

COURSE 119

DISCOVERING AND FULFILING YOUR MINISTRY

(A Teaching Note of the Global School of Ministry, London, England and Waxahachie, Texas)

Text: **Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:8-11; Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12; John 15:16; Luke 22:24-27**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The critical difference between a Kingdom minded church and a denominational one is the issue of concept of ministry. A Kingdom minded church will be one where the Church is presented as the Body of Christ. Since it is a Body, the real Head is Christ and every one of the redeemed is gifted by the Holy Spirit to function optimally to contribute to its health. This by no means implies there will be no leadership. Rather, the Kingdom minded Church is conscious of the need to live according to the Word of God. The Word specifically pinpoints the ministry of leaders – the five-fold: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers – as that of “equipping the saints” or perfecting them for the work of the ministry. In other words, the work of the ministry is to be done by brethren in the household of faith rather than just the leaders themselves. This establishes the fact that the Church is designed to function as a living, loving organism rather than an impersonal human or religious organisation. Until this simple truth is discovered and put into practice, the Church of Jesus Christ will remain immature and an ineffective witness of the risen Christ before a sceptical world.

A. OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF MINISTRY

In the Old Testament there was an especially dedicated priestly caste that descended from Aaron the brother of Moses. This exclusive priestly caste had special access to God while the general congregation were far from Him. Many believers are caught up in the Old Testament concept of ministry. This paradigm is severely defective because it keeps the majority of the church in the pews while a tiny class of people are available to serve on a full-time basis as a vocation - **Exodus 28, 29**.

B. NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF MINISTRY

In the New Testament the ground norm of ministry is “expression of that with which we are impressed with”. In other words whenever Christians bring forth the gifts that the Holy Spirit imparted within them, or serve other brethren or even meet needs of their community or humanity, they are engaged in ministry. Ministry therefore is not an organisational construct, neither is it the collar that a select few wear. The Church is not an organisation but a living organism in which all the members are like the cells of a body that are designed to contribute to the overall wellness and proper functioning of the entire body. The scriptures are very clear on how God intends the Body of Christ, the Church, to be structured and operated - **Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:8-11**.

A critical preparation for ministry is the thirst, preparation for and receiving of the endowment of power from on high, with the subsequent manifestation of spiritual gifts - **Acts 1:5-8**. It is vitally important however to state clearly that New Testament ministry is about serving God and His people and not an opportunity to join an exclusive priestly class - **Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-7**.

C. WHAT IS MINISTRY ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Ministry is not a title, nor the exclusive right of a priestly class. Ministry is rather a summary of these issues:

1. The expression of what we are impressed with - **1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10-11**.

2. The release of grace, virtue, wisdom and divine abilities deposited within our spirit man.
3. Serving the Lord and His people as well as our community - **Luke 22:24-27**.
4. Meeting the needs of other people or providing solutions to problems utilising the grace of God.
5. Every true child of God is called to ministry. Ministry is not about titles; it is who we are and what we do according to the new covenant that is established by the blood of Jesus Christ. We have been given the ministry or reconciliation - **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**.

D. THE BASIS OF MINISTRY

True New Testament ministry rests on these pillars:

1. The calling of all Saints - **John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Peter 2:9**.
2. The outward working of the indwelling Holy Spirit - **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**.
3. The wellness and proper functioning of the body of Christ is guaranteed only when believers release their gifts and callings to build up and edify others - **Ephesians 4:11-16**. The Church is not an organisation but a living organism.

Every Christian is called into ministry. This is the distinguishing feature of the New Testament priesthood as opposed to the restrictive extreme hierarchical structure of the old order. The scriptures affirm with clear and vivid language that as Christ consummated His sacrifice at the cross of Calvary, the veil of the tabernacle which symbolised separation between God and man and entrenched a priestly caste that could approach God on behalf of men, was rent into two - **Matthew 27:50-51**.

As Jesus hung on the cross between heaven and earth in the full glare of Jews, Gentiles, religious people, stark sinners, men, women, old and young, a new pathway was made through which all humanity could access the Throne of Grace, even through the broken body of Jesus Christ - **Hebrews 10:19-22**.

