



Defining “The Minister and The Ministry”

In this article we will explore two questions:

1. Is it accurate to say that some are called to “The Ministry,” and are therefore “Ministers” while others in the body of Christ surely minister but are not technically referenced as Ministers?
2. If so, how does the New Testament define the role and function of The Minister and His/Her Ministry? (Throughout this study, while the male gender will most frequently be used to describe the Minister, this is for no other reason than to avoid using the “his/her” format redundantly. This writer acknowledges the viable place of both men and women in The Ministry.)

While we recognize the Lord has come with revelation and insight regarding the nature of His Church, to many of us, and we have therefore left the more Traditional and Institutional models of Church, how are we to understand our call to ministry? Let me say from the outset that the use of the word “Call” is not meant to be understood in an exclusive manner, as if not all believers have a call upon their lives; certainly they do. In this article the use of the concept of “calling” is with a view to a specific form of calling that pertains “to leadership Ministry.”

If we have already come to understand that the New Testament does not authorize anything like a professional ministry, with business organization salaries, titles, and positions of controlling authority; how does the New Testament define such a call? What does “The Ministry” look like under the New Testament, if it doesn’t involve going to a building each day, having staff meetings, setting salaries, job descriptions, and presiding over committees? If I’m not preparing sermons which will be given behind a pulpit to a passive audience of spectators, somewhere within the pre-prescribed order of service, then what am I to do with the bible, who and when am I to teach or preach, and how do I function in this role?

Let me digress for a moment and get a bit personal. In 1970 I received what I came to identify as a “Call” to “The Ministry.” I understood the Lord to say to me at this time “Tom, this day I ordain you to The Ministry. From this day forward I call you to see yourself as an ordained Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While it will take men years to acknowledge you in this way, after study and degrees, let it be known that in the courts of heaven this day you are counted as among those called to the ministry.” The exhilaration was intense, the anticipation overwhelming. It felt like a combination of being affirmed and given value at the highest of all levels, as well as charting out a life of meaningful significance. I was “A Minister.” This was how God saw me. Wow! I saw this in the context of the only concept of Church I knew at the time...i.e. a paid staff member, of a specific Church denomination, and a specific building, with title, salary, and office.

Time went by, study ensued, positions were given, ministry titles bestowed, and I became The Minister/The Pastor I had always dreamed of being. From the time of that call to the time of formal titling the anxiety for fulfillment was almost indescribable. There was literally nothing on this earth I desired more. I came to believe that my entire worth, value, and significance lay in obtaining that title and function, and mind you, not just “function” but “title.” It drove me to strive with all that was within me for that place of calling. I literally worshipped the call of God more than God Himself. I became genuinely addicted to the ministry. It was not healthy, today I’m not proud of it, and my life and family paid a huge price for the error of it. If I could have just believed His words to me in the beginning, and seen myself as fully in the ministry from His perspective, I would have been saved a lot of grief, but I didn’t. Then, 30 years later, after all those years of meaningful labor, a different and strange call came to my life. This time the same Lord came to me, who had spoken so clearly in 1970, and spoke into my heart, “Tom, as I called you in the beginning, so I return to that call and expand and add new definitions to my call upon your life at this time. From this time forward you will never again identify your call with a building, a professional salary, being on someone’s staff, having any title, standing behind pulpits, or sitting in committees. You will never again look to men to define you, laud you, or pay you as their staff member. I’m calling you to Myself and to understand My heart for your call, walk in

My ways, and let Me provide for you. Walk with Me in this new season.”

Now, to be very clear and honest, I had heard this call in 1980, but was unable to discern it accurately at that time. I was blinded by my own understanding of what it meant to be a Minister. I was blinded by ambition. My paradigm was a box given to me by over 1850 years of Church history. I could only see The Ministry within the strictures of current and historical definition. Yet, throughout that time I was seeing something different, but knew of no context in which it was being walked out, and wrestled with deep inward doubts. In time I began to write about and see a more simple and relational form of Church, within the relational and familial contexts of a home or small simple settings, but I was not personally aware of any that were functioning throughout those years. I had my title, my office, my job description, my salary, and the honor that goes with being a Pastor/Elder/Teacher. It was just too heady and secure to walk away from.

