lord Almighty lives whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you, (verse 15)... But now bring me a harpist.” This is a prophet of God saying, “Bring me a harpist. Bring me a musician.” And while the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha. The anointing of the Spirit of God came on Elisha as the musicians played!

Music is a ministry of helps. People with the gift of helps have to watch the flesh too. Many times they will want to help and it may be that the authority does not see the same needs they see. They need to learn how to deal with that by going to the authority and talking it over to get it worked out. Sometimes pride will enter in too, causing them to feel hurt if they are not used. There is always a flesh (bad) side to each of these things which are good (spiritual).

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:7 and following: “The end of all things is near, therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (Here is the flesh side of hospitality, grumbling. Do not grumble if you are going to do it. Be hospitable, but without grumbling. Do it cheerfully and thankfully to the Lord.)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace or ability in its various forms. “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very Words of God. If anyone serves (helps), he should do it with the strength that God provides.” God will give you the strength to do what He wants you to do. Whether it is encouraging, showing mercy, giving, or whatever it is, it should be in accordance with the gift given.

God will actually supply the finances to the givers because He knows their hearts and their desire to give, because He put it in their hearts to give. He knows they are going to be faithful in distributing the way that God wants it distributed, not the way they or someone else does. Those with the gift of giving will often have people come to them because they are known as givers. But God will instruct the givers on how and where to give. Remember, this giving is over and above the tithe.

“If anyone serves he should do it with the strength (ability) God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.” (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:11) God puts the desire and ability to serve in people’s hearts. You do not just take it on yourself.

An intercessor is different from a person who prays. Everyone is called to pray, but intercession is a ministry of prayer, and that is an intercessor’s ministry. Most of their time will be spent praying because God has put that on their hearts.

There is much overlapping in these ministering gifts. You can be a musician and actually be operating in exhortation, encouraging people through the music. Also, you can be operating in a ministry of mercy and use music in that ministry of mercy, at a nursing home for instance.

You cannot be placed in a ministry that God has not already put on your heart. You cannot have someone pray over you and suddenly have the gifts of healing, etc. The Lord will already have put your gift within you, and all you do is confirm it.

Be faithful to do what God has given you to do. Do not look to someone else to get moving. You move first. Check with the authority in your Body as to your role. When it is God’s will for your life, you can trust that God will make the arrangements and will make it happen. Do not seek to promote yourself, but be faithful to simply do what you have been given. If you feel a call to pray, get involved in a prayer group. If you want to help people (show mercy), go to a nursing home, etc. If you have a desire to give, ask you pastor where you can give, etc. Get involved with God’s ministries and you will find you ministry!

## 7. AUTHORITY

“He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit; He who looks after his master will be honored.” (Proverbs 27:18) “He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit” is another way of saying that you are going to reap what you sow. If you cultivate fears you will reap of the fears. If you cultivate anger, you will reap the fruit of the anger. Whatever you cultivate, you will reap the fruit of it. If you cultivate a fig tree, you are going to get the figs from it. Who has the right to the figs? The cultivator.

“He who looks after his master will be honored.” Throughout the Bible, God deals with authority. He speaks about authority and that we should tend to our master, Jesus, and His affairs. Who will honor us? The Lord Jesus will honor us. Authority is God’s way. God is the originator of all authority. All authority rests in Him and from there on authority is delegated downward. Those who look after the authorities in their lives will be honored by those authorities.

The husband is the authority in the home. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers are the authorities in the church. Who are under the pastors, teachers, evangelists, apostles, and prophets? The body of believers. In the government there is an authority order in effect. In your jobs there is an authority order working. Some are the bosses, some are under the bosses. There is always an authority order working. Proverbs 27:18 also says that if you tend to the master, or the authority, at that point you are going to receive honor.

Proverbs 16:2 says, “man’s ways appear right to a man, but God searches the intentions or motivation of the heart.” Often people think that what they are doing is right, but God looks at the motivation of the heart. Why are we doing what we are doing? We may think we are doing it for a godly reason, but it is really for ourselves. God searches the intention and motivation of the heart. He shows things for what they really are. Pride is a very subtle thing, a very subtle thing. Many people want to be ministers of God because they want the glory or honor that goes with it. Of course, they will never tell you that. They are seeking a position of authority, and will never tell you that either. Down in their hearts they want authority over others, and they want to be recognized.

That kind of striving to have something, or to be something brings pressure. It will bring pressure within yourself. It will also bring pressure on others around you when you are trying to make something happen. We wonder why there is fighting. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not of your own lusts?” (James 4:1) Strife comes from your own self, your own desires, your own passions from within you. Proverbs tells us, “Without pride, there is no contention for fighting.” Fighting, striving, quarreling, or seeking after a certain position at the expense of others always bring pressure. Pride always brings conflict inside yourself and with others as well. Proverbs 22:10 says, “Remove the scorner and the strife will cease.”

We noted that pride is very subtle. It does not just jump up on you and say, “Hey, you are thinking of yourself. That’s wrong!” It is very subtle. It was pride that caused John the Baptist’s disciples to question the authority of Jesus to also make disciples and baptize. They did not understand God’s ministry workings. They actually thought Jesus was “sheep stealing!” To this, John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I have said that I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of Him. The bride belongs to the bridegroom; the friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine and it is now complete. He (Jesus) must become greater, and I must become less.” (John 3:27-30) John understood his ministry role and purpose and the ministry of Jesus.

Often when people are seeking to be used of God, they let their pride get in the way. Because it is so very subtle, they try to take to themselves things that God never gave. They want to be something that God never intended them to be. They have failed to recognize that their actions and desires have been prompted by their own pride.

God lays out the principle for ministry. He says that you cannot take to yourself something that God has not given. If you attempt to do this, you are going to feel pressured. There will be striving and discontent within yourself which will also affect others around you. You may even pressure others in order to make something happen.

