

The Power of the Gospel

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The Secret to Ministry

Read John 20:21

We have been sent by God into the world in the same way Jesus was sent. In fact, Jesus has passed on his ministry to us. Every ministry gift that is listed in God's Word is an aspect of Jesus' own ministry which he has "apportioned" to his Church.

Read Ephesians 4:7

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus has actually divided up his ministry among every believer in his Church. These ministry gifts are described as "apportioned grace" It is God's enabling power working within you, empowering you to do the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

This has some amazing ramifications upon our understanding of what ministry is and how it works:

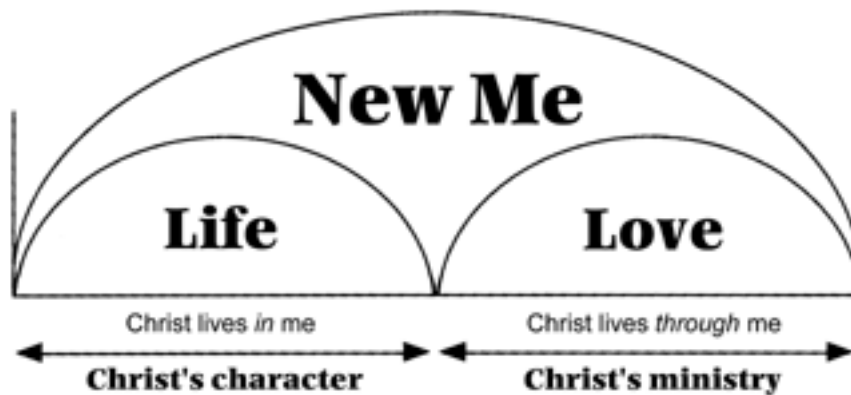
- The Church is expected to carry on the same ministry as Jesus.
- No one Christian has the *whole* ministry of Jesus – it has been divided up among the many-membered Body of Christ.
- Every believer has a *portion* of this corporate ministry of Christ.
- It is only *as we work together* that the whole ministry of Christ will be expressed to the earth.

Read Ephesians 4:15-16

Each particular role of ministry, each individual gifting, is like one piece to a very large puzzle. It is only as each piece finds its place in the puzzle that the whole picture of Christ's ministry is revealed.

Read Ephesians 4:13

This "whole measure of the fullness of Christ" is not just the character of Christ (as expressed *in* your life), but is also the ministry of Christ (as expressed *through* your life). As we have seen, the Gospel declares that Christ not only lives *in* you (the third quarter of the Gospel); he also lives *through* you (the fourth quarter of the Gospel).



You cannot have one with the other. Christ's character will result in Christ's ministry. And Christ's ministry is based on Christ's character. Both are made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit and both are moving toward the goal of seeing the life of Christ fully expressed in and through your life.

Read Philippians 2:5

Jesus Christ is our role model, the standard against which all matters of life and ministry are measured. Let's take a look then at what Jesus had to say about his own ministry.

Read John 14:10-11

This is Jesus' own description of his ministry. Let's have a look at **verse 10** from the perspective of several Bible versions:

New International Version: "Don't you believe that *I am in the Father*, and that *the Father is in me*? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, *it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*"

New Century Version: "Don't you believe that *I am in the Father* and *the Father is in me*? The words I say to you *don't come from me*, but *the Father lives in me and does his own work.*"

New Living Translation: "Don't you believe that *I am in the Father* and *the Father is in me*? The words I say are not my own, but *my Father who lives in me does his work through me.*"

The Living Bible: "Don't you believe that *I am in the Father* and *the Father is in me*? The words I say are not my own but are from my Father who lives in me. And *he does his work through me.*"

Do you pick up the implications of Jesus' words? There was no such thing as a personal ministry of Jesus. It is clear that in Jesus' mind, he was not just working *for* God. He saw his ministry as God working *through* Him. Jesus saw it clearly as his Father's ministry, not his own. That was why He was able to say:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

What Jesus was saying was that, even though he was returning to his Father, the ministry of the Father would not stop there. The ministry of the Father would now continue through the Church. The ministry of the Father would now continue through you.