In 2001, after 30+ years of formal ministry in the Traditional setting the Lord called me away from that place of ministry and landed me at home. At first I was unsure if it was a permanent dislodging from the formal role of Minister, but as time went by it became clear He had no intention of me ever returning to my previous understandings of The Ministry. I was called to function within the context of His broader Kingdom and the small relational units of His Church that meets within homes and similar small settings. So here I was, with no salary, no office, and no title. The question of my heart became “So Lord, who am I now? What am I to do? How will I meet the financial needs of my home? How do I define and function in this new role?” These and many other questions have become the definers of my thought and prayer life ever since. I have, as time has gone by, discovered many other brethren who have been called, exactly as myself, from the formal and traditional settings, into the small and simple home settings. I, along with them, have pondered, wept over, discussed, and sought to clarify who we are in God’s economy and reformation, now that we are in such a different place of Ministry calling. This paper will address those questions and concerns.

Now let’s come back to the original two questions, posed at the beginning of this article:

Is it accurate to say that some are called to “The Ministry,” and are therefore “Ministers” or “Specialists” while others in the body of Christ are not so called?

None would question that all believers are called to be disciples and ministers of the New Covenant. Listen to God bring clarity on this matter:

Romans 15:27 “...For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also **to minister** to them in material things.”

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints **for the work of ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Philemon 13 (Philemon) whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might **minister** to me in my chains for the gospel.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have **ministered** to the saints, and do **minister**.

1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, **minister** it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

These verses make it abundantly clear that every believer priest is to see himself as a minister of God, but are there other verses that imply there is something of a priesthood within the general priesthood? I believe the following verses imply this, though, we must be careful in our defining of what this priesthood is and isn’t:

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 “to take part in **this ministry and apostleship** from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”

(Notice the connection between “ministry” and “apostleship.” There appears to be a common ministry of all believers as well as a more specialized ministry for those called to leadership. The distinction is not hierarchical or being someone who is “better,” but simply different in nature and function.)

Acts 6:4 “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to **the ministry of the word.**”

(Clearly, not all believers are called to the same ministry of the word, as are some. The Apostles had a unique and specialized function of leadership in this ministry.)

Acts 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled **their ministry**, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

(Notice, as the New Testament develops the concept of ministry, that it refers to a specific ministry, rather than just general ministry.)

Acts 20: 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and **the ministry** which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

(This is the first occurrence, of what will become "defining," in the use of the phrase "The Ministry." Once again, we hasten to say this phrase does not imply "better," but simply "unique." The Leadership, and the ministries given to them are not better, or even necessarily more eternally rewarded, but they are unique, and specialized in nature.)

Romans 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify **my ministry**,

(Notice now Paul, when discussing the uniqueness of his ministry, describes it in terms of a broad breadth of spectrum - to all Gentiles... This theme of "largeness of breadth," seems to characterize Paul's description of his calling. All believers minister at God's leading, but those called to leadership seem to be given a broader spectrum and breadth of call to their ministry, as well as specializations of function.)

2 Cor. 6:3 We give no offense in anything, that **our ministry** may not be blamed.

(It is apparent that Paul saw his ministry as a very specific ministry, and not simply a general ministry call.)

Colossians 4: 17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to **the ministry** which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

1 Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry**,

(This passage is an important one, in our pursuit of clarification on this matter. Here we see Paul clearly recognizing that while all believers are called to "ministry" he has been "put into The Ministry.")

2 Timothy 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill **your ministry**.

(Paul recognized the personalization element of one's calling, in his phrase "your ministry.")

Acts 26:15 "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to **make you a minister** and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

(Here we see the specific moment of Paul's very specific calling.)

Romans 15:16 that I might **be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles**, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 9:1-18

1 Am I not **an apostle**? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of **my apostleship** in the Lord. 3 My defense to those who examine me is this: 4 Do we have no right to eat and drink? 5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no **right to refrain from working**? 7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? 8 Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also? 9 For it is

written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? ¹² If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are we not even more?* Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of **Christ**. ¹³ **Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?** ¹⁴ **Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.** ¹⁵ But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. ¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸ What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

(This passage is especially significant in our study of the question of whether there is truly a priesthood within the priesthood. Paul makes it very clear that there is, and as such it comes with the inherent right to be fully financially supported in the administration of that calling, though in the case of the Corinthians he would not allow them to do so for him.)

