

5. USE THE GIFT THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU - I PETER 4:10-11 – DIAKONEO

The last one we will look at is found in I Peter 4:10-11. In God's multi-faceted or manifold grace, He has given to us gifts to minister in the body of Christ. Now, if we don't use these gifts Peter tells us it is as if God's grace gift was given to us in vain. And folks, if we don't use these gifts they are wasted. Meyer puts it this way, "Manifold grace is many-coloured grace. As when a ray of light breaks into a spray of many hues, so each of us receives God's grace at a different angle, and flashes it back broken up into some fresh colour."

It just makes sense, to use the gifts that God has given to us and yet, many refuse to take those steps of faith. And notice that Peter tells us that we are to use the gifts with the ability that God has given to us and not in our own strength! These are not natural abilities or talents that a person has. God is the one who raises the person up, gives them the ability to do the work. Thus, God gets the glory and not man!

We are going to now look at the example of Jesus and the ministry He did when He walked this earth. He truly is the ultimate example for our lives of what a servant is all about! He shows us what this gift of ministry or gift of helps is to be manifested in our lives!

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

1. WASHING THE DISCIPLES FEET – JOHN 13

Jesus, of course, is our ultimate example of a minister or one who helps others. In John chapter 13, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus and his men had gathered together to share in the Passover meal.

And so, as guest arrived at someone's home the lowest servant would come and wash their feet and dry them. You did not want to sit next to someone at the table with dirty, stinky feet! But here, in this room that the disciples of Jesus met there was no servant, no one to wash their feet.

And none of the disciples were going to step forward and do this job, they were the Apostles not the B-postles you might say! In fact, the disciples were arguing who was going to be greatest in the kingdom, not a slave in the kingdom, so they were not going to stoop down and do this. They were not thinking of serving anyone, let alone washing anyone's feet!

And so God, the creator of heaven and earth, girds Himself with a towel, gets the water, and begins to wash the disciple's feet. And I'm sure that things grew quickly silent in the room at that time. No one was talking about being prime minister in the kingdom at this point! And as Jesus finished teaching them by example, He now was going to teach with words in John 13:13-17.

Jesus, who has taught them by example, now tells them to go out and do the same to others, to be a servant. Now Jesus is not saying that we are to literally go out and wash people's feet, that is not the point. He is telling us to go out and be a servant, to minister to people as He ministered to them!

2. FULFILLMENT IN DOING THE WORK OF GOD – JOHN 14

In John 4:13-14 Jesus encounters a woman by Jacob's well in Samaria, while His disciples are out looking for food. Jesus is telling this woman that she will never fill that void that is in her life with worldly things, only a relationship with God will satisfy her completely. He is the only one that will satisfy our hunger and our thirst!

Now keep in mind that Jesus was hungry, He was thirsty, He was tired at this point. And now His disciples returned and in John 4:31-34 we see Jesus teach by example. Notice that Jesus found satisfaction, joy, rest, fulfillment in doing the work of God. His hunger was satisfied. You see, you can't minister without getting something back in return. It comes as you give yourself away!

Now we have seen Jesus teach by example and now He was going to teach by words, showing them how this applies to their lives. And we read in verse 35, "**Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!**"

Please understand what is going on here. It is not harvest time yet, there is still four months to go until the harvest. Some say that this was a proverb that Jesus was speaking of; others say it was a literal time till the harvest. But don't miss the point through all the rationalizing. Whatever was growing in the fields, it was tall, but not ready to harvest yet. And as the woman of Samaria went to get the men of the city, they now were coming through the fields, and as they walked their heads were seen above these crops with their white turbans on. And Jesus is saying that it is harvest time now, the people are coming, there is your work, be a servant and fulfill the work of God that your joy may be full! In other words, I have shown you by my example what needs to be done; now you go and do the same!

May we be a servant of all and minister to people with the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit! It truly is a gift that is needed today and may we exercise it, the gift of ministry or the gift of helps!



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What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 11

10. THE GIFT OF MINISTRY OR HELPS

Paul, in Romans 12:3-8 lists more gifts of the Spirit and we are going to look at the gift of ministry. In I Corinthians 12:28 it is called the gift of helps. And these are a little different from the other gifts we have been looking at in that these gifts are given to individuals in the body of Christ to be used to minister to them.

It is not just a one time or specific time gift, but I believe the Holy Spirit gives these gifts to certain individuals, just as we saw with the gifted men that Christ has given to the Church. Now, not all have these gifts but God spreads them out so that each body is able to function properly! And these gifts that God gives to us are not based on how spiritual we are but they are grace gifts. They are gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit not because we deserve them, but that is what God has chosen to do!

The New Testament uses three different Greek words that are translated into "minister" or a similar English word. And we are going to look at them starting with the word that Paul used here in Romans 12:7 to help us understand what this gift is all about. And keep in mind that all three of these words will encompass what we are speaking of here. Also, please don't forget that this is a supernatural ability; it is not just a person who is really good at doing something, like ministry! May we not lose sight of that fact; this is a gift of the Holy Spirit that has been given to us! So let's look at these three Greek words so we can get some insight into what this gift is all about.

THE GREEK WORDS USED FOR "MINISTRY"

1. DIAKONIA OR DIAKONOS

The first Greek word we are going to look at is DIAKONIA, (dee-ak-on-ee-ah) and it means servant and we have translated it into our English word "deacon."

Now a deacon was someone who took care of the physical aspects of the church. This is the word that Paul used here in Romans 12:7 and it is also called the gift of helps, as Paul said in I Corinthians 12:28.