Since you are called to the same ministry as Jesus, it is important to understand exactly how Jesus ministered.

How Jesus Ministered

Let's take a stroll through the Gospel accounts and note the way Jesus ministered to people. Let's see if we can determine a formula for ministry that we can use as we work with the Lord in his continuing ministry on the earth.

Read Mark 1:32-34

The ministry of Jesus had great impact on people's lives. He ministered with great power and authority (see [verse 27](#)), teaching the people and ministering the reality of that teaching to their lives.

Now think for a moment. What would happen if the events of [Mark 1:32-34](#) happened to you? What if the “whole town gathered at the door” of your home? What if news about your church “spread quickly over the whole region” ([verse 28](#))? What if people camped outside the door of your church from before the crack of dawn, just waiting for the church doors to open? What would you call this?

Most of us would call this revival! And isn't this the desire of your heart? How many of us pray earnestly that our community would respond to God and flock to church to hear God's Word? But what if it happened like it happened to Jesus? What would you do?

Read Mark 1:35

The response of Jesus to such a revival was very unusual. Rather than simply seeking to meet their need, the Bible says that while it was still dark, “Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Read Mark 1:36-37

As soon as dawn arrived, the disciples discovered they had a problem. The crowds were already at the door of the house, but Jesus was nowhere to be found! Finally, after a thorough search – “pursuing Him eagerly and hunting Him out” (*The Amplified Bible*) – they found him in a secluded spot, praying to his Father.

Peter's response was to rebuke Jesus. “What do you think you're doing here, Jesus? Don't you know that everyone is looking for you? You should be where the action is! You should be where the people are!”

But Jesus' reply is very enlightening. For in his words, we see the essence of his whole approach to ministry.

Read Mark 1:38

Even though he had compassion on the people (**Matthew 9:36**), it wasn't the needs of the people that drove Jesus in his ministry. Common sense would have dictated that Jesus go back into town and service the people's needs. But instead, Jesus declared:

“Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – and preach there also. That is why I have come.”

What was it that drove the ministry of Jesus? It was the will of his Father! In that quiet morning interlude with his Father, Jesus had received specific instructions which took him away from an outwardly successful ministry into virgin territory.

Even a cursory reading of the Gospel accounts reveals that Jesus was never distracted by the results of his own ministry. He was never motivated by a desire for outward success. To him, success was defined by obeying the will of his Father.

The Will of the Father

Let's read through a familiar story in John, then take a look at the significance of Jesus' actions in his ministry to the Samaritan woman by the well.

Read John 4:31-34

The context of this statement by Jesus – “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” – is the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (read **John 4:1-42**). **Verse 4** records that Jesus “must needs go through Samaria” (KJV). Any first century Jew would immediately see this as being unusual. For even though Samaria lay immediately between Judea and Galilee, no Jew would voluntarily travel through Samaria, since the Samaritans were considered accursed by God. Instead they would travel by a round-about route via the Jordan Rift – any distance was deemed reasonable if it meant avoiding Samaria. Yet Jesus “*had to go through Samaria*” (NIV).

Jesus' reason for being in Samaria was simple. He had been directed to be there by his Father. He was there to “do the will of [the Father] and complete his work.”

Joining the Work of God

Read John 5:17

Just one chapter after the incident in Samaria, Jesus is challenged by the Pharisees because he was healing on the Sabbath (see **verse 16**). His response to this challenge that he should not heal on a particular day was:

“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

As far as Jesus was concerned, if his Father is always at work, then he was also always at work. If the Father continues his work “to this very day” (the Sabbath), then the Son would also do the Father’s work on the Sabbath.

In **verse 19**, Jesus gives us the reason why he was working “to this very day.”