Ephesians 3:7 of which I became **a minister** according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

Ephesians 6:21 But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and **faithful minister** in the Lord, will make all things known to you;

Colossians 1: 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a **faithful minister** of Christ on your behalf,

Colossians 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, **became a minister**. ²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I **became a minister** according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

Colossians 4:7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, **faithful minister**, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 and sent Timothy, our brother and **minister of God**, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,

1 Timothy 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be **a good minister of Jesus Christ**, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

Hebrews 8:1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² **a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle** which the Lord erected, and not man. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

In all of the above cases we clearly see a specific call to become "A Minister." In some remote way it is connected with the Old Testament concept of being a priest, but with a distinctive New Testament orientation. It is very obvious, in all of the NT references, that such a call does not come to all believers, but that in the administration of the Kingdom and the Church Jesus calls certain ones to "The Ministry," while all believers are called upon by Him, at times, to minister.

Within the New Testament, as the writers define the role of leadership in the body, and refer to them as "Ministers," it is evident that their role is vastly different than what it came to be understood after the death of the apostles.

During the times of the apostles, leadership in the body was a leadership marked by "spiritual" authority, connected with speaking His Word, rather than "title or position" authority. In other words their authority lay

in their calling and their consistency of character and the accuracy with which they conveyed the Word of Jesus Christ to those whom they were leading and ministering to. Their leadership was focused on function rather than title. They did not understand their calling to give them the right to order the body of Christ, based on their title or position, but only as the orders they gave proceeded directly from Jesus Himself. In this regard, it was required of them that they manifest the signs of an apostle.

2 Corinthians 12:12 Truly **the signs of an apostle** were accomplished among you with all **perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.**

It had to be evident that the authority they ministered from was not based on human structures, but a manifestation of the supernatural power of Christ. Apostles didn't walk into Churches and tell them "Look, I'm apostle so-and-so and because I am you have to obey me..." They had to be known by the people, evidence the signs of an apostle, and their words had to ring of the authoritative Word of Christ. Their character had to precede their words, and as such gave credence to the things they spoke. They did not trust in titles to give them the right to speak, but required of themselves a godly, loving, and powerful life style. Would to God that such criterion would once again flourish among us, more than it tends to.

While entire books have been written on the authority of leadership in the Church, it is not the purpose of this article to re-articulate that theme. We now proceed to the second of the two questions we posed at the beginning of this article:

How does the New Testament define the role and function of The Ministry.

In other words, what did the daily administration of the New Testament minister's/specialist's life look like? If we can accept that they were, in special ways, separated out from the rest of the body of Christ, and set apart to unique ministry functions, what were those functions and how did it occupy their daily lives?

Why pose such a question? To a certain degree the answer is obvious, "We need to know what true ministry looks like. But, the reason this is such a critical need falls under two reasons:

1. There is a great confusion as to what true ministry is, due to 1850 years of diversion from the original intent and function of leadership as manifested by the apostles and those they raised up. And,
2. Because those of us who live in the 21st century have possibly never seen a true New Testament minister.

We are simply left, after 1850 years of confusion, distortion, and detours, with a failure of understanding in what the New Testament minister's life is to look like. Once strip away Church as defined by a building, preaching from pulpits, congregations from being passive spectators, ministers as paid professionals, ministers as those who preside over committees, who hire and fire, set agendas for people groups, who define the vision for the congregation, and who separate themselves from the people as clergy over laity, and what are we left with?

If I'm not called to find, rent, or build a building, where am I supposed to meet? If I'm not called to set as my goal an ever growing congregational size, and therefore a need for moving from one building to a larger one, and then a larger one, etc. etc., then what are my goals to be?

If I'm not primarily called to preach behind pulpits to passive listening spectators, then how do I preach? Do I preach?

If I'm not to demand of a congregation a set salary for the services I render, then how do I derive the money I need to live? If I'm not a professional, as any other salesman, CEO, or executive of a worldly business, then who am I? If my Church is not a place, or to image a corporation or business then what is it? If we aren't an identifiable organization, with charters, constitutions, memberships, and dues, then what are we?

If I don't preside over committees, form committees, set agendas, and expand the programs of "my" Church, then what do I do every day? You mean I don't punch a ministerial time clock, have hours I'm on duty and hours I'm off duty? You mean the definition of my calling isn't necessarily sitting down a set amount of time each week and writing a sermon that I will preach to passive spectators, who would never think of adding cogent points to my message while I'm speaking, ask for clarification in the midst of my delivery, or disagree openly with something they either don't like or understand. Then what the heck do I do with my time every day, and when I do teach how does that look? It sounds like I'm not really needed.