This is not a profession but it truly is a calling, and I believe it goes far beyond the idea of a deacon, as we think of it today. We should think of this gift as the laying down of our life to serve or minister to others. It is going that extra mile. Thus, we can translate this verse in Romans 12:7 like this: "or service, let us use it in our serving." This Greek word, DIAKONIA or DIAKONOS, is the most used word for "ministry" or "minister" in the New Testament!

2. LEITOURGOS

The second Greek word we are going to look at for "minister" is LEITOURGOS, (li-toorg-os') and this Greek word speaks of a wealthy person who has given himself freely to public service. He, in a sense, is a volunteer who has given himself to serve the community at his own expense. He works for the people, volunteering his time, you might say.

We see this word used in Philippians 2:25, as Epaphroditus gave himself to the service of Paul.

Also, Paul used this same Greek word in Romans 15:15-1. Here Paul tells us that he gave his life to the service of Jesus Christ, serving the Gospel message to those who were lost, and in this service to man, God was being worshiped.

And so, the idea here with this Greek word, LEITOURGOS, is no matter where you are you are a servant, volunteering to serve others at your own expense. And this may not necessarily be monetary in nature. It could be with your time, your resources, whatever, but it will cost you!

3. HYPERETES

The last Greek word for "minister" that we are going to look at is HYPERETES, (hoop-ay-ret'-ace) and it means, "under rower" or "galley slave." What does that mean? These are the ones who were located on the lowest level of the ship and yet they did the majority of the work. They were the slaves! But you see, without their efforts the ship would remain motionless or it would be tossed all over the place by the waves, not moving in the direction they needed to go. But the under rowers would propel the ship forward, helping it to reach its destination and yet they were the ones not seen and they were, of course, not thought of as being important, they were slaves!

When you look at the ministry, that is a good definition. It may not be pretty, it may even be smelly, and the work is tremendous, but you are propelling God's church through this world, helping them to see Jesus more clearly, to help people reach Jesus.

In Acts chapter 26, as Paul is speaking before king Agrippa of his conversion experience, of sharing Jesus with him, he said beginning in verse 16 what the Lord said to him, "**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. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.**" Acts 26:16-18. That word "minister" in verse 16 is the Greek word

HYPERETES, or under rower. Paul was a galley slave for Christ and truly that is what the Lord has called us to be!

I think it is important that we understand that this is a gift and how it truly is also a calling. It is not a job, we need to understand that. It is a calling and we will see this as we look at a few Scriptures.

A CALL TO MINISTRY?

1. THE CALLING - EPHESIANS 3:7 - DIAKONOS

In Ephesians 3:7 Paul tells us what this gift of ministry is all about, this gift that God has given to us. As you read this notice that this was a calling and this calling was not according to man, but by the gift of God's grace. Because it was of God, God gave him the power to do the work. Too often people wonder how they can become a minister. We don't make ministers, God does and as He raises them up all we can do is recognize what God is doing in their life.

2. THE EDUCATION - ACTS 4:13

So, what do you need to be a minister of Jesus Christ? What kind of education do you need? Let me explain by sharing with you what two apostles had in regards to education. In Acts 4:13 we see this played out for us.

Notice that Peter and John did not go to Old Rabbi University. They did not have their PhD in Theology. They were with Jesus and that fellowship with the Lord trained them up in the things that they needed.

What is interesting is that these religious leaders who had arrested Peter and John were the ones who were schooled in the Law of God, the Scriptures, and yet they saw something different in Peter and John.

Yes, they were fishermen, and in their minds they were uneducated and untrained men, and yet they spoke the Scriptures with boldness. How can that be? They recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus! We must remember that when the Lord calls us He also will equip us. Sometimes that means going to Bible School and sometimes it doesn't!

3. FULFILL THE MINISTRY - COLOSSIANS 4:17 - DIAKONIA

Here is one that seems so obvious and yet, I have seen people get involved in ministry and then just drop the ball you might say. God wants us to fulfill the ministry that He has called us to, that just makes sense and that is what Paul tells us Colossians 4:17.

How important are those words for each of us. What has God called you to do? Whatever it is, fulfill it and do the work to the best of your ability. It would seem that maybe Archippus was down, maybe discouraged, maybe he wasn't seeing much fruit from his labor and Paul encourages him to continue on, don't stop, don't give up, keep forging ahead in the work that God has called you to do. He wanted the church in Colosse to encourage Archippus to finish the work that God has called him to do, to fulfill it! We all need that encouragement from time to time as did Archippus!

And I love Paul because he had such a passion for the ministry. He had such a passion to fulfill the work that God had called him to do. Remember what Paul said in Acts 20:22-24?

He did not want anything to move him from the course that God has set for him. And thus, may nothing move us from the course that God has for us! And, know that what you do, even though you may not see results as quickly as you like, Paul reminds us, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**" I Corinthians 15:58. What a glorious promise, one that I hold onto and I hope you do too!

You see, whatever ministry that God has placed you in, give it your all, do your best. That is all God asks of us, to fulfill the ministry He has called us to for the betterment of the body of Christ!

4. GOD PLACES US IN MINISTRY - I TIMOTHY 1:12 - DIAKONIA

People often wonder, "How does a person get into ministry?" Let me say this, we don't appoint people into a ministry, God raises them up and we can only recognize what God has done in their life. The Lord puts people in ministry. That is what Paul tells us in I Timothy 1:12.

You see, God not only enabled Paul to be in ministry, but it was the Lord who put him in the ministry! I know, some of you look at Paul and see this great man of God and then you look at your own life and that is not what you see. And you wonder if God can ever use you!

It all comes down to this, it is the grace of God, it is the mercy of God that He extended to Paul and to us. It is not because of us, it is because of Him! God places us in the ministry as I have said before; all we must do is follow!