Many times people get all upset inside themselves wondering, “What is my gift? What am I supposed to be doing?” A thought will pop into their heads

and immediately they will assume, “Well, this is what I am supposed to do.” Then they try to make it happen. But putting a square peg into a round hole will not work! Something has to give. The only way that square peg is going to fit in that round hole is to become a round peg. Some people are trying to cram it in there, wiggling it and trying to get down to where it is round... but then it is not square anymore! It has lost its function in the place where it was really intended to be.

Note in John 3:29 that the friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him. Somebody who is under authority waits and listens for the authority. God always works through His authorities and they will know His leading and plan. It is most disrespectful and presumptuous to push ahead of an authority when the authority has not said anything or given direction. Jesus did not do or say anything that His heavenly Father did not give Him to do or say. He never did anything apart from His heavenly Father, but waited until His heavenly Father gave Him something to do. In the meantime, He was content.

On several occasions, the disciples wanted honor because of their association with Jesus. They knew they were not Jesus, but they wanted honor by being with Him. (We too, are His disciples and His followers.) Remember how proud they were? They actually forbade another man to cast out devils and lay hands on people for healing in the name of Jesus because “He did not follow with their group.” That is pride. They wanted to be an exclusive group. They even forbade people from coming to Jesus. Remember those mothers with their little babies? They were bringing them to Jesus, wanting them blessed, and the disciples said, “No, He does not have time.” They acted on their own initiative time and time again rather than check with the authority. Jesus rebuked them for this.

God has a way, and He always works through His authorities. Even Jesus was under His authority. Jesus never did or said anything on His own. He always checked it through with His heavenly Father. What was He trying to teach His disciples? The same thing. Two of those disciples wanted honor and recognition above the others. One wanted to sit on the right and one on the left of Jesus in His glory. Jesus said to them in Mark 10:35-45, “It is not for me to give it to you.” In other words, I do not have the authority. He could not follow the orders of His Father God, and His Father God had not authorized Him to give those positions to those two disciples.

Were the desires of those disciples wrong? Was that such a wrong desire to sit at the right and at the left of Jesus? No. It showed a lot of zeal, but it also revealed a lot of pride. Was their initiative good? It was selfishly motivated. It is amazing, if you appeal to people's self, how fast you can get things done. Selfish motivation is: Give so you can get; minister so you can be honored, etc.

Again, God determines what we are going to have and what we shall not have. God is the One Who determines the gifts and our place in the Body of Christ, not we!

If you are under authority on a job, can you promote yourself? You cannot! Can you recognize yourself? You cannot! Except the authority recognizes you, you cannot be recognized. An authority always recognizes loyalty, faithfulness, integrity, etc. Authorities recognize self-sacrifice, not self-seeking, striving ambitious desires.

Jesus walked in the Spirit, listening to God rather than to man. Men came to Him with all kinds of wonderful ideas, but their motives were selfish. An "Is that going to benefit me?" attitude is selfish.

The disciples wanted Jesus to do certain things on various occasions. One time they wanted Him to make amends to the Pharisees and Saducees, church leaders with whom He had just had a confrontation and had offended. The disciples came to Him and said, "master, Master, don't you know that you offended those folks?" Jesus looked at them and said, "leave them alone!" They were trying to get Him to go back and make amends. He said, "Leave them alone!" In other words, "Quit it, guys. You are wrong. You missed it. Your initiative is not right. It is not spawned by the heart of God. You are not sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. I know they are offended, but it was the Word of God that offended them. If they are offended by the Word of God, they have a problem and I am not going to compromise. I am not going to whitewash it. You must line up with the Word of God if you are going to share the Word the way it should be shared. You should not be concerned about what people think or how their faces look when you are talking to them."

Jesus says, “Let the blind lead the blind and let them all fall in the ditch.” If that is what they want, let them fall in the ditch. They are going to fall together. Why? Because the blind are following the authorities who are blind rather than following the authorities who have the light and goodness in God.

If Jesus had listened to the disciples, what would He have done? He would have compromised the ministry of the Spirit of God. Jesus was under orders. No matter how they talked to Him, He could only do what His heavenly Father told Him to do.

Another time, Peter came to Him and said, “You do not have to go to the cross, Jesus.” Why did Peter say that? Because He loved Jesus, and he loved being with Him, and did not want Jesus to die and leave them. Do you see it? Selfishness! “What are we going to do if Jesus is not here?” Fear!

Before He left, Jesus made it clear who was going to be the authority and how it was going to work. Any good authority will do that. They do not leave without first delegating authority.

Throughout the Bible you see a lot of rebellion and usurping of authority. You see people trying to get their own way, trying to do their own thing. Again, God and God’s authority determine what each of us will do and how we will do it. (Note what happened to Miriam and Aaron [Numbers 12] and Korah [Numbers 16] who opposed Moses, and Absalom against David [2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 18]. God hates rebellion and will stamp it out.)

Another time, Jesus’ disciples came to Him and said, “Why do not you show yourself openly?” In other words, “Since God is doing all these great things through you, why do not you publicly let everyone know who you are and where you are going to be so that the work can increase?” What did they want? Recognition. “We hang around with that guy! We eat dinner with Him. We travel with Him. He does not teach the multitudes like He teaches us. He takes us aside and if we have personal questions, He will set time aside just for us but He will not for the multitudes. He does not teach the multitudes except in parables. He reveals things clearly to us but not to them.” Pride! Selfishness! Flesh!

Note Jesus' response when they suggested that He show Himself openly. He answered, "I am not ready." In other words, "I appreciate your initiative, even though it is flesh motivated, but my time is not yet." He then sent them off. He went one way, and they another. It is interesting that the Word says He went "privately."

