

Moving Into Ministry

Luke 9:24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (This is repeated many times by Jesus [Mt 10:39; 16:25; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 17:33; Jn 12:25 and in Acts 20:35])

Antithesis: Christianity as self-improvement-personal empowerment

Jesus us talking about being convinced from the heart about a lifestyle of giving-giving our life away. Being convinced that that is the KEY to fulfillment in life

What happens when you don't pursue this way of life? The word becomes dry, you experience lack of direction and purpose, etc.

Have you decided which set of values you will pursue?

Uniformity in Ministry (these are like "fundamentals" in sports)

The ideal is being a **team player** who is **fundamentally sound**; then on that basis we could specialize. God has designed each of us uniquely, but also calls on our regular, consistent, and committed efforts in certain areas **regardless of our gifts, burdens, or personality traits.**

The main idea: *evangelism and discipleship in context of community*

What are the areas of ministry uniformity (areas of ministry we have in common)? THIS WILL BE ON THE EXAM!

- **Intercessory Prayer** (Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18) (Unit 3)
- **Evangelism** (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:15; Col. 3:17-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:12-3:7; Titus 2:7-3:8; 1 Tim. 6:1,2) (Unit 4)
- **Missions** (Matt. 28:19 of all nations; Acts 1:8) (earlier in Unit 4)
- **Discipleship** (Mt. 28:19; see also 2 Tim. 2:2)
Nothing could be more natural than for me to assume responsibility for helping younger Christians grow. Young. Think in terms of a perpetual day care center vs. a healthy family where all have responsibilities. Discipleship could take a lot of forms: with other leaders in a cell; one on one...
- **"Love one another"** (Jn. 13:34) as unpacked by the New Testament "one another" passages (see Rom. 12:10,15; 15:7; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 10:24,25; Jas. 5:16).
Jesus stresses that it is the underlying ministry that will enable us to succeed at the above ministries. Do we serve others? (more in Unit 3)
- **Financial giving** (Lk. 12:33,34; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17,18). As stewards of God's money and material possessions, we are all responsible to use these things to advance his kingdom, as well as your own needs. (Unit 4)
It is disastrous to view any of these as options! We live in a culture that tends to specialize. Little value is given to being a generalist. We need to remain involved in these areas regardless of our area of ministry focus. We have to allow time for these provisions in our schedule-and sometimes in our heart.

Diversity in Ministry: Spiritual Gifts

(1 Cor. 12:4-6) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (See also ROM 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:8-11; Eph 4:7-16)

(DIVERSITY OF) Gifts

DEFINITION: God-given capabilities to serve others so that they are impacted for and/or built up spiritually in Jesus Christ.

Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift

(1 Cor. 12:7,11) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . (11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

None of the passages concerning spiritual gifts are meant to provide an exhaustive list, but the focus is on how to use the gifts (E.G. with diligence, with love, etc.).

One of your handouts includes definitions of these gifts along with distinctives to help you recognize gifts in yourself or others. The handout also provides cautions-areas where sanctification is often challenged in people with that gift.

Tonight, we will not define every spiritual gift. The Ministry Assessment Materials provide definitions of most spiritual gifts. (spgifts.htm). Download spgifts.rtf.

*Note: We should view spiritual gifts as special areas of aptitude, and not as limits on our capability to serve (i.e. the evangelist is not the only one to evangelize).

(DIVERSITY OF) Ministries

Ministry - The use of spiritual gifts to serve others.

We tend use the word ministry in two ways:

1. Ministry is **what you do**-- the act of exercising your gift.. For example, you may develop a hospitality ministry by helping newer people feel welcomed and part of the group and hosting events.
2. Ministry can refer to **the sphere in which you serve**, the group of people among whom you exercise your gifts in service. Examples of ministry spheres might include a junior high cell group, a home church, or a group of terminally ill patients.

(DIVERSITY OF) Effects

Effects are **the outcome of our ministries**. We bear spiritual fruit in ministry as we impact people for Christ.

In the Body of Christ, **some** will have a more **visible, dramatic effect** while others' ministry fruit may be less obvious (from our perspective, not God's). THIS HELPS US NOT COMPARE WITH OTHERS

IT'S VERY EXCITING THAT GOD HAS SUITED YOU AND I UNIQUELY TO A ROLE IN HIS PURPOSE!

Why it is Important to Discover and Exercise your Gifts

Discovering and exercising your gift(s):

1. Gives you a greater sense of significance and purpose for your Christian life.

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

You will share the sense of purpose that Paul had in this passage as God progressively clarifies your unique role.

2. Provides more insight into God's will for your life.

It is God's will for you to exercise and develop your gift(s). As you do so, there will be many practical implications for decision-making in your life.