E. SPIRITUAL DNA

In the natural realm, every human being has what is called a DNA. Here is how Wikipedia describes the human DNA:

“Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is a [nucleic acid](#) that contains the [genetic](#) instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living [organisms](#) and some [viruses](#). The main role of DNA [molecules](#) is the long-term storage of [information](#). DNA is often compared to a set of [blueprints](#) or a recipe, or a [code](#), since it contains the instructions needed to construct other components of [cells](#), such as [proteins](#) and [RNA](#) molecules. The DNA segments that carry this genetic information are called [genes](#), but other DNA sequences have structural purposes, or are involved in regulating the use of this genetic information.” The human DNA is thus a unique piece of divine engineering that ensures every human being is uniquely created in a bespoke manner by God to functional as an original being. No two persons out of over 7 billion people on earth have the same DNA structure.

As is generally known, every Christian has the DNA of God because we are begotten of Him both by creation and by the new birth experience - **Genesis 1:26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18**.

Apart from this divine heritage, all Christians are uniquely packaged with Spiritual DNA. This is a combination of qualities and personalised factors the Lord uses to make each person a unique vessel in His vineyard.

The properties that make up your Spiritual DNA include:

1. **Your Spiritual gifts.** You need to identify, practice and grow in use of your spiritual gifts. The starting point is to know what they are. They are found in these scriptures - **Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-11; 1 Peter 4:8-11**.

2. **Your natural talents.** The things you can do well naturally from a young age. It could be acting, drawing, decoration or being humorous. You need to consecrate and deploy them for the glory of God.
3. **Your life experiences.** **Romans 8:28** says all things work together for your good. **Psalm 37:23-24** says the steps of the righteous are ordered by the Lord. The journey of life will take you through so many kinds of experiences and encounters with people. They are part of the divine process of preparing you for your ministry and calling.
4. **Your education and skills acquired by learning and practice.** These are not a waste of time. God allowed you to go through particular disciplines because He has need of them in making you an effective minister. Whether Peter the fisherman, Matthew the tax collector or Paul the learned Pharisee, the education and skills of these people were relevant to what they would do later on in life.
5. **Opportunities God sets before you in life.** When God wants to use you in a particular way, He will provide opportunities to bring out what is in you. Some of those opportunities may come as challenges and problems of other people's problems. It is an opportunity for you to provide a solution. That is why God may cause you to see the way out. It is wrong to murmur and complain over challenges. Wait, watch and pray because God may have placed you there for that very purpose of solving it.
6. **The Things you are passionate about or you love to do.** Whatever area of ministry you have a deep and abiding interest in may be indicative of a special call of God on your life. Learn therefore to identify, understand and pursue fulfilment of your passions.
7. **Your Personality.** When you were conceived God prepared a body through which you would live in this present life - **Jeremiah 1:5-10; Jeremiah 29:11; Hebrews 10:5-9**. That body was shaped in a peculiar way. Your personality was wired to deliver on the treasure that is within you - your gifts and calling. You are truly unique and able to deliver on your life assignment through the earthly tabernacle or body fashioned for you. You need to appreciate what God gave to you, stop comparing yourself with others and celebrate how fearfully and wonderfully you were made - **Psalm 139:13-18**.
8. **Your peculiar style in doing things.** Every one is unique and we do not need to imitate others before we can be fulfilled. Do not be apologetic for your way of life, provided it is not sinful. Some people are humorous while others are serious. Some are multi-tasked while others are mono-gifted. Appreciate your style, develop it and lay it down as a vital tool for discovery, pursuit and fulfilment of ministry.

F. SCOPE OF MINISTRY

It is important to realise that it is God who determines the scope of ministry. In other words we should avoid ambition or competition or other carnal considerations that we suppose will propel us into ministry. **Romans 12:3** speaks of acting in proportion to faith. We should not therefore exalt ourselves beyond what God has called us to do.

1. Categorisation concepts in ministry

There are three broad categories of ministry and every believer should understand which of these God has designed them to function optimally.

- (a) **Primary calling.** This is a calling in which an individual receives a fresh mandate from God to expand the kingdom in a specific direction. By reason of this calling the individual becomes a visionary. In this category are pioneer pastors or heads of new ministries. The people called are equipped with the capacity to see new frontiers and are given the grace to begin fresh works by the Spirit. God will normally speak specifically to those He has called in this regard and they will have no doubt whatsoever that they have heard from God. It is advised that no-one should presumptuously proceed into a primary ministerial assignment without receiving a clear mandate from God.