God's way is not always the way that people want things to be done. Often people think, "You should be doing this, you should be doing that." That is what they were doing to Jesus all the time. Why were they saying, "You should?" It was for their own benefit. They took great pride in Jesus.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus was always teaching about humility? About washing one another's feet instead of trying to be lords of all? Stop trying to lord over people and learn how to wash their feet. "You who would be great in the kingdom of God, must be the servant of all." (Mark 10:44)

We note that Jesus acted on what God showed Him. He chose those whom God had chosen to be His disciples and for the task that He wanted accomplished. This is very important! Throughout the Bible, God chose. The Prophet of God came to Jesse and said, "One of your sons is going to be the next king." He had a handsome allotment of sons. Not only did they look good, but they were gifted. The Prophet looked at the first son and thought, "this has to be him." He was tall and good looking. He was strong and of good character. Operating in the flesh, the Prophet said, "This has to be him." Do you know what happened? God said, "no, that is not the one!" Many times we do not discern and judge the same as God.

Notice that the authority of God, who was the prophet in this case, could not put the kingly blessing on that first son. He could not because God's blessing was not on him. He went through the whole lot of sons and none of them had the blessing. How did he know? Because God was telling him which one was chosen, and he was not there. Then he asked Jesse, "Do you have any other boys?" Jesse answered, "Yes, I have one more and he is out tending the sheep." The prophet said, "Bring him to me." He anointed David to be the king.

You cannot choose something for yourself! You can decide that "I am going to be this or I am going to do that," however, it brings undue pressure that you and God's authorities do not need. Besides, God will not bless your

desire and it will not amount to anything. Why waste your time and effort if God is not in your undertaking? It will fail and you will be defeated if God is not in it. (Psalm 127:1-2)

We note that twelve disciples were chosen, hand picked by God. This is clearly evident in John 17:6 and following. Jesus was praying just before He went to be with the Father and said, “I have revealed You to those whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours.” Jesus was speaking to the heavenly Father saying, “They were Yours, and You gave them to Me. Father God. You picked these out for Me. You chose them.”

How did Jesus find them, and what did He do? He walked around, and when He came to one of them He said, “Follow Me.” And you know what they did? They dropped everything. They did not even have to ask why because they were chosen by God. Jesus, as the authority, simply came along and pulled them right out. That is the way it should be, just that simple. “They were Yours. You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your Word. Now they know that everything You have given me, comes from You.” (John 17:6-7)

Jesus gave them the Words that His Father had given Him, and they accepted them. “And they knew with certainty that I came from You and they believed that You sent Me. I pray for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours. All I have is Yours and all You have is Mine and glory comes to Me through them.” (John 17:8-10) Why? Because they did what they were supposed to do. They followed His leadership. They followed the authority that had been given by His Father. Now what did Jesus in turn, do? He said to the disciples, “Behold, I give to you authority, in My name.”

He spent more time with three of His disciples than with the others. He ministered to multitudes of people, but He never spent any time with them. Why? He was preparing those disciples for what was ahead. Was He showing partiality? No. God wanted Him to spend time with those three because they were going to be the leaders when He was gone. Did He choose those three? No. Could any of the twelve say that He was partial? No. He was following what God had given Him to do and working with the people that God had chosen.

No doubt, there were multitudes out there that wanted Him to work with them, but Jesus never spent time with individuals of the multitudes. In John 12:20 and following, we see that there were people who came to Him with questions, and do you know what? He started teaching on something totally different! Then it says, “He left and hid Himself from the multitudes.” Again, whose time was Jesus’ time? It was God’s time. He had to spend His time the way that God had set down for Him, God’s way.

Many times Jesus said, “Push off the boat.” He left the multitudes behind and often left the disciples in order to spend time alone with His heavenly Father. Why? Because His heavenly Father wanted that time spent with Him. It was God’s time. An authority is responsible to the one who has given the authority.

Because of their selfish desires, people wanted time with Jesus. To them, Jesus was just a man and they wanted time with Him. If they had known the Father, they would have wanted to spend time with the Father. People are always looking to spend time with the man. Now what is the man responsible to do? Direct them to God. This is why many times Jesus just left those people to find their own answers. How are they going to find their own answers? By seeking God.

However, when God directed, Jesus did spend time with people. The Bible records all kinds of questions asked by the multitudes. Some of them Jesus answered, and some He did not. Some He brushed aside, others He seemed to answer flippantly. His answers were not flippant, but exactly what they needed to hear.

We are to look to God, not God’s “persons.” Does God want “persons” to minister? He sure does. He uses every one of us in the way that He has determined. Never think that you do not need people who are tuned to God. The key is not to be tuned to the people. It is to be tuned to God and then God will direct you and use the people to His glory!

Jesus, not the people, determined how His time was spent. In other words, He was not afraid to say, “See you later,” and “Push off the boat.” When His Father said, “Go,” He went, and the multitudes followed! Jesus did not point the people to Himself. He was not the focal point. He pointed them to God. Jesus is our example for ministry.

## 8. DEALING WITH PRESSURE FROM PEOPLE

Jesus chose the disciples that God chose for Him. There were all kinds of other people around Him. We note that in John 17 as Jesus was praying, He said, “These that You have given to Me, I am now giving back to You. I have done what I was supposed to do with them. I have fulfilled my part with them.” Although Jesus ministered to multitudes, we noted earlier that He did not spend His time with the multitudes. He spent His time with the twelve, and out of those, three were chosen. Do you think the other nine wanted to get in on that? You bet they did. But did Jesus permit that? No. Why? It was not given to those other nine to come in. Were they apostles? Yes, they were, but Jesus was not to spend His time with them; only with those three.

