

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY (Eph.4:11-12; Colo.4:17)

Dr. Alexander Kurian

Introduction

1. A clear, biblical understanding of the meaning of ministry for our personal life, church life & family life.
2. Lot of confusion and misunderstanding exists – “ministry” done by leaders/elders/pastors/evangelists/ full time workers/missionaries – “Lord’s work. Lack of participation & involvement in “ministry” - idleness, fruitless, unproductive and carnal lives.
3. “Ministry” means “service.” But In our assemblies, “ministry” has become a synonym for word ministry.
3. A holistic, biblical concept – expanding your vision and involvement in ministry, explore the commitment and contribution of each member.

Key Verse: Eph.4:11-12:

These gifts/gifted men are given to the church for the purpose of preparing every member to do the ministry. They are equippers (they themselves must be equipped). **Ministry is *diakonia* (service)** – rendered unto God and others on His behalf to bring Him glory and to build up His church.

1. **Universal Ministry of all Believers** – ministry of all members evident in the **gifts** of the Spirit given to each member. Each member has a ministry of some type (“each one”). The metaphors of the church and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is fused with the ministry of God’s people as a whole **corporate ministry**. No clergy /laity distinction, no separate ministerial class.
2. **Ordered Ministry** – Those who are designed (designated) by the Holy Spirit, gifted and equipped to provide leadership, order, functional direction, shepherding. They serve as those delegated by the church to perform certain

functions in the name and on behalf of the assembly. This must be recognized and followed for church order.

While all believers are ministers with varied ministries/services, the Spirit has distributed the ministries in such a way that the body may function with order (1 Cori.14:40). We have to recognize and follow those appointed to serve among us as leaders.

Points to Ponder: lack of clear understanding on this among our assemblies, unqualified leaders. Negligence and hesitance to recognize this aspect of ministry has created disastrous results.

The Meaning & Nature of NT Ministry

1. ***Ministry is humble service*** – The predominant word for ministry in the NT is “service” (diakonia) – someone waiting on tables (in classical Greek, menial service). This is the root word for “Deacon” (diakonos). To the Greeks there was no dignity in service. “How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone” (Greek saying). To the Greeks the only service deemed to be of value was that rendered to the state. We are bond slaves (**doulos**; one who is subject to the will of another) of Christ (Rom.1:1; Jude 1 Pet.2:16). Doulos also applies service to men (2 Cor.4:5; 1 Cor.9:19). A broad spectrum of service (practical service, not proclamation alone). We have to serve God by ministering to others.

The NT throughout and uniformly chooses a word that is entirely unbiblical and non-religious and never includes association with a particular dignity or position” (Eduard Schweizer).

The OT concepts of ministry is more ceremonial and liturgical; priestly service unto God (Hb: terms: Sharath and Abad; GK counterpart: leitourgos (official performance of a public service) – religious service, priestly service, temple service, narrow and restrictive, not a broad term as in the NT. Rom.15:27 (leitourgia, the collection made for the saints in Jerusalem); Rom.15:16 (as a leitourgos preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles). Rom.12:1: worshipful service, divine service (latreian). OT: Never to others; Only God-ward; NT- God and others.

People serving people in the name of Christ, in the power of His Spirit, ministering His grace for edification and blessing. Crucial change in the concept of ministry in the NT.

No place for self, recognition, applause, prominence, place, position, name, fame (e.g. our meetings, confes., divisions, competitive spirit and problems). We engage in ministry without any consideration of the basic meaning of ministry.

2. Serving/service is a part of **discipleship** (Jn.12:26) – Serve (diakoneo); Servant (diakonos).

3. **Greatness is to be measured in terms of service** (Mark 10:42-44 – “servant,” and “slave”).

4. Our concept of ministry (service) should be the same as **our Lord’s concept of ministry/service** (Mark 10:45) - **Serving involves sacrifice**. “To be served” (passive form of diakoneo); “but to serve” (active form).

- The ministry of Christ was characterized by service. Jesus came as the Servant of the Lord (“The servant songs” in Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 53. Any deviation from this model is not NT ministry.
- The ministry does not consist in domination, prominence, position, but in service (Jn.13).
- The glory of the ministry is not in terms of status, but rather in service.

5. **Ministry is Spiritual** (2 Cor.3:7-8) – Origin, source, energy, motivation, prompting is from the Spirit. He empowers. Spiritual gifts are manifestation of God’s “grace.” It seeks to produce spiritual results (the measure of ministry) – Eph.4:12-16. Ministry & spiritual gifts (leadership, teaching, physical help/well-being, various services). See diakoneo in 1 Pet.4:10.

4 Important words in 1 Cor.12 (to consider in relation to NT Ministry)

Pneumatika – spiritual gifts (spiritual in nature; gifts/functions assigned by the Holy Spirit).

Charismata – gifts, grace-gifts (gifts stemming from grace/ charis; characterized by grace, 1 Pet.4:10-11).

Diakonai – ministries (purpose of gifts as service).

Energemata – works, operations (the active outworking of the gifts in the energy of the Spirit).