

The Church, A Ministry of Ministries

Functions not Titles

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

When the word ‘ministry’ is used to pertain to government, it means a department, a bureau, an agency or office. When used with Orthodox Churches it refers to the holy orders of their priesthood. With Jesus, it refers to teaching, preaching and evangelism.

The word also carries the connotation of administration even as a minister is seen as a member of a government. The Christian Church is a department or agency of the government (kingdom) of heaven. It is also a ministry comprising many other ministries, since, in the Church, there are many offices. For example there is the office of an Evangelist; the office of a Pastor; the office of a Teacher, etc. The ‘Church’ and ‘Ministry’ are at times used interchangeably in Scripture. When Peter proposes for the replacement of Judas Iscariot after the ascension of Jesus, prior to the initiation of the Christian era through the coming of the Holy

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Spirit, the KJV uses the word 'ministry' for 'Church' (Acts 1:17). The Good News bible (GNB) renders the word 'ministry' as 'work'. The ministry or work of 'Bro. A.', may be different from the ministry of 'Bro. B.', even as the ministry (work) of 'Sis. B.', may be different from that of 'Sis. C.', as determined by the grace (talent) endowment (Rom. 12:6-8).

What, friend, is your ministry in the ministry of Jesus Christ? Does your ministry meet needs as the Owner and Head of the ministry would have met if He had lived in the body at the place in which you are living? I emphasize this because the ministry of Jesus is about meeting the needs of His family members, and not about keeping laws. It is not about superiority one to another. A friend reported to me the other day of how he has no ministry of his own. I beg to differ, because there is no one who has not been given a ministry ab initio who has believed in Jesus Christ according to the Scripture.

Judas Iscariot had obtained a part of the ministry (work-phase) to work as a member of the body of Christ towards the growth and development of the body.

Ministry belongs to the body of Christ, not to one man. Every believer has a function by the Spirit's calling.

1 Cor. 12:7 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.*

But not everyone is called to the office of elder or pastor.

1 Tim. 3:1-2 *¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach.*

Leadership is by calling and heart, not by title. Jesus said,

Matt. 23:9 *Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

Spiritual fathers are known by heart, not by a title for power or money. If a member cannot correct a leader in love, that is not biblical fatherhood.

1 Tim. 5:1 *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers.*

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Another friend told me that he “runs a ministry and not a church”, because his group does not meet on Sunday mornings. But that definition does not fit Scripture. The Church is the people of God, not a Sunday meeting (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 12:27). And ministry happens whenever believers serve one another, not just on Sunday.

More importantly, no one owns the Church or ministry. Christ bought the Church with His blood (Acts 20:28). We are servants, not owners. 1 Cor. 7:23 says, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

God’s purpose is that all of us partner with Him in Christ for the salvation of mankind. That is the singular goal, and our eternal reward comes from working with Him, not building our own thing.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How does the Bible use the words ‘Ministry’ and ‘Church’?
 - * Interchangeably for function, not identity. ‘Ministry’ denotes the service / work of the ‘Church’, a people.

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- * ‘Ministry’ of which Judas Iscariot had a part (Acts 1:17 KJV); “ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4).
 - * Church does ministry. Ministry does not own Church. Rom. 12:6-8 lists ministries – prophecy, service, teaching – within the Body.
2. Used to refer to the gathering of Christians, can anyone own a ministry?
- * No. “You were bought for a price; do not become slaves of men.” (1 Cor. 7:23)
“Church of God which he purchased.” (Acts 20:28)
 - * You do not own what God bought. “My ministry” language is Judas language – he had “part” (Acts 1:17), not ownership. God has a ministry for all, “working together for the salvation of mankind” (2 Cor. 6:1), “workers together with Him”.
3. Something owned is either inherited or purchased or given. When in Scripture can we see an example of men inheriting or purchasing or being given Churches (Ministries) to own?
- * Inherited? No – “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps. 24:1), including people.

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- * Purchased? Only God did (Acts 20:28), “with His own blood” (1. Pet. 1:18-19).
 - * Given? Christ gave gifts to men (Eph. 4:8), not men to men. Shepherds are given to the Church (Jer. 3:15), the Church is not given to shepherds. To claim ownership is slave trading which is forbidden (1 Tim. 1:10 (NIV)).
4. It is appropriate to post pictures (portraits) of Church leaders on billboards as owners of Christian gatherings (Churches). True or False? Why?
- * False. “Let no one boast in men” (1 Cor. 3:21). “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?” (1 Cor. 1:12-13)
 - * Billboards with “G.O.” (General Overseer) pictures declare ownership. The Owner is invisible (Col. 1:15). If your face is on the banner, whose ministry is it? “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
 - * The only person we are to exalt in our hearts is Christ Himself, as revealed in Scripture. We do not need billboards of men, and we must beware of fake images of Jesus. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” (2 Cor. 4:5)

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5. It is only in the old King James translation and American Standard Version of the Bible that the word “Reverend” is found, in Ps. 111.9, in reference to the One sending redemption to His people (“holy and reverend is His name”). Why are men wearing the same title?

- * Because of tradition, not Scripture. “...holy and reverend is his name” (Ps. 111.9 (KJV)). Hebrew ‘yare’ means “to be feared, revered”.
- * Applied to God alone. No apostle was called “Reverend Paul”. “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” (Acts 10:25-26)
“ ‘See that you do not do that’ I am your fellow servant.” (Rev. 19:10)
- * To wear it is to claim what belongs to God. It is “ministry” not “majesty”. Diakonia, not Dominion.

6. Between titles and offices, which has the Scripture endorsed for Church workers?

- * Functions, not titles. “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.” (Eph. 4:11-12)
- * Jesus forbade titles. “Do not be called ‘Rabbi’... ‘Father’... ‘Teacher’” (Matt. 23:8-10).
- * Paul: “Paul, a servant” (Rom. 1:1), ‘apostle’, sent one, a function.

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- * Unscriptural titles: ‘Reverend’, ‘Archbishop’, ‘G.O.’, ‘Daddy G.O.’
- * Functional titles: ‘Evangelist Philip’ (Acts 21:8). Say ‘Bro. A., a teacher’, not ‘Reverend Dr. A.’

7. Jesus warns that we call nobody ‘father’ or ‘daddy’ in spiritual matters (Matt. 23:9). What use of ‘father’ or ‘daddy’ is he forbidding?

- * Spiritual fatherhood as title / authority. “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.” (Matt. 23:9)
- * Context: Pharisees loved titles (Matt. 23:6-7).
- * Meaning: No man mediates your faith. There is one mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no spiritual genealogy that replaces God (Jam. 1:18). “He brought us forth by the word of truth.”
- * Earthly ‘Daddy’ is OK; Spiritual ‘Daddy’ is forbidden.
- * Paul-Timothy: “son” = relationship of mentoring, not title of ownership (Phil. 2:22). Paul still called him “brother” (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1). If Paul refused “father” as a title, who are we to adopt it?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the knowledge that I can function as a pastor without being called Pastor; that You need ‘towels’, not ‘titles’. Amen.