God is the One who directs our time if we are yielded to Him. Jesus often left all kinds of other people around Him. We note that in John 17 as Jesus was praying, He said, “These that You have given to Me, I am now giving back to You. I have done what I was supposed to do with them. I have fulfilled my part with them.” Although Jesus ministered to multitudes, we note earlier that He did not spend His time with the multitudes. He spend His time with the twelve, and out of those, three were chosen. Do you think the other nine wanted to get in on that? You bet they did. But did Jesus permit that? No. Why? It was not given to those other nine to come in. Were they apostles? Yes, they were, but Jesus was not to spend His time with them; only with those three.

God is the One who directs our time if we are yielded to Him. Jesus often left all twelve disciples and He went off to spend time alone with His Father. When the Father wants time, you go and spend time with Him and leave the people. Jesus shoved off the boat and left multitudes on the bank. He recognized that their needs could wait until He got back. He also knew that He did not have to meet their needs because if those people would learn to believe God, they would learn that God would meet their needs.

Jesus only did and said what His heavenly Father gave Him to do and say. Any authority of God is under that kind of direction. That is the way each of our lives should be run. “Father God, what do You want me to do? How do You want me to spend my time today?” Ask Him, and He will show you. Ask God to direct your time. In other words, His ministry was not dictated

by what other people thought, or by what others thought He should do. In the same way, our lives should not be influenced by people. They should be directed by our Lord.

As we mentioned before, when people are trying to get their own way, pressure comes. Many times the pressure comes within ourselves when we try to be something we are not. The pressure comes right inside. Sometimes you may feel like you are going to pop! Some of that pressure has to be released, and many times the release really is not acceptable to the Lord. Many people just keep it all bottled up inside. They hold it too long rather than give it over to God.

I am the servant of all men, but under the direction of my heavenly Father as He leads. Do you think the disciples got all upset when they wanted to spend time with Jesus, and He took off? I suppose they did at times. They were striving. They were jealous. They were envious. They were prideful. I know how those guys reacted. They stopped men from ministering in the name of Jesus and doing work for God because they did not travel with their group. They looked at their group as an elite one. They were taking glory in following after Jesus. They walked and talked with Him. “We are the inner circle,” was their attitude.

Jesus was teaching men and women to go to the heavenly Father. He even told them in John 16 before He ascended, “do not pray to Me. Pray to the heavenly Father now in My name, for the heavenly Father Himself loves you.”

This is why I cannot understand how people think that they can pray to Jesus or to other people who have died. Jesus Himself said, “you go to the heavenly Father Himself in My name, and that is the only way to the Father.”

God chooses people at His discretion. Do you think the people of Israel were upset because Moses was chosen to lead them? They sure were. They were continually challenging his authority. At one point, Miriam said, “Well, who is Moses anyway? He’s our brother, but God speaks to us also.” Well, God shows very clearly in the text who Moses was. Moses was God’s anointed chosen vessel for the flow of the Spirit of God. God does not tolerate rebellion against His authorities. Miriam ended up with leprosy.

God then showed mercy because of Moses. Displaying the compassion and mercy of God, Moses prayed that God would heal her. God permitted leprosy to stay on her body for seven days. Do you know why? So she would never do it again!

Do not go against God's authority. When you are in rebellion, you open yourself up to the devil. You get out of line. Note: You get yourself out of line. Nobody makes you get out of line. The devil cannot even get you out of line with God if you do not want to be disobedient. The devil appeals to our pride to cause us to fall.

Jesus operated by the Spirit of God. He let God determine His time. People in the flesh wanted His time, and if God directed it, Jesus spent that time with them. This does not mean that Jesus was separate from the people. He spent a lot of time with the people, but He did not let them dictate how His time was spent.

Jesus always pointed people, not to Himself, but to God. False prophets draw people to themselves and seek glory from men. A true teacher does not want any glory from men. They want all the glory to go to God. He uses them as a vessel for the flow of His Holy Spirit and as a point of contact for the ministry of the Spirit of God. But note: No true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to seek any glory for himself, or seek to attach people to himself. You are God's people! God showed me a long time ago that these are God's people. They are not mine! They are His!

God sends people to us that He wants us to minister to, to teach, to equip. He wants us to be the vessels for their healing and for their deliverance. God sends people to us. You just did not get this book on your own. Glory to God! God put it in your heart to read this book. Give glory to God that you were yielded to the Spirit of God. He could tell you to go some place and you could refuse to go. Praise God, you were yielded today.

Jesus pointed people to God, not to Himself. When one is under authority, one follows orders, nothing more or less. This is how Jesus operated. He did not do or say anything on His own. That is why He told those fellows, "I cannot give you a place on My left or on My right." God would tell Him who to choose, if that is what God wanted to do. These men were hand picked by the heavenly Father. As Jesus walked and came across them, the

Spirit of God rose up inside of Him and said, “Choose him.” And Jesus simply said, “follow Me.” This was not just on Jesus’ heart. Those men dropped everything! They dropped their boats and nets right there on the spot and followed Him.

Matthew left all the tax money sitting right there at his little booth, and it was probably a sizeable sum. He did not even take any thought about it, but just got up and left. Why? Because his spirit bore witness that he was chosen of God for that work. When the authority of God was moving in Jesus at that point and He said, “Follow Me,” that man already knew it. “That’s me. I’m going.” And away he went. This is how it works. That is why God moves through His authorities first. The authority of God will know what is right and what is pleasing to His heavenly Father.

Many people get ideas like, “I feel strongly that I ought to be a teacher and I believe you ought to help me set up meetings.” What is going to happen? Well, if that does not bear witness with the authority, it is not going to get off the ground. You can go to any authority you choose and God will speak to that person and say, “You are not ready.” But when the time is right, the authority of God, God and your spirit will bear witness, and that is when things will start to happen.

Again, when one is under authority, one follows orders; nothing more, nothing less. This is how Jesus operated.