3. Provides additional motivation toward spiritual growth.

Why did I turn away from the world? "Because it's a rush to teach." This has been called the "Expulsive power of a New Affection."

Also, it is much easier to resist sin when we replace it with the stimulation of ministry. As this happens, you will find greater resistance to the seduction of the world (1 Jn. 2:15,16), which is only a counterfeit to the real purpose for your life.

It is difficult to maintain motivation in our sanctification unless we see the purpose for it.

4. Lets you experience more consistently and to a greater degree the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is one of the features of gifting--the Holy Spirit often empowers you with special intensity as you serve in that area. This helps you overcome fearfulness and timidity in your service for Christ. When you serve according to your gifts, you gain confidence in God because you see Him at work in your ministry. This confidence permeates other areas of your Christian life.

(2 Tim 1:6-9) And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which was given to you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has

saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

5. Frees you from making unhealthy comparisons to others and increases healthy interdependence within the Body of Christ.

The devil really likes to alienate us from each other by getting us to compare. The more you discover and develop the unique contribution that you have, the easier it is to be grateful for the contribution of others. This minimizes carnal competition.

See 1 Cor 12:14-26 -- For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, 24 whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

As you exercise your gift, you appreciate the genius of God's design of the body of Christ: everyone has an important contribution to make. As a result, you are more likely to seek out and receive the contribution that others have been gifted to make. You realize "I can't do it all. I need others..."

Ways to discover your spiritual gifts

It seems that there is no specific method for discovering spiritual gifts. Instead, God emphasizes certain principles that we employ as we live in the Body of Christ. As we live and function in the Body of Christ our gifts emerge.

1. Ask God to reveal your gifts

Remember that God has sovereignly given you the gift(s) that you have. Affirm that he has gifted you for a unique and significant role, and submit in advance to whatever role he has chosen for you. Then ask him to reveal your role to you as you step out in faith to find it.

2. Become a servant. (IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO SERVE, WHY SHOULD GOD SHOW YOU YOUR GIFT?)

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Philippians 2:3-5 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:11,12 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

God laid his life down to meet our needs. He commands us to follow his example, by expending ourselves in the service of others within the framework of the Body of Christ. As we serve, our gifting is manifest. Over time you have probably become aware of different needs/ tasks in home church that are being overlooked (e.g. organizing a retreat, cleaning up after HC, encouraging a new person, etc.). As you make various attempts to serve, some efforts will be fruitful and others

won't. Through feedback from others and the result of your efforts, God will open your eyes to unique areas of gifting that you may have.

Because servanthood is such an important area, we should carefully distinguish it from its antithesis, selfishness. The chart below contrasts a servant attitude with a selfish attitude:

Servanthood	Selfishness
<p>Theo-centric: <i>"I want God's agenda for my life so I am willing to subordinate my own agenda to his."</i> See Matt. 26:39; Mark 8:34. Jesus chose to deny his own human will to endure and survive the cross because he was God's servant, and because there was no other way to rescue the people he loved. How do you respond when God contradicts your agenda with the needs of others? Sacrificing our time and energy for the good of others might be painful at times-yet it leads to life (Luke 9:23-24)</p>	<p>Ego-centric: <i>"this doesn't fit into my agenda so I refuse to consider it."</i> It is necessary to be able to say "No" to certain demands, but not for this reason. This kind of selfishness closes God out of the formula of growth in our life.</p>
<p>Fellowship with God: <i>"I can know God better through this whether or not people are impressed with me."</i> Do we remember that we serve God? This area is usually challenged at the moment people don't respond as we would like them to. The bottom line of all of our study, fellowship, prayer, and service is: Are we doing it to know God better or to be noticed by others?</p>	<p>Impress People: <i>"If I do this, will they like me or think I'm spiritual?"</i> This is giving with strings attached. "What am I getting in return for what I'm doing?" "Have people noticed and responded as I believe they should?"</p>
<p>Whatever It Takes: <i>"I am committed to excellence in my responsibilities to others, and I am willing to serve outside those areas in order to accomplish God's purposes."</i> (Col. 3:23; Jn. 13:13,14) (Col. 3:23) Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men. . . Watchman Nee said, "Most Christians would lose their job if they treated their secular work like their Christian work." This includes being dependable-on time. As I realize the importance of my role in ministry, reliability comes more naturally.</p>	<p>Not My Job: <i>"I'll do the minimum in my responsibilities to others, and I will not be inconvenienced by tasks outside those responsibilities."</i> This may be an attitude that is perpetuated by too much focus on our gifts/spiritual job description, or perhaps just selfish laziness. Each one of us will want to be aware of this potential tendency and lean against it. Wholehearted vs. halfhearted service</p>
<p>Humility: <i>"God has enabled me to make a significant contribution and I want to be faithful to him so he can be glorified through my service."</i> (1 Cor. 15:10)</p>	<p>Pride: "I have a lot to offer and you should feel privileged that I'm involved." OR, "I can't do anything significant." It doesn't matter if I'm here or not (Many Christians).</p>
<p>Other-Centered: <i>"I am learning to trust</i></p>	<p>Self-Protective: <i>"I have to take care of</i></p>