- (b) **Supportive ministry.** This refers to the broad spectrum of ministry that God commits to those He has gifted to uphold the hands of those in primary calling. The most graphic picture of this is the case of Moses on the mountain with Aaron and Hur holding his hands up whilst Joshua engages in battle against Amalek at Rephidim – **Exodus 17:8-13**. In this category are elders, deacons, administrators, worship leaders and operational personnel. Those called to support ministers in primary callings are not in God's eyes inferior to them. This operating principle is seen in **1 Corinthians 12** – the body has many parts and no part can function without the other.
- (c) **The hybrid.** These are people who are gifted with both primary and supportive ministry capacity. Whilst pursuing their supportive ministries, the Lord propels them to pursue their primary callings. Examples in the Bible include Paul the Apostle, Barnabas, Philip and others. The core principle to moving from supportive to primary is that of faithfulness as unto the Lord - see **Luke 16:12**.

2. Place/Location of ministry

- (a) **Pulpit based ministry.** This refers to the ministry of the five-fold – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers - **Ephesians 4:11-12**. They are the leadership gifts given to guide God's people into all truths and train, equip, activate and release God's people to discover and fulfil their ministries.
- (b) **Marketplace ministry.** This is ministry that is exercised in the normal course of life outside the pulpit. This is where Christians engage with their spiritual DNA to advance the Kingdom right where they find themselves. They do not need to seek ministerial fulfilment through pulpit based ministry because God has ordained to use them in and through business, the professions, academia, public service and other non-pulpit arenas to fulfil their redemptive assignments. As priests and kings who minister to God, believers and humanity those in marketplace ministry will be able to exercise dominion over their environments - **1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:9-10**.

It is important to note that not all the prominent people in the bible were the great prophets but rather they were marketplace ministers. These included people like Joseph, Joshua, Daniel, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel.

- (c) **Hybrid.** There are some individuals who God will gift for five-fold ministry and yet make their place of ministry predominantly in the marketplace rather than on the pulpit. These will include business men, administrators, academics and professionals who are Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Their styles will be peculiar and trail blazing. Just as no one can perfectly understand the ways of the Holy Spirit, so it will be impossible to pigeonhole such people. They are merely vessels whom the Lord wants to use in peculiar ways to get things done. For instance, God can raise as President of a nation, a Christian who is an Apostle in the marketplace. Such a person will be mightily used by the Lord to chart a new direction of progress, peace and prosperity for the country.

Special Note:

It is wrong to consider ministry from a worldly perspective. This is a perspective that places an undue premium on availability of money, infrastructure, such as a building, broadcast media, staff, worship team, amongst other things before the work can begin. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus says He is automatically present where two or three people are gathered in His name. What this means therefore is that in proceeding with ministry, what we need most is sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, yieldedness to Him and faith in God. When He prompts us to proceed in any particular direction, we need to step out in faith using three ultimate benchmarks: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17–19) and allow Him to use us to do what He wants to do. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of the Church. The sheep are His and He alone knows the capacity He has granted to any of His under shepherds to take care of part of the flock for Him. In John chapter 10 this concept is vividly illustrated. Verses 16, 27–28 are particularly instructive.

3. **The four divine facilities for success in ministry**

If we are sincere with the Lord and yielded to Him, there are four core facilities He releases which will propel us to achieve exactly what He set before us. These are:

- (a) **A Name.** The Lord will give to us a name which is greater than our natural name.
- (b) **A Voice.** The Lord releases the authority of His voice on our natural voice and it becomes supernatural.
- (c) **Spiritual Identity.** The Lord clothes us with His own identity. With this, those assigned to us will no longer know us after the flesh but by the Spirit. They will neither consider such mundane issues as race, tribe, age, gender or level of secular education before they come to us or stay with us.
- (d) **A Peculiar Message.** This is based on a specific revelation the Lord grants us of Himself or His Kingdom or His programme for humanity. This message will be so powerful that it is literally identified with you among the comity of preachers.

Effects of these four facilities:

When you have these four facilities and your life is right, the “other sheep” of the Lord assigned to you will:

- (a) Hear His voice in you and **come**.
- (b) When they come, they will **connect** with the peculiar message you preach or teach.
- (c) They will **accept** you on the basis of your spiritual identity and not find fault with you.
- (d) They will **abide** with you and you will all become one sheep under the great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.
- (e) They will **abound**, starting with their spiritual life and onto other aspects of their lives.