In Luke 12, one fellow came and said, “Master, come and help me divide my inheritance with my brother.” That is very interesting. They wanted Jesus to get involved in their affairs. (Many of God’s people would save themselves a whole lot of trouble if they would keep out of other people’s business. When people come seeking help, ask God, “God, what do You want me to do, if anything?”

Let me explain what kind of a situation that was. Settling an inheritance usually means dealing with greed, jealousy, envy, bitterness, hatred, pride. And here was a man saying, “Jesus, come and help divide the inheritance with my brother.” Let me tell you, Jesus knew the verse that says, “he who meddles in another man’s strife takes a dog by the ear.” He knew better than to get Himself in the middle of that one. And He also, I believe, asked His heavenly Father what He wanted Him to do. His heavenly Father said,

“Forget it.” What did Jesus proceed to say? “You go back and work it out with your brother. That’s between you and him alone.” In other words, He was not going to get into that. His heavenly Father did not want Him in that, and His Spirit did not want involvement with that. God was leading and directing.

Was Jesus being unjust to those men? No. He was simply telling them one of the finest principles that anyone could ever teach. “You go and straighten it out and get it worked out yourselves.” In other words, “you have the ability to work it out. God will help you, if you ask!” And you know what that involves? It involves a little humbling of yourself. It involves a little giving of yourself. It involves loving, sharing, trusting God. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Idolatry is what the Bible calls greed. Jesus refused to be pressured by men’s desires for themselves. In other words, this fellow had a selfish desire. He wanted to get as much as he could out of that inheritance. He figured if he got Jesus to agree with him, his brother would back off. Jesus refused to let others pressure Him for their own selfish purposes.

There are certain things that we all want. A lot of those things, if we would ask God about them and turn them over to God, we would not want anymore. Many of those things are selfish and they are standing in the way. We do not need them, and should get rid of them. They are not profitable. They drag us down. The next thing you know, those things become an obsession, and close behind an obsession comes a devil saying, “I have to have it. I have to have it. I have to do it.” And before you realize it, you are in bondage to whatever it is.

When God had Jesus tell Peter to “Feed My sheep, feed My lambs.” Jesus was speaking as the authority of God telling Peter what he was supposed to do. Why? He had been with Jesus for a long time and in the spirit, things start to bond up really well.

In John 21:15 and following, Jesus is reinstating Peter after he had denied Him three times. And so, three times, Jesus told Peter to “Feed My sheep, feed My lambs.” After the third time, Peter broke down because it finally dawned on him. The first time, Peter said, “Yes, Lord, You know I love You.” The third time, Peter broke down and repentance came forth from his

heart. He had made many flippant statements about his faith in God throughout the time that Jesus was with him. Then, when the time came that Jesus really needed him, he disappeared. All those confessions of faith that he had made before, were empty; they were nothing. It finally dawned on him, "I cannot make these empty confessions of faith any more." God loved him and he realized that God had forgiven him. What happened then? Jesus told him what he was to do, and Peter was hurt.

In verse 17, Jesus was asking for the third time, "Do you love Me?" Peter was hurt now. Glory to God when people get hurt! I am not referring to sickness and disease. I am talking about being cut to the quick because they know they are out of line with God, and something has to give. They are hurt. That is godly repentance. It hurts. It does hurt, but if you yield to it, your life is going to be changed like it never was before. It is pride that hinders us. Peter was loaded with pride. But when he was humbled, he saw what he was doing. Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." The Lord could not use Peter in the way He wanted to until that pride was broken!

In verse 20 (paraphrased), Jesus had just told Peter what he was supposed to do, and Peter looked over and saw John. Peter asked, "Master, what about him? What is he supposed to be doing?" Do you know why Peter asked that? Possibly because he wanted to make sure that John was not going to do anything more than what he was going to do. Also, sometimes people are just nosey about things that are none of their business. People do this time and time again. They are always looking to see what somebody else is doing. That is jealousy. That is envy. It leads to strife. It leads to an unworthiness in yourself where you cannot operate in what God has given you to do because you are thinking, "It is not important. It is not good. It is not special enough." As a result, you miss out on what God would have you do in the freedom which God wants you to have.

Jesus came back to Peter and said, "Peter, it is none of your business what John is going to do. It is not for you to know. You do what I have given you to do and let John do what My heavenly Father has appointed him to do." Do what you are given to do and do not try to do what somebody else has been given to do. Do what God has given you to do. Be faithful about it, and be content in it!

The flesh is nose. We always want to know, “What is your ministry?” The church, the religious leaders, did not recognize Jesus’ ministry. They did not recognize the authority that the Father God had given to Him. Why not? All the people had recognized the authority that the heavenly Father had given Him. Why did not the church leaders? Because of their jealousy, envy, strife and pride.

God confirms His Word with signs and wonders following. He works with His ministries. They are co-laborers. They work together with signs and wonders following. In due time, if you are called of God and anointed of God, He is going to give the increase, and everyone will recognize it. Glory to God!

Jesus Himself, as He walked the earth, was accountable to His heavenly Father. Everyone is accountable to authority, and authorities are accountable to God. Husbands are accountable to God as to how they deal with their wives and children. Employers are accountable to God for how they deal with their employees. The government authorities are accountable to God for how they lead their country. All authority is accountable to God, to the One who gave the authority.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:1-7, Paul says that all that matters in a servant is that he be found faithful. Faithful to whom? To the one he serves. Paul was a servant to the Lord God of Hosts. Everyone was judging his ministry, saying that he was a lesser apostle, that he did not have the authority to do what he was doing. His response was simply, “All that matters is that I be found faithful. Not faithful to you, but faithful to God.” Let me tell you, as he was faithful to God, then he was also faithful to the people. If I am faithful to God, then I will be faithful to you. If you are faithful to God, then you will be faithful to me. That is how it works.

Paul went on to say, “I do not care about your judgment of me.” In other words, “I do not care if you think my ministry is valid or not.” He said, “And I do not even judge myself about that.” He did what God had given him to do. God will judge.