Read John 5:19

Jesus declared that his work and the Father’s work were one and the same (note **verse 18**). His words provided an incredible insight into his ministry – and into your ministry as one who now continues the ministry of Jesus. Let’s look at his words more closely:

“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

This is an amazing declaration by Jesus. The Son can do nothing – *nothing* – by himself. And just in case you might have missed his meaning, Jesus goes on and repeats himself a few verses later in **John 5:30**:

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

These three verses – verses **17**, **19** and **30** – reveal the secret to the success of Jesus’ ministry. Let’s take a look at the five principles these verses reveal:

- **There was no cut-off time to Jesus’ work.** Jesus knew no time-clock. Because the Father was constantly working, so was Jesus. He was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **By himself, Jesus could do nothing.** While it is true that Jesus, in his divinity, could technically do anything he pleased, he refused to step outside the parameters set by his Father. This is, in part, what **Philippians 2:7** means when it says that Jesus “emptied himself” (KJV) or “made himself nothing” (NIV). During his temptation, Jesus resisted every attempt by Satan to get him to exercise his divinity outside his Father’s direction (**Matthew 4:1-11**). This victory over Satan’s temptation set the pace for Jesus ministry from that point on. At no point did Jesus exercise power or authority outside of his Father’s will.
- **Jesus only did what he saw his Father doing.** This indicates that every healing and miracle performed by Jesus happened because he perceived his Father already at work in that person’s life. He was “finish[ing] his [Father’s] work” (**John 4:34**). He was following up on his Father’s initiative.
- **Jesus judged according to what he heard from his Father.** He made decisions not based on his own wisdom but upon the direction of his Father. There is a pre-supposition behind **John 5:30** that Jesus heard

constantly from his Father, that before he took any action or made any judgment in a situation, he had received his Father's instructions. This assumed also in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (**John 4:3**).

- **His motivation was purely to please his Father.** There was no trace of selfish ambition in Jesus' ministry. His motivation was not to please men but to please God.

Read Acts 10:37-38

The characteristic of the ministry of Jesus was that "God was with him" (note also **John 3:2**). Is this something way beyond you as a mere mortal? Or does God expect the same of you?

We need to understand that it was not the *divinity* of Jesus which determined this style of ministry. It was his *humanity*. So totally did Jesus identify with your humanity, even in his ministry he abided by the same limitations that you experience. He operated within the same parameters he expects of you. In both life and ministry, the Father has called you to follow in the footsteps of his Son.

Abiding in the Vine

Read John 15:4-8

In this passage, Jesus describes your life and ministry in the same terms he described his own:

- **If you abide in the vine, you will bear much fruit.** Both the fruit of a godly lifestyle and the fruit of ministry come from your intimate connection to the life of Christ. As Jesus went on to say, "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."
- **Apart from Christ, you can do nothing.** This is a repeat, almost word for word, of Jesus' description of his own ministry. Jesus said that he could do nothing by himself. Now he says you can do nothing by yourself.
- **If you abide in Christ and his words abide in you, you have authority to ask for anything.** This abiding in Christ involves spending intimate time with the Lord, drawing from his life and his wisdom. This is also the meaning of his words abiding in you – not just a dry memorization of Scripture, but a vibrant drawing on the daily words of God (**Matthew 4:4**). When our prayer is aligned with the will of God, our prayer takes on the authority of the Lord himself (**1 John 5:14-15**).
- **This kind of ministry style will bring glory to the Father.** Because it is not based on your own strength, ability or wisdom, the glory goes not to you but to God. Once again, this is the nature of the Gospel. The only boasting that remains is a boasting in the Lord (**1 Corinthians 1:31**).

- **This kind of ministry style will bear much fruit.** The fruit that is produced from a ministry totally dependent upon the wisdom and power of God can rightly be called God's own fruit. The fruit of the Gospel is an abounding fruit (note [Philippians 1:11](#); [Colossians 1:6,10](#)).
- **This kind of ministry style will prove that you are following in Jesus' footsteps.** As a disciple of Jesus, you take on both his lifestyle and his ministry style. You are a disciple of Jesus if you follow in his footsteps.

The Gospel links you with Christ not only in life but also in ministry. When Jesus called his disciples, his intention was to train them to minister in exactly the same way he did.