God's care for me enough to begin to notice and seek out others' needs." See Jn. 13:3,4ff as the context for Jesus' sacrificial service-he served freely and sacrificially because he knew he was in good hands. When you receive Christ, God makes you his adopted child and promises to care for you like he does his own Son. Knowing this, we can afford to take our eyes off our self and begin to look after others' needs.

me first. If I don't, who will?" This is an expression of one who is truly alienated from God or just doesn't believe God at his word when he promises to care for us and provide for us out of his wealth.

3. Develop foundational ministry skills in your home group.

Recall the importance of areas of ministry uniformity, including "loving one another" in the context of Christian community. We should prioritize developing ministry skills in our home group over getting involved in various ministries in the church at large. So it begins with Home Church, but eventually goes beyond. **SEEK TO BE AN EDIFYING FORCE IN THE HOME GROUP.**

4. Take steps of faith to try new ministries.

Sometimes we are pushed into a ministry by the need.
Having a gift does not mean you won't be scared to step up.
Flowing from the first four, the next four are reflective:

5. What kinds of ministry do you especially enjoy doing?

Phil. 2:13 says that God is at work in you both to create the desire for and to give you the empowering for his good pleasure-that is, for his unique purpose for your life. This promise encompasses God's ministry purpose for your life as well as his moral purpose (sanctification). Therefore, it is appropriate to ask yourself, "What areas of ministry are especially appealing to me?" What would I like to do for the Lord if I could do anything for him?
Remember the variety of gifts that God has given. Resist the tendency to assume that you must be gifted like "so and so" in order to be significant, or that if you really would like to minister in a certain area, it must not be God's will.

6. What kinds of ministry needs do you consistently notice?

Gifting often affects our perception of ministry needs. Ask God to open your eyes to the needs that exist around you. Look especially within your own home group, but also look beyond it to the fellowship as a whole and the local and global community. Are there certain kinds of needs that you tend to consistently see?
Aptitude often affects our perception of a situation; we tend to be most aware of those needs that we are most suited to meet.

7. What kinds of ministry do you experience consistent empowering for?

"I sensed God working through me." Gifting is spiritual empowerment, which is partially experiential.

8. What kinds of ministry are you effective in (others' feedback; fruit)?

What unsolicited feedback do you receive from others?
When a pattern emerges of people telling you that God builds them up through you in a certain area, this is a reliable indicator of gifting. On the other hand, we will experience setbacks in areas of gifting so be careful not to give up prematurely.
Start looking at others from the perspective of how God has gifted them. Put some thought in on how they might be gifted; let them know when you see them being effective with you or others.
This creates an environment much more conducive to the discovery of gifts

Fulfillment in Ministry

Teachers: do some autobiographical stuff about why you are thriving in the work of God -- both failures and successes. Tell them why you have stuck with it despite the hardships.

Everyone wants a fulfilling life. Many Christians have not yet experienced fulfillment in ministry. **What is fulfillment?** Fulfillment is a deep-seated sense of blessing/ joy arising from total commitment to something significant. This is what we were designed for. Total commitment to God's purposes.

All of us are committed to something. We have to consider, "What am I committed to?" In the US it's the "me first law." We learn to value and seek our personal interests above any other values. We've learned that the biblical world view is dramatically different.

1 Cor. 9:23-27 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (25) And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (26) Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; (27) but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

We reach this point gradually as led by God. He gifts us and empowers us to serve effectively. It's not like being committed to ballet, but without talent. God provides the talent and part of our spiritual growth process entails learning that we are inadequate to serve him apart from his empowering.

2 Cor. 3:5-6a Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant...

The joy offered by Christ, as we align our will with His, far exceeds any worldly attempt for joy.

John 10:10 ...I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.

Phil 3:7,8 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

Heb.12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus offers a brilliant example of commitment to God's purposes and his joy flows from living in concert with his Father's will despite the agony he faced.

- We shouldn't be committed to pursuing fulfillment as an end to itself.
- Joy, in the modern sense, is often absent. Loving others can be painful at times.
- Our own selfish motives can rob us of the joy/ fulfillment of serving others.

Conclusion: Maybe you have not decided what set of values you are committed (Luke 6:46-49) "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 "Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 "But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."