Anyone who is an authority of God was given that position by God. Most of them on their own, did not seek it because there is a tremendous responsibility that goes with it, tremendous blessings, but also tremendous

responsibilities. Paul was simply saying, “Friends, I love you, and I am just doing what God has given me to do in the way that God has given me to do it.” I do not care about your judgment on me. I do not even judge myself on these matters. Some day, I am going to stand before my Father God and He is going to tell me whether I have done right or wrong. In the meantime, friends, I love you, but why do not you mind your own business and do what God has given you to do and let me do what He has given me to do.” At the end of Galatians 6, he says, “I bear in my body the marks of Christ. You quit this nonsense towards me.”

The Word tells us that we should not regard men more highly than we ought. It says, “What can a man do except that which has been given him?” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:6-7) If God has given gifts to a person, he cannot take any praise for the gifts, and no one should give any praise to the person for the gifts because they were given. The praise should always go to God for what God is doing through that person. That keeps everything in balance, and in proper perspective.

When you are preferring people, looking to people, running to people, then you are carnal. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:5 says that one was of Paul, and one was of Apollos, intimating that one was better than the other. That was carnal. The scripture goes on to say, “who is Peter, who is Paul, who is Apollos? But co-laborers with God. It is God who gives the increase.” Do not get puffed up in what God has given you to do. Do not let that happen. Pride comes before the fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

“Well, God, I want a world-wide ministry.” Do you know what? Unless God gives you a world-wide ministry, you cannot take it to yourself! “Well, I have learned a lot about faith, and I can believe God for it.” The way the Bible reads, “Except God has called you” to a world-wide vision, you will never have one.

There may be a pastor in the Midwest with a ministry to a dozen people; and that is all the growth his ministry has experienced. What will happen when he stands before God? There were not 5,000 or 100,000 reached by his ministry. Let me tell you, if God called him to that place to minister to those twelve people, and he ministered faithfully under the anointing of the Spirit of God, then he is going to receive just as great a reward when he stands before God as the man who ministered to millions. In other words, what

matters is that we are faithful in what God has given us to do; no more and no less. If we are faithful with little, then God will increase, but that is not for us, nor for anyone else, to determine.

God has something very special for each of you, too, as a part of the work of God. We need to be content with the gifts and the place that God has given to us. We need to be content. God gives the increase, and it is up to Him. If God has put it on your heart to pray, and to pray, and to pray, give glory to God. That is what you are supposed to do. Be faithful, and do it!

If God has given you a ministry of giving, then give; and give thankfully, generously to the Lord. If God has put it on your heart to be a helper, do not start taking the initiative on your own and decide that you are going to do this or that. Ask the authority what needs to be done, and get direction concerning what you are to do. When we try to make something happen on our own, nothing but pressure develops inside of us. Nothing but strife results.

Do not ever feel that you are not needed. Everyone is needed in the work God gave each one to do. Thank You, Jesus. God needs each one of us to do what we are appointed to do by Him in His Body.

Prayer: Father, in Jesus' name, help me to simply be faithful to do what You have given me to do, no more and no less. I desire simply to be faithful to You. Thank You that You are showing me clearly what I am to do, and You are enabling me to do it to Your glory, and the good of Your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## 9. COMMITTING TO A VISION

“My son, I am well pleased with you. For not a Word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground. Every Word which I have spoken to your heart and every Word that I have spoken to you in secret shall be shown openly before men, and shall be displayed as My power and My glory. You have been diligent and humble before Me and as you will continue (and I am confident, as a Father is confident in His son, that you will continue to walk humbly before Me, your God), all those things shall come to pass as a mighty display of My power. You shall go forth and show forth the praises of Me, and you shall show forth My power and you shall be a mighty warrior in My army, saith the Lord.

I speak to you people, too. The Lord has a warning that you shall receive from My ministers as from My own hand. Do not say, ‘They are just men.’ You are all men, but when he ministers under My anointing, receive it as from My own hand. Do not look that it is from Randy, but receive it as from Jesus Christ Himself. Receive him. As you receive him that way, you will be blessed, for you will receive from Me. Do not put him on a pedestal, but receive him as Me, and you shall see My mighty power displayed in mighty ways. Do not reason in your minds. Let your spirit rule you.”

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:15-18, Paul speaks about some of the workers in his time, and their commitment to his ministry. I say “his,” because God gave it to him. We know very well that it was not Paul’s ministry because it was Jesus working through him. Any minister of God, if he is a true minister of God, is going to tell you the same thing; “It is not me, it is Jesus.” We will simply refer to it as “his” ministry because God gives to different individuals in the Body different kinds of ministry, different operations, yet the same Spirit working. This is the ministry that Paul was called to do and he was faithful in doing it.

In any ministry that is anointed of God, He will call up laborers to work with those to whom He has given a vision. God knows they cannot do it alone, and the Body was never intended to have super stars. The Body is to work together with each part doing what they have been given to do. When that happens, the unity of the body increases and more gets done to God’s glory.

Look at the commitment that these people had concerning Paul's ministry. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:13-14 says, "What you have heard from me keepeth the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

Verse 15: "You know that everyone in the Province of Asia has deserted me including Phygellus and Hermogenes." (These two men must have been real close to him because he specifically singles them out.) He says, "Everyone deserted me in Asia."

Verse 16: "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus as he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains." He is one who stuck with him. Everyone else took off.

Verse 17: "On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me." This man was so committed that he searched until he found Paul. Note where he had to find him – where the prison was located.

Verse 18: "May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well in how many ways he helped me at Ephesus."

On one hand we see a group that was really faithful and loyal, and on the other hand we find the deserters, some of whom were faithful at the outset but were later side-tracked. Some probably decided that they were going to take off on their own ministry. Others were side-tracked by other things.