And, and perhaps this is the most confusing and disappointing, if I'm not to be given a title, then how do I get the people to respect me? How do they refer to me? If I'm not pastor-so-and-so, then who am I to "my" people? Are they even "my" people any longer? Is it even "my" Church, in a possessive and controlling concept? Aren't I supposed to go to all those ministerial conferences, and gather all the other local Church ministers together so as to brag about all the good things I've done, impress them with how large my Church is, or ask them to pray for my Church to grow, or my salary to be increased? You mean all those folks who set my salary, those administrative boards who set Church policy, apportion the finances, and determine Church directions are no longer needed? Then who governs the Church?

Whew, tough questions huh? Once strip away all the religious gobby gook of 1850 years and what are we left with? What does a New Testament minister look like on a daily basis?

Let's take a look at how God defines the New Testament minister. You will be surprised at how specific and detailed He was about this subject. We may be unclear, and we may have added all kinds of junk to it, but His definition is very clear as to what it should and shouldn't look like.

The work of The Ministry.

1. Acknowledge and receive one's calling.

Acts 9:13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to ⁽¹⁾**bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.** 16 "For I will show him ⁽²⁾**how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.**"

For Paul this came through direct revelation and divine appointment. What was it going to look like? Very simple outline:

- a. Bear Jesus' name to those he is sent to.
- b. Suffer for Jesus.

That's a pretty simple outline don't you think? If we follow the entirety of Paul's ministry it really never diverges from this simple format - preach and suffer. That's about it. Implied in this calling, and manifested in the way Paul walked it out, is an approach based on following the Spirit's guidance and leadership in going and doing whatever God wanted him to do. In other words, his call was very broad and unspecified. As the kingdom was full of Gentiles, this meant that Paul should walk out his calling each and every day, with a trust that God would guide his steps to reveal the life of Christ to any given Gentile at any given moment. A life lived in divine assignments.

They walked out their individual call:

Here is God's solution:

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to 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; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- a. Apostles brought the message of Christ to the lost, raised up Churches to His Headship, and mentored leaders to lead them.
- b. Prophets brought the Word of Christ to the Churches, gave prophetic guidance, and strongly exhorted the body to holiness and purity of life.
- c. Evangelists sought the lost and encouraged the Church to reach out.
- d. Pastor Teachers shepherded the body of Christ with the living Word of Christ.

In a nutshell, they trained the body for the work of the ministry and edified them in their walk with Him. They saw themselves as responsible to guide the Church into the fullness of Christ for their lives. They didn't do this as a result of having any man give them a job description and hold their salary over their head until they fulfilled their call. They did what they did as unto the Lord Jesus alone. No one made them minister. No one paid them to minister. They ministered because they loved the body and honored the Lord in their calling. Their job description was not an given but Spirit given.

They lived verses such as:

1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Colossians 3: 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Look at Timothy's calling:

1 Timothy 1:18 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 having faith and a good conscience,...

2. Conduct the work of The Ministry.

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; *give yourself entirely to them*, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul is a bit more detailed in his commissioning of Timothy than Jesus was with Paul, so we can note a few more specifics:

- a. Wage spiritual warfare for the saints.
- b. Maintain faith and a good conscience.
- c. Read the Scriptures to the saints.
- d. Exhort the saints.
- e. Teach the saints right doctrine.
- f. Pay attention to the gift that Jesus gave you.
- g. Meditate on your calling.
- h. Give your entire self to your calling - don't allow distractions from it.
- i. Let the saints see you are continually progressing and growing in your calling.
- j. Watch out for your personal life.
- k. Don't let false doctrine lead you astray.
- l. Save those who listen to you.

3. Qualifications for The Ministry.

In Paul's letter to Timothy he makes it pretty clear, as to personal qualifications of the minister:

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- a. See your call as "work."
- b. Have good character.
- c. Be respected in the community.

4. Provision for The Ministry.

How does he derive his daily needs of food, covering, and clothing? Ultimately it's the same way the entire body of Christ is to derive such needs.

Matthew 6:28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

It is never right for any member of the body of Christ to look to any other source than God Himself for our daily needs. While we work our various jobs, we look to Him to provide.

We've already noted 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 above. Paul makes it very clear that the minister has a right to financial support, and the body of Christ is right to help him in this regard, but, he is very clear in all of his writings to say that while he has a spiritual right to it, he will not force the body, nor even try to lock them into anything like a salary. Listen to how he stays far away from this:

1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. 16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. 18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2:3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a **pretext for greed**--God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though **we could have made demands as apostles of Christ**.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brothers, **our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you**, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

5. The attitudes and motives of The Minister.

Paul didn't boast over the things that many 21st century ministers boast over - things like how big their Church is, or how large their salary is, or how many educational titles they have earned, or how fancy a car they drive, or how often they travel, or how many books they have written, etc. Nope, he boasted in his weakness and in the greatness of Jesus' power working through him.

