



Ministry Minded

Discovering and employing my gifts to serve the body of Christ and the world

When most of us think of ministry, we think of the work done by pastors, missionaries, Christian conference speakers, or evangelists. Somehow in America we have the notion that the church is divided into two halves: those who “do” ministry (the pastors and staff) and those to whom the ministry is “done” (the members of the church). However, this limited idea of ministry is inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture. A proper understanding of ministry will help us find a greater fulfillment in life as we begin to see all that we do as opportunities to glorify God and serve others.

Q: What do you tend to think of when you hear the word “ministry?”

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a minister even though you are not employed by a church?

The Greek word in the New Testament that we most often translate as “ministry” carries the basic meaning of “service.” It can be used of tasks as basic as waiting tables (Acts 6:1), caring for the poor through monetary gifts (2 Corinthians 9:12), or proclaiming the gospel (Acts 20:24). The important thing to note about the use of the term is that the term is not limited to a select few individuals who hold a particular position within a church. All of God’s people are called to serve in a variety of ways. Ministry is what happens when God’s people utilize their gifts and abilities to serve others in ways that bring God glory, build up His church, and reach out to the world.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Q: According to the above, what are we saved “by?” And what are we saved “for?”

Notice how there is nothing that we can do on our own to earn God's grace, His unmerited favor or unconditional acceptance. However, there is an interesting comparison that is being made in these two verses. Verses 8-9 clearly state that we are not saved BY good works, however verse 10 states that we were saved FOR good works. The fact is that God has ordained "good things" (ministry) for life, and He has even gone before us and prepared the way for us to minister.

The ultimate example of being ministry minded is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus set aside the glory that was due Him and took the form of a bondservant. He was others-oriented. Jesus' entire existence on earth, including His work on the cross was a selfless act of obedience to the Father. In John 17:4 Jesus says, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." If you find it too difficult to relate to the ministry of Jesus, consider Timothy. In Philippians 2:19-21, Paul sends Timothy to the church at Philippi because he is a kindred spirit who will look after the church's needs rather than his own. Looking after the needs of others provided Timothy with plenty of opportunities for ministry.

STRIVING TOWARDS A MINISTRY FOCUSED LIFE

The core ingredient of a ministry focused life is spiritual gifts. Each member of the body of Christ has been given a spiritual gift. These gifts are given supernaturally by God and not through asking or wanting. Gifts are also not given to make individuals look good, even though the selfish nature of man often abuses them.

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Q: According to these verses, what are some of the reasons why God gives spiritual gifts to believers?

According to Ephesians 4, God gave leaders to the church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Therefore, some of the primary responsibilities of the leaders at Mars Hill are to help you identify your gifts, train you to serve, and make sure there are opportunities for you to serve both inside and outside the church body. Just as each individual has a distinct fingerprint, every believer also has a distinct ministry fingerprint. Beginning with spiritual gifts and supported by our interests (talents, skills, passions, personality, and experience), each believer has an endless number of ministry opportunities.

Final Thoughts

- At Mars Hill, we want all members to experience the power of God working through them as they use their gifts and abilities to serve others.
- In order to become ministry focused, we must choose the eternal over the temporal, realizing that God wants us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.
- If you were only given one more year to live, what in your life would you change in order to be more ministry focused?

Personal Application: Are you Ministry Focused?

1. Do I view myself as a “minister of the Gospel?” Do I focus on ways that I can serve others, or do I expect the church to do this work?
2. If I were to leave Mars Hill one year from now, would my absence create a void in a particular ministry?
3. Do I know what my spiritual gifts are? If so, how am I using them?
4. What do I think about when I hear the term “good works?”

Examples of personal goals to help you become Ministry Focused

1. Take a spiritual gifts assessment. / Ask others what spiritual gifts they have observed in your life (see the following page for a list of common spiritual gifts).

*If you are interested, you can contact the church office for access to an online Spiritual Gifts test.

2. Serve in one of the essential ministries of the church (children’s ministry, student ministry, campus impact, etc.).
3. Complete a Bible study of Jesus’ life making careful note of how he was “ministry focused.”
4. Do a Bible study on the spiritual gifts.
5. Seek out a younger believer to disciple.
6. Take some time to spend alone with God. Pray for God to show you opportunities to use your gifts, both in the church and the community.

7. Look over your budget and gauge how much of your resources are going to support God's work. Align your budget in a way that you can make an impact in God's work with your finances.
8. Read three (3) biographies a year on Christians who made an impact for God in their life.
9. Pray that God would make you sensitive to the opportunities you have each day to minister to someone in the workplace.
10. Take a meal to someone who is hurting.
11. Invite a person from church, your neighborhood, or your work that is new to the area over to your house for a meal.
12. Aside from giving to the church and other ministries, set aside a "miscellaneous" fund each month that you can use for a need that someone suddenly has.
13. Take a week of vacation and use it to serve God somewhere.
14. Take responsibility to organize meals for someone who has a need (i.e. new baby, hospitalization, etc...)
15. Offer to baby-sit for a couple you know so they can take a date night.
16. Be willing to share your personal resources (car, truck, lake house, etc.) to help someone in need.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LIST

Though this list is not exhaustive, the following are known spiritual gifts listed in scripture. Some of these may be natural abilities for you, but a spiritual gift is only present due to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to carry out the purpose of God through you:

Administration: To plan, organize and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the church

Creative Ability: To use creative abilities such as music, writing, drama, painting, etc. for the benefit of the church

Discernment: To distinguish between truth and error and to be able to discern the difference between good and evil spirits

Encouragement: To present God's truth to strengthen, comfort or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering

Evangelism: To effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship

Faith: To act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in God's ability to fulfill his purposes

Giving: To contribute money and resources to the work of the Lord with a giving heart and positive attitude

Hospitality: To care for people by providing fellowship, food and shelter

Intercession: To recognize the prayer needs of others and consistently pray for them

Leadership: To motivate, lead, and direct people to accomplish the purposes of God

Mercy: To cheerfully, compassionately, and practically help those who are in need or are suffering

Prophecy: To reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance or edification

Service: To possess the grace to minister to the needs of the body, both spiritually and physical

Shepherding: To nurture, care for and guide people toward ongoing spiritual maturity

Teaching: To understand, clearly explain, instruct and apply the word of God