Read Luke 6:40

Let's take a look now at the disciples-in-training, and at one incident that became an object lesson in their training.

An Object Lesson

Read Mark 9:14-29

Jesus had just taken Peter, James and John with him up to the mountain summit, where they had witnessed him being transfigured in glory. When they returned to the base of the mountain, however, a great commotion was underway. A large crowd had gathered around the disciples who had stayed below and "the teachers of the law [were] arguing with them."

What was this argument about? It turns out that a father had brought his demonized child to the disciples. The disciples had tried to cast out the evil spirit, but had failed. You can be sure that the argument that followed this failure was about methodology. It was about formulas. It was about the way you should cast out an evil spirit. You must remember that the Pharisees and teachers of the law practiced exorcism (note [Matthew 12:27](#)) and you can be sure they had a very comprehensive set of formulas.

Jesus comes on the scene and, before long, deals with the evil spirit and sets the boy free. Now if you were one of those disciples, wouldn't you want to know what it was that you did wrong. What part of the formula did you miss?

Remember, these disciples were not novices. They had already been sent out two by two and had already had been given authority to cast out evil spirits (read [Luke 9:1](#); [10:17](#)). Yet this time they had failed, and probably not for want of trying. And so the disciples did what you probably would have done.

"After Jesus *had gone indoors*, his disciples asked him *privately*, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'"

Now the very fact that the disciples had to ask is interesting in itself. After all, if you were in their shoes, what would you do? You would watch what Jesus did

when he cast out the evil spirit. You would look for anything that he did differently from what you did. And so, the fact that the disciples had to ask Jesus meant that they had watched Jesus address the demon but *had not seen anything noticeably different* between Jesus' method and their method.

Can you just imagine Jesus saying to them, "Sorry, guys. I'd meant to tell you about this latest method, that last part of the formula, but just didn't get the opportunity." No, Jesus speaks directly to what they lacked. "This kind," he says, "can come out only by prayer."*

You can just imagine the disciples looking at one another blankly. After all, there was no point, just prior to casting out the evil spirit, that Jesus had prayed. He had not held up his hands and said, "Wait a moment, this kind can come out only by prayer and fasting, so we'll have to make an appointment three days from now." No, he had simply cast out the evil spirit.

So what was Jesus talking about. He was not, in fact, referring to a specific time of prayer especially organized to deal with uncooperative demons. He was not talking about prayer at the point of the need for authority. He was talking about a lifestyle of prayer.

Where had Jesus just come from? He had just been up on the mountain, where he had been transfigured. But Jesus did not in fact go up to the mountain specifically to be transfigured. According to **Luke 9:28**, Jesus took Peter, James and John up to the mountain *to pray*, and "[as] he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning" (**Luke 9:29**).

Jesus had already spent time with his Father in prayer. When Jesus pinpointed the need of prayer, he was identifying a lack in the disciples' lives which was affecting their ministry. A lifestyle of prayer is the key to the ministry style of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Formula for Ministry

In this generation, we have become a "formula-hungry" Church. We are often looking for the next methodology, the formula that will help our church grow and see more people come to know the Lord. Yet as we examine the ministry of Jesus we cannot see any one methodology to how he prayed for the sick or performed miracles. Take a look at just a few examples:

Read Matthew 8:2-4

Read Matthew 9:6-7,22

Read Matthew 20:32-34

Read Mark 6:13

Read Mark 8:22-25

Read Luke 4:38-41

Read Luke 7:11-15

* Some translations of the Bible include "prayer and fasting."

Read John 5:1-9

Read John 9:6-7

Read Acts 3:4-8

Read Acts 5:15-16

Read Acts 9:11-12

As you read through these scriptures, do you see any one pattern emerging? Far from it, the methodologies are quite varied. At times, Jesus laid his hands on the sick person. At other times, he simply spoke the word, or instructed the sick person to get up themselves. Sometimes he even did things like spitting in a blind person's eye!