How did this affect the work Paul was doing? It was slowed down. I will never say it stopped because a man of God who has a vision from God cannot be stopped. Why? God is fighting for him and God is with him. But how much better is it when all those who are obedient to the Spirit of God are committed to and get behind the vision, and make it happen! A lot of visions are slowed down because the people are not obedient to the Spirit of God and do not involve themselves.

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:9-18: "Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia." Take a look at Demas. He was spoken of very highly by Paul in another book, and yet we find here

that he became unfaithful, not only to Paul, but also to Jesus Christ. I am bold to say that if God put it in their hearts to follow Paul and they decided to go somewhere else, they were disobedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. I say this because Jesus is the One who places people together for a work that He wants to accomplish. Who is the head of the Church? Jesus. Who is the giver of the gifts in this Church? Jesus. Who is the One who places people together for the work that He would accomplish? Jesus.

Demas, because he loved this world, had deserted Paul. He loved the world more than he loved Jesus, and so became unfaithful and parted from the ways, and the work of God. Not only did he abandon the work of God, he left the Body of Christ. When the Bible speaks about a believer going back to the world, it is not referring to backsliding. It denotes his departure.

Verse 11: “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”

I love this one because Mark is the same fellow that Paul referred to years before when he said, “Leave him behind with Barnabas. I do not want to take Mark. He is unprofitable to us. One day, hot for the Lord, and the next day going back. He is not consistent. I do not want to take anyone who is going to be a burden. We would have to spend more time with Mark than the work. I want workers I can count on and do not have to be ashamed of, nor hindered by what they do.”

Apparently something happened with Mark during this period of time. Earlier, Paul and Barnabas had split up over Mark. Paul knew where he was going, he knew what had to be done, and he did not want any heavy baggage to weigh him down. His concern was a quick spreading of the ministry of the Word. Barnabas, on the other hand, was given a different ministry and goal in the gifts that God had put in his heart. He was willing to take Mark and make him into someone profitable. His concern was to develop a minister, as he had earlier helped Paul.

Paul would then later say, “Send him. I want him, he is going to be a great profit to me here now.” We have to understand that in the different ministries, God has put a different anointing on different individuals. Some fellows will just not take the time to work with people and train them. Now that is not their fault, nor their problem. They must do what they are given

to do. Others have been given the desire and ability to equip and develop believers that will become profitable. I would be very slow to judge Paul or Barnabas as to who was right or wrong. Their goals were different: Paul (the ministry), Barnabas (the minister). Apparently, God furthered both goals as they split up!

Throughout the Bible, we see that all the people whom God used mightily were basically “nobodies.” God did not choose them because they had some great ability.

Verse 12: “I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus at Troas and my scrolls, especially the parchments.” What we see here is a team working. Paul is giving orders and commands. Others are doing what he says, bringing what he requested, and sending for people whom he needs. It is time that we get diligent!

Verse 14: “Alexander, the metalworker, did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.” (I do not need to, you do not need to. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.) “You too, should be on your guard against him because he strongly opposed our message.” When people are strongly opposing a message of God, they need to be dealt with and avoided, if possible.

Verse 16: “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.” Well, Paul had about the same track record that Jesus did. They did the same thing to Him. “May it not be held against them. Forgive them.” That is what he did, and said. “God, let it not be so the next time. Give them grace, or ability so that the next time, they stand their ground. Let them know, God, that they do not have to run anymore. Let them be willing to suffer, to give up their own lives for Your sake. They do not have to run.” Thank You, Jesus. Who stands fast with His people? God does. If we do not compromise God’s Word, God fights for us and we cannot lose.

Verse 17: “And the Lord stood at my side.” Everyone else had deserted him, but the Lord stood with him. “And gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear.” In other words, the work of God cannot be stopped. Many people are going to lose a lot of rewards, but the work of God cannot be stopped. If you are not willing to be used of God, He will call up a rock! Someone is going to

be raised up! Verse 17 continues: “And I was delivered from the mouth of the lion.”

Verse 18: “And the Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.” That is a real profession of faith. “And the Lord is going to rescue me from every evil work that comes against me.” That is so true. We cannot be stopped! We cannot be defeated! The work of God will go on! It will go on stronger and stronger every day, because He is in front and He is behind, and He is all around His work. Thank You, Jesus.

Philippians 2:14 and following: “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure. Children of God, without fault, in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like the stars in the universe as you hold out the Word of Life in order that I may boast on the day of Christ, that I did not run or labor for nothing.”

Verse 17: “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too, should be glad and rejoice with me.” Do you know what kind of word spreads the fastest? The bad words. But glory to God, the Word spreads! God says that He will take that negative report and turn it around to the praise of His glory. One of the finest places you can be is in a source of controversy; then you are going some place! It is God Who is moving when you become controversial because of the Word of God and the signs and wonders that follow His Word. Love is controversial.

Verse 19: “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.” Paul knew that Timothy could be entrusted just as if he were there himself. He just said the “key.” Paul was not interested in himself! He was committed to the vision of God!

If you are going to be used of the Lord, you must fade into the woodwork, where it is not you anymore. Your desires, your wishes, your wants are gone! Ministering is not some ego trip. People who are on an ego trip cause division, getting puffed up about themselves and what they are doing. Then they want to do more. Well, no one does more unless God tells the leaders what they are to do!

Timothy was special. “I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.” In other words, he was more concerned about those people growing in the Lord than about anything else.

There are a lot of people ministering, and we know that many of them are not doing it out of proper motivation. Paul ran into that in Philippians 1. He was sitting in prison for the sake of Jesus Christ and other ministers on the outside were bad mouthing him, and undermining his ministry. Paul said, “I do not care. Whether they preach Christ out of true or false motivation, I do not care, as long as Christ is being preached!”