With this understanding, strife, competition and carnal church growth concepts and strategies will have no place to confuse or deceive the elect remnant again. We will then return to Spirit led Church growth which lead the people of God to rest in Him and occupy until He comes.

G. WAYS TO KNOW THAT GOD HAS CALLED OR IS CALLING YOU TO A SPECIFIC MINISTRY

In the true sense, every believer is called into ministry. This is attested by these scriptures which reaffirm the priesthood of all believers - **John 15:16, 1 Peter 2:9**. Beyond the general call there are specific ways through which a Christian can know that the Lord is seeking to arrest his attention or apprehend him for the purpose of serving a specific sense within the Body of Christ generally or his/her local assembly.

In order to fully discover, pursue and fulfil your ministry, it is important that you understand your spiritual DNA as it reflects what God has made you to be.

What is expository here are the various ways a Christian can hear from God concerning his or her life. Every candidate for ordination into the ministry is required to be able to outline in clear detail the way or collection of ways in which he or she received the call of God. This is the bedrock of their testimony as they appear before ordination boards that may be set up to ascertain their readiness and/or suitability for ordination. Never proceed into the ordination ordinance presumptuously or in ignorance.

- 1. **Audible Voice.** God speaks audibly to some people. You can have a divine visitation in which He calls you by name and tells you He wants you for service. This was the case with Saul of Tarsus in **Acts 9:1-18** and Samuel in **1 Samuel 3:1-10**.

2. **The Written Word.** God can call you through the quickening of specific verses of scripture that minister to you. The quickening can occur when you are in a church service or when you are alone. Those who make it a regular habit of studying and meditating on the Word of God have the greatest chance of receiving inspiration from God - **Psalm 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.**
3. **Ministration of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit communicates the call of God to prepared vessels. This was the case of the apostolic call of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch - **Acts 13:1-4.**
4. **Burden of the heart.** A call can be discerned by a burden the Lord lays on a heart of an individual which refuses to be shaken off. Such a burden fixes your gaze spiritually on a given aspect of the work of the Kingdom.
5. **Revelatory Gifts.** God uses the revelatory gifts to communicate His calling. The revelatory gifts include dreams, visions, trances, prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom and discernment. The call of Saul (**Acts 9:1-16**) and the call of Peter to the gentile mission field (**Acts 10:1-16**) involved the revelatory gifts.
6. **Angelic Visitation.** God sent His holy angels to call His elect vessels to specific assignments as in the case of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8:26-39.** Angels are God's messengers and/or helpers - **Hebrews 1:13-14.**
7. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit.** The greatest ordination and qualification for service is to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the mind of Christ, the Lord of the Church, no man is qualified to minister by recourse to natural abilities or arm of flesh. This is why Jesus Christ, shortly before His ascension to heaven, charged His disciples to wait until they were endued with power from on high **Acts 1:3-8.** It is significant to note that even Jesus Himself did not begin His earthly ministry until He was baptised with the Holy Spirit and affirmed by the Father at John's baptism in **Matthew 3:13-17.** Whoever is baptised in the Holy Spirit is called by God for service in the Church.
8. **Manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.** In our day to day lives and work in God's house occasions arise when spiritual gifts manifest. The manifestation is an indication of the specific call of God in a person's life. God's pattern for the Church is that His work will and should only be built by and through spiritual gifts - **Romans 12:2-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11.** It is important therefore that every Christian pay the price of discipline to discern or discover their spiritual gift(s). A spiritual gift audit is available on the International Ministers Fellowship website www.ministersfellowship.org taken from the book, "The Church of His Vision" authored by Dr. Cosmas Ilechukwu, President of the Fellowship. .
9. **Providential Steps.** **Psalm 37:23** says the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. In calling some of His children to ministry, the Lord orders their paths to cross with other vessels ordained as instruments of taking them to the next level of service. For Esther the vessel was Mordecai, for Saul it was Barnabas, for the Ethiopian eunuch it was Phillip. Circumstances can also be divinely orchestrated by God to bring out gifts embedded deep within Christians. In **Acts 8:1-8** persecutions by Herod and the martyrdom of Stephen led the maintenance minded church of Jerusalem to scatter. The outcome was unexpected. Phillip who was appointed a deacon to mind the "other business" of the early church which consisted of distributing relief equitably to widows of Jewish and Grecian stock, was used mightily of God to evangelise Samaria where he ran to with mighty signs and wonders following. His gifting as a five-fold leader in the office of an evangelist was manifested. **Romans 8:28** teaches that all things work together for good for them who love God and are called by Him. What are you passing through? What is God saying, even if you are in the midst of fire like the three Hebrew children in **Daniel 3.**
10. **Opportunities.** One of the best ways of knowing a calling is quite simple: what do you do with opportunities that crop up? How do you respond to challenges that arise? Opportunities are powerful means of bringing forth grace that is embedded within our lives. The case of Phillip in Samaria is instructive.

