

The Ministry Gifts

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STUDY: THE MINISTRY GIFTS

Lesson I
CHRIST'S PROVISION FOR HIS CHURCH

- A. *He gave.* The Lord Jesus Christ gave these ministry gifts.

EPHESIANS 4:11

11 And HE GAVE some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

- B. *When did He give them?* When He ascended on High taking with Him the Old Testament saints who since their physical death had awaited in Paradise (Abraham's bosom) the consummation of God's great plan of redemption.

EPHESIANS 4:8-10

8 Wherefore he saith, WHEN HE ASCENDED UP ON HIGH, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

- C. *From where did He give ministry gifts?* These ministry gifts came (and come) from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He ascended and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High.

- D. *For what purpose did He give these ministry gifts?*

EPHESIANS 4:12

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

1. *For the perfecting of the saints.*

The Greek word (KATARTISMOS) translated "perfecting," according to W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, denotes a fitting or preparing fully, implying a process leading to consummation.

If one purpose for which the ministry gifts are given is the perfecting of the saints, will they every reach maturity without them? No.

2. *For the work of the ministry.*

3. *For the edifying of the Body of Christ.*

- E. *For how long did the Lord Jesus Christ give the ministry gifts?*

EPHESIANS 4:13

13 TILL WE ALL COME in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

The ministry gifts are Christ's provision to the Church to build up, edify, and mature the saints.

An erroneous teaching which surfaced a few years ago stressed what it termed "body ministry." (And there is a certain truth to that. God does use everyone.) But some taught, "We don't need pastors and ministers any longer. God is not using ministers anymore. God has a different program now."

The Scripture says that He gave these gifts to men, "*TILL WE ALL COME . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*"

Until Jesus comes, "all of us" as a body of believers will never come to that place of maturity. When Jesus comes, some spiritual babies will just have been born into the family of God. They will not have had time to mature.

These ministry gifts are God's program for the maturing of the saints until Christ comes for His own.

F. *What is the ultimate aim in all ministry?*

EPHESIANS 4:13-16

13 TILL WE ALL COME in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST:

14 THAT WE HENCEFORTH BE NO MORE CHILDREN, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, MAY GROW UP INTO HIM in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

1. We need all five ministry gifts working together to bring the Body of Christ unto full stature in Christ.
2. Spiritual children are easily disturbed and swept about by false things.
3. The ministry gifts Christ placed in the Church help us *grow up into His image*.
4. We cannot reach that place without the function of the fivefold ministry.
5. Some areas of Christendom have not matured beyond a certain stage of growth because they recognize only two or three ministry gifts: evangelist and pastor, and sometimes teacher.

Summary: The ultimate aim of all ministry is not for self glory or to magnify the human in any way. It is entirely to edify and mature the Body of Christ. It takes all these ministries functioning together to edify — build up — the Body of Christ.

STUDY: THE MINISTRY GIFTS

Lesson II
THE DIVINE CALL

A. *God hath set some in the Church. There is a divine call.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27,28

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 AND GOD HATH SET SOME IN THE CHURCH, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

1. Ephesians 4:11 says "Jesus gave." This passage says "God set."
2. Notice this Corinthian passage calls the Body of Christ the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the Church.

B. *God sets ministry gifts in the Church — not man.*

1. There is a vast difference between God setting some in the Church — and man setting some in the Church.
2. A study of Church history reveals that down through the centuries, various groups have endeavored to get back to what they call New Testament practices.

They've set up organizations which often were something man manufactured — something in the flesh; something carnal.

They "called" and "set" people who had no divine calling into certain offices.

This is unscriptural.

God does the setting.
God does the calling.

C. *You do not enter the ministry — any phase of it — just because you feel it is a holy calling and you'd like to respond.*

1. You cannot make yourself a ministry gift.
2. It is dangerous to do something just because you want to do it.

D. *You do not enter the ministry because someone else tells you that you are suited for it.*

Personal experience: As a pastor, I've watched young people in the church who were apt to work for God. Some of them, I believe, were called. Some of them, I am certain, were not. I have seen other members in the church ruin some of these young

people by getting around them and saying, "I believe you are called to preach," and so forth. They tried to do it and failed. Oftentimes they got out of church completely because of it.

1. Don't go into the ministry because somebody else called you.
2. Don't go into the ministry because your mother called you.
3. Don't go into the ministry because your father called you.
4. Husbands, if you are a minister of the gospel and have a divine call on your life, don't try to call your wife into the ministry. Let her be the helper who is meet (or proper) for you, as God designed her to be. Include her in every way you possibly can.
5. Wives, if you are called, don't try to make a preacher out of your husband if he is not one. But don't shut him out of your life. Work him into your life, and even your ministry, in every way you possibly can.
6. There is a divine call to the ministry. You must determine whether or not it is on your life. Don't try to go into the ministry without a calling from God to do so.

E. *How can you tell a divine call?*

1. You will have the conviction in your own spirit.
You will have the witness in your own heart.
You will have the spiritual equipment — gifts of the Spirit — that go along with the office or offices to which you are called.

Personal experience: I just knew I was called deep down inside myself. How? By an inward intuition. It was always with me. It was as much a part of me on the inside as my ears were a part of me on the outside.

2. God deals with man's spirit.
 3. Learn to listen to your spirit.
 - a. Learn to listen down on the inside of you and you will know many things you don't otherwise know.
 - b. But if you are just messing along in the world, about half-dedicated, half-in and half-out because you are living too much in the carnal realm, carnality will dominate you, and you won't be conscious of your spirit.
 - c. If you are fully dedicated and consecrated to God to do anything He wants you to do, you will become conscious of that something inside you.
 - d. There will be a divine compulsion on the inside of you.
- F. The methods by which men are called are unimportant. But obedience to the call is important.

1. If methods were important, the Bible would emphasize them; it does not.
2. The Bible has much to say about obedience.
3. Sometimes God does move in extraordinary ways. But this is not the rule.
 - a. *Visions.* Sometimes people will have visions. Paul did. I have had visions. But I was in the ministry 15 years before I did. I went into the ministry without any kind of "supernatural" (if you want to call it that — actually, everything of God is *supernatural*) visitation. I went just by the inward intuition; the inward witness