Who is going to have to deal with the motivation of their hearts some day? Each individual has to contend with God about the motivation of his heart. But do you know what? I can guarantee you that any authority, or true minister of God is not going to entrust any responsibility to someone who they cannot trust. (Proverbs 25:19) Even though a person is eventually accountable to God concerning their motives, that person will be dealt with now by God’s authorities.

Verse 21: “For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” Is that a judgmental statement? Did Paul have a right to say that? When the going got rough, everyone fled. They deserted him. What does that say about the motivation of their hearts? It was not set on the furtherance of the Good News of Jesus. It was not set on being faithful to one of God’s ordained servants. It was selfish, self-centered. They were looking out for themselves and their own interests.

Verse 22: “But you know that Timothy proved himself.” (there is a powerful statement.) “Because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel.” Anyone who is going to be used of God has to grow up. They must be instructed and led of God, as a father leads a son. He stuck with him. Timothy proved himself. He stuck with Paul and did not desert him.

Verse 23: “I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; and I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow

worker and fellow soldier who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs.”

The church had sent this man to walk with Paul and help in his work. They were supporting the work by sending laborers. He became ill. Some point this out as if a servant of God cannot get sick. A servant of God can get sick, but he can get well too! Those people never quote verse 26: “For he longs for all of you in his distress because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill and almost died, but God had mercy on him and not on him only, but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.” In other words, he was healed! He got going again! Thank You, Jesus.

Verse 28: “Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.” There is a lot of care upon a person who is responsible for other people. I am not saying that I worry or am anxious about the people in my ministry; but there is responsibility. How wonderful it is to know that I have people I can count on. Like Paul was saying, “I can count on this man.” What joy and freedom there is to go about the work of God knowing that somebody is not knifing you in the back; and is actually looking to build up the vision and the working of God, not getting all puffed up and thinking, “Well, I have my own vision.” Getting behind a vision and working with it to God’s glory causes something to happen. If God has given you a vision, be about it. However, do not undermine someone else’s to build yourself up. That is betrayal. God’s visions work together.

Judas, one of the twelve, betrayed Jesus with a kiss. He sold Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver. How far can thirty pieces of silver go? What about all the wonderful blessings and the work of God that this man had seen? He decided that he was going to head off anyway.

Peter and the rest of the disciples declared, “Lord, we will follow you anywhere.” Jesus said to Peter, “You are going to deny me three times before the cock crows twice.” Peter responded, “Oh, no, Lord. I will never do that.” It is also recorded that all the others said, “Oh, no, Lord, we will never desert You.” What did they end up doing? They ran off at the first sign of trouble. These were men who had seen the work of God time and time again. They saw the ministry of God’s Spirit through Jesus. They saw

the anointing of God. They knew who Jesus was. They knew His purpose and plan, and they still ran off.

Later, they came back, when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane before God in such intense intercession. His sweat was as blood coming out of His veins, pouring right through His skin, it was so intense. When He came to those disciples two or three times, what does He find them doing? Sleeping! They were not diligent.

He said, “Could you not stay up one hour and watch with Me? Could you not stand with Me at this difficult time?” They stood with Him during the good times when all the blessings were coming down and they saw all the miracles. They stood with Him watching Him turn the wisdom of their enemies into foolishness by the Spirit of God. They stood with Him all those times, but when the going got the toughest, when Jesus needed them there, they let Him down.

People would say, “Well, He is Jesus. He has God. He does not need anybody.” And I have said that many times. And you know why I have said that? Because I had to learn the hard way that when you stand for God, oftentimes you stand alone with God. Any minister of God has to learn to stand alone with God. And once you learn that and are not depending on others or yourself, then God will send you people to stand with you. But if you are always looking for people, then you are going to fall. You have to learn that fact.

Jesus knew that His Father God was the One standing there with Him. But what was He doing? He was encouraging those disciples to watch and pray with Him for one hour. One hour, and they could not even stay awake. They could not work with Him.

Jesus was trying to teach those disciples that the day was going to come when they were going to be in the same position that He was in. They would need people agreeing with them at that time. Ten of those original disciples were martyred, suffering horrible deaths; sawed in two, crucified upside down. One of them was put into a pot of oil to burn, but he just bubbled back up to the top and all kinds of people fell on their faces and received the Lord. They concluded, “We have to get rid of this one.” So they exiled him.

God looks for nobodies, and He makes them somebody. He looks for them to stand with His ministers, standing in agreement; and that is when the power of God starts to move.

Matthew 10:40-42: “He who receives you, receives me. And he who receives me, receives the One who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet, will receive a prophet’s reward. And anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. And if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

God told me this: “My son, you are going to see greater things than you have ever seen before in the ministry thus far.” I could not figure out what He was talking about because we have seen such mighty things that I do not know what more we could see. I started to laugh, and I said, “What do you mean, Lord?” Then He started to laugh and said, “You are going to see more of it.” And do you know what? It is waiting on faithful laborers to come forth. Praise God, they are coming!

God’s people are at every meeting that we have. The workers are there at every meeting. They are not missing anything. They have made a commitment to the Body of Christ, and to the work of God. They have committed themselves to the vision. Have you made a similar commitment? If not, but you have that desire, simply say to the Lord: “I need to make that commitment, to be faithful; not to be floating around, but to get some roots down solid. I am going to be a part of the work of God, here in this vision or in another. Lord, direct me and help me to be faithful.”

When you are in the right place with God, then you will have peace and those around you will be blessed. You and everyone else will know that you are doing what God would have you do, for His blessing will be on your work.

Hebrews 13:17 talks about obeying those who have been given charge over you, submitting yourself to that leadership. By doing so, that person who is in leadership has to give an account some day for you. The Word says to be obedient to that leadership and to be submitted to it so when that day comes

that person might be able to give his report to God with joy and not with sorrow, for that is unprofitable to you.

Are you committed to a vision?