11. **Passion/Love.** What you love to do or find yourself passionate about may reveal a special call of God on your life. Love is a powerful and positive emotion. If you find yourself peculiarly drawn toward a particular ministry you may as well give yourself to intense prayers and diligence in learning all you can about that particular ministry. After all **1 Corinthians 13** assert that love is the greatest gift.
12. **Critical Insight/Perspective.** God can call by giving a person critical insight into a particular ministry or church activity. With such a perspective you may be able to see what many cannot see. If you are carnal you will end up criticising or tearing down what others are doing. The Lord does not approve of this response. We should allow what we are seeing to plant a burden in our hearts that impassions us to be willing to be part of the solution and stand in earnest intercession for divine intervention.
13. **Answers to Prayer.** God expects His children to take the discovery and exercise of their callings seriously. This is proved by your willingness to engage in intense prayers of inquiry to ascertain the will of God for your service in His house. We need to wait on the Lord in importunate prayer and fasting to discover the specific mission field He is calling us into - **Matthew 7:7-9; Luke 18:1-8; Luke 11:5-10.**
14. **Authority.** Throughout God's work with human kind He requires order and discipline in His house. **Romans 13:1-7** urges every soul to be subject to the higher powers. **Hebrews 13:17** calls for obedience and submission so that we can obtain reports of joy from our leaders to God concerning us. God may use a leader to give us a message, clarify a revelation and test our motives of suitability for a particular aspect of His work. God's call on young Samuel was rightly discerned by Eli in **1 Samuel 3:1-18**. Whenever a leader God places over your life gives you assignments do not be drawn to those you think will bring you fame or glory; be mindful to execute all assignments diligently. Life and ministry is a seed. What you sow is what you will reap says **Galatians 6:7-8**.
15. **Natural Abilities/Talents.** **Psalms 139:14** says we are fearfully and wonderfully made while **Psalms 138:8** says God will perfect everything concerning us. Every one created by God is supernaturally invested with some talents or extra abilities that will be needed to navigate the journey of life at one time or the other. Talents are given to all men whether saved or sinners. God does not show partiality on the fundamental issues of life just as He allows His sun and rain to be enjoyed by all - **Matthew 5:45**. As we grow in the Lord He requires us to consecrate every talent or ability He gave us back to Him and to use them in pursuit of His Kingdom agenda. Talents so consecrated are sanctified for God's holy use in building His Church. Talents include the ability to sing, draw, paint, decorate, act, write, produce films, internet web design, video production, photography and much more.
16. **Skills/Experience/Education.** In the same vein, we can also consecrate to God the skills acquired in our workplaces or through education and professional development. In God's economy He at times allows His chosen vessels to acquire invaluable experiences and deep insights from institutions they will be called upon to reach for Him in due course of time. Joseph and Daniel were divinely planted in heathen courts as part of their election. Paul's acquisition of the best Pharisee education of his day was an essential part of His calling to expound the fullness of the mystery of the ages – **Philippians 3:1-6**.
17. **Brokenness.** Divine strength is for the broken, the weak and humble who tremble at God's Word. For God to use His elect, He first breaks their strength, pride, esteem and ego - **1 Samuel 2:4; Psalms 51:16-17; Isaiah 66:1-2**. Jacob was broken at Peniel, David after his sin with Bathsheba, Peter, after he denied Jesus; Paul on his way to Damascus. When we are broken we no longer rely on our natural strength, wisdom and worldly endowments but entirely on God's strength, by His Spirit to function. Whenever you are going through a prolonged breaking process, be sure that the Lord is preparing you for an awesome assignment - **1 Peter 5:10**.