Paul did not look at his calling as a "stewardship duty," but as a joyful privilege. He "never" charges for his ministry! Whew, how different is this than the modern minister? This ought to make every professional minister very nervous. It tells us that however our receiving of monies from the saints looks, it should never look like a "fee for service." Ouch, that is exactly what a professional Church staff set salary looks like friends. You can try to skate around this one all you like, but Paul couldn't be clearer - no ministry charge of any kind whatsoever, period. A monthly salary, required for our service, is nothing else than a ministry charge. And why didn't he do this? Because it would be an abuse of spiritual authority. Wow! If the above comments didn't hurt, then this one should really hurt. It is just plain down right abusive of the body of Christ to evidence anything that ever even comes close to requiring any specific amount of money to be given to the minister for the service he brings the body. To do so is to exercise false authority, an authority based on title or position, rather than in a powerful demonstration of the living Word of Jesus flowing through his life.

Be assured I am not saying it is wrong for the minister to receive a salary, as a result of the faithful giving of saints, but it is wrong to require, pressure, or intimidate for it, or refuse to minister without a set committed salary.

Notice how this is exactly what the false ministers of Paul's day were doing - charging for their services:

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not like many, **peddling the word of God**, but as from sincerity, but as from

God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you; 9 and when I was present with you and was in need, **I was not a burden to anyone**; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12 But what I am doing, I will continue to do, **that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.** 13 **For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.** 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:19 For you, being so wise, bear with the foolish gladly. 20 For **you bear with anyone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself**, if he hits you in the face.

6. The right to financial assistance.

At the same time it is not wrong to receive financial assistance from the body, and Paul makes it clear the body is wise and honoring to the Lord to give to those called to the ministry.

Galatians 6:6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things?

So, while it is wrong to require or push for financial provision, it is not wrong to accept the blessing of gifts and assistance, and the body is correct in providing it. It is not wrong to teach the saints to give, but all teaching on this subject must avoid any form of false promises or intimidation.

Paul also makes it clear that what the body failed to provide for him, regarding support, he made up in his occupation of tent making:

1 Thessalonians 2: 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

2 Corinthians 11: 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you; 9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.

7. The heart of the Minister.

In our consideration of the function of ministry, it is valuable to listen to Paul describe how ministry looked in and through his life:

1 Thessalonians 2:4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. 5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. 8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be

a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

- a. A ministry that is first and foremost directed towards God.
- b. No coveting of money for ministry.
- c. Gentle.
- d. Tender and caring.
- e. Transparent life impartation.
- f. Devout, just, blameless behavior.
- g. Exhortation, comfort, forceful charges to action.
- h. Call to accountability to God.

Note the similarity in Peter's descriptions:

1 Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

- a. Overseer not boss.
- b. Willingly, rather than for money.

8. The primary focus of Ministry.

Whereas the tendency of modern ministry is to please the crowds, not offend, and flatter the parishioners so as to secure a following, income, and growth, Paul saw himself as a servant of God rather than directly a servant of the people. Not that Paul didn't see himself as a servant to the flock, but his servanthood to the flock never superseded his servanthood to Christ.

Colossians 3: 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Timothy 2:24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Galatians 2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), 5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6 But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

So if many of the things that characterize modern ministers had no place in the Early Church leadership, then it is evident that ***what characterized Early Church leadership was caring, love, comfort, example, oversight, spiritual authority, wisdom, grace, tenderness, confrontation, admonition, rebuke, exhortation, teaching, reading, praying, giving, sacrificing, willingness for persecution, ridicule, humiliation, rejection, resistance, and the presence and power of Jesus Christ.***

How about on a daily basis? Did they punch a clock? No! Were there times of inactivity, in terms of outward ministry? Undoubtedly! Would they have appeared as busy as the modern day minister? This is a little harder to speak to, since we are not given a day by day description of the life of any of the NT leadership, but one thing is evident, they did not posture themselves as businessmen fulfilling duties and satisfying the expectations of people for their labors. They lived their lives unto Jesus first and the people second. While

the modern minister is intensely “Do” oriented, the New Testament ministers appear to have been far more “Be” focused and moment by moment “led” focused.

When the Early Church recognized their leadership in a God honoring way they loved them, respected them, received their ministry, supported their ministry, and thanked God for them.