The one thing that emerges from these verses is that there is no apparent formula. And this is exactly as it should be! For if there was a set formula, then you would rely on that formula instead of relying on God.

Have you ever held a remote-control in your hand? Central locking on a car is a wonderful thing – it gives such a sense of power! From a distance, you have complete authority over your car, with all the sound effects that come with that authority! Likewise, a remote in the hands of a couch potato can be a very dangerous thing!

God does not operate by remote-control. It is not just a matter of finding the right formula then pressing the button – beep! – and God does what you want him to. No, the authority does not flow from you to God; it flows from God to you!

The amazing revelation of the fourth quarter of the Gospel is that there are *no* formulas, except one – *closeness with God*. Rather than working on a principle of *remote* control, God operates by the principle of intimate contact with you.

The Secret Place

Read Matthew 6:6

God calls us into a hidden time of prayer with Him. Our open time of ministry will only be as powerful as the quality of our hidden time with God. It is in our time of prayer that we receive rest, wisdom and anointing for ministry.

Read Isaiah 50:4

Right at the beginning of the Biblical Studies Course we noted the extraordinary amount of time Jesus spent in prayer with his Father. We noted that this verse above looked ahead prophetically to the coming of Jesus, who was the one who “listen[ed] like one being taught.”

Read Mark 6:46

Read Luke 6:12

Read Luke 5:16 (note verse 17)

Read Luke 9:18

There is an open part of ministry and there is a hidden part of ministry. What people saw of Jesus' ministry was the open part – the miracles, the healings, the teaching. But the disciples saw the hidden part, the time he spent in the “secret place” with his Father. It is interesting to note that it was while Jesus was praying one time that the disciples approached him and asked him to teach them to pray.

Read Luke 11:1

It took a while, but by the time of Jesus' ascension the disciples had finally learned the importance of prayer in life and in ministry.

Read Acts 1:14

Read Acts 4:31

Read Acts 6:4

Read Acts 10:9

Is it any wonder that those same disciples experienced the flow of God's power through their lives. For they were walking in the footsteps of their teacher, applying both his lifestyle of prayer and his ministry style of doing what they saw the Father doing.

Read Mark 16:20

Earlier in Module 102 we asked the question, “How much prayer time should you spend in morning devotions?” The answer was, “You need just enough time to kickstart your day in prayer.”

Now, however, the question is slightly different. “How much time do we need to spend in prayer to have an effective ministry?” The answer is, “No amount of time is ever quite enough.” The only way we will effectively following in the footsteps of Jesus' ministry is to learn to spend time in the secret place with his Father and our Father (note [John 20:17](#)).

Read Matthew 10:27

A life of prayer is the foundation of all ministry. What we hear in the secret place with the Lord is what we speak out in the open. Out of the overflow of the life we draw upon in our hidden times with the Father in prayer, we minister to those around us. It is in the secret place that God shapes us, teaches us and prepares us to be sent out.

Read Isaiah 49:2

Fellow Workers with God

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9

You are called to be a fellow worker with God. But for this to happen, you need God's daily and continual grace ([Acts 14:26](#); [1 Corinthians 15:10](#); [2 Corinthians](#)

9:8; 12:9-10; Ephesians 3:7). Ministry is all about hearing from God, seeing what God has prepared and stepping into the work of God himself.

Read Ephesians 2:10

God is in the process of preparing you for ministry. This preparation involves soaking in God's word, learning to hear God's voice and being trained in obedience (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2:15; Hebrews 13:20-21**). It involves learning to operate in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the same anointing that was upon the Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry (**Luke 4:17-21; Acts 10:38; John 3:34**).

Read Colossians 1:29

The secret to ministry is simple. There are no formulas, except one – *closeness with God*. Just as in the third quarter of the Gospel, the closeness of your walk with God translates into a transformation into the likeness of Christ's character, so in the fourth quarter of the Gospel, the closeness of your walk with God translates into an anointing to minister as Jesus did.

You are not working *for* God. You are working *with* God as his fellow-worker. Your work is *from* God, *through* God and *to* God.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58