These men and women lived their lives under the direct orders of Jesus Christ, and were not ruled by any human missions boards, Church board, or committee. While they lived in accountability to Christ in all believers, they did not adjust their doctrine to satisfy the whims of people, did not speak only what was popular, were not fad chasers or fad starters, didn’t look for or try to create revivals, but themselves lived in continual personal revival, did not control anybody, didn’t rule over anybody, didn’t attempt to manipulate or coerce anyone to do anything for them. They were humble, giving, servants of God. Oh that God would restore to His body men and women whose lives were so dedicated to the will of God, and cared so little for the will men, who moved in divine power and authority, and cared so little for human recognition or personal legacy, who gave room for Jesus to be the head of His body, and never sought to gain personal control of anyone.

9. Mentored the body of Christ.

They lived the final commission of Jesus into their lives:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Their lives were busy, but didn’t value busyness for the appearance of industry. They were disinterested in the ideas of men, and passionate for the mind of Christ. They longed to see the lost saved, and the saved matured. Discipleship was a way of life, and not a Sunday school program. They lived with those they disciplined. They knew intimately those they taught the ways of God. They were relational, real, and passionate. No one had to coerce them to minister. No one had to define their job responsibilities. No one had to pay them so as to motivate them to follow through with their calling. They did what they did because they loved Jesus and His body. Consequently they didn’t boast in their labors, since they weren’t interested in gaining reputations, and had no desire for personal legacies. They were motivated by love.

They were more willing to be persecuted and less interested in personal acclaim. Where many of us would give up they persevered. Where we prefer the prosperity message, they lived the suffering message. They gave, they bled, and they died as powerful testimonies to what lives lived for Jesus alone can look like.

What did their daily lives look like? There were no missions agencies to report to, no organization with its set of performance requirements. They reported to Jesus Christ alone. Each day they arose, spent time with Jesus, who gave them their daily assignments and set their agenda.

Paul didn’t need anyone to tell him what he needed to be doing each day. He didn’t have any Church’s job description to satisfy. As a result of his reporting directly to the Lord Jesus his level of accountability was at a far higher level than if he had simply attempted to fulfill the agenda of men.

Paul looked out over the world, considered the life of Christ that the world needed, and set forth to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world. He obviously heard Jesus instruct him to do what he taught Timothy to do with others:

2 Timothy 2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also**. 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

God spoke to Paul regarding Priscilla, Aquila, Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Trophimus, Gais, Euodia, Syntyche, Tychicus, and others, to mentor and speak into their lives. No one had to have an organization tell them how to evangelize the world or raise up leaders. Paul knew his calling, knew those whom the Lord had added to his life to reach the world, and he spent time with them teaching them the ways of God and sending them out into the field. It’s no different today. Our challenge, as ministers of God, is to stop looking to missions organizations for approval, salaries, titles, and commissions, and to look to Christ to show us whom

He has chosen to mentor and commission us, and us to mentor and commission.

The Church still belongs to Jesus, even though it so often appears to be under the headship of men who head organizations. We who have left the traditional Church to the headship of man, and come back under the headship of Jesus should anticipate Him guiding us to build His Church exactly as He led Paul and the other apostles. If we will spend the time in prayer that it takes to hear His burden and directions, if we will identify those whom He is connecting us to in the work of the ministry, and then function at His leading we will find our lives will be animated with the same passion and lifestyle of the original apostles.

They looked to Him for guidance, power, and provision, and He never let them down.

May God raise up, once again, Ministers whose lives reflect the following level of commitment, as seen in Paul's life:

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

16 I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little.17 What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.18 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise!20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you*, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.21 To *our* shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also. 22 Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I.23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.24 From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one.25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;26 *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me;33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

There you have it. What did their ministry look like? 2 Corinthians 11 about sums it up. What was the driving force in Paul's life...a legacy, a salary, renown, applause of men, a need to control and conquer, a love of power, a plaque with his name on it in some building...not likely! It was all about, for, in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And when he was all done, how many folks came to his home going service? 2 Timothy 4:9 Be diligent to come to me quickly; 10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 11 **Only Luke is with me.** Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Early Church writings tell us he died in a small town outside of Rome, named Ostia, and only a small handful of faithful believers were there that day to watch him be beheaded for his faith.

Paul didn't do what he did for notoriety. He didn't write one single book in his entire life. All of his writings were personal letters to believers he knew and loved. He built no buildings, didn't live in fancy homes, had no expensive clothes, nor rode the most expensive horses. He was a quiet and simple man who loved passionately and lived sacrificially, and died nobly. Do it again Lord! Do it in my life, and lives of those who care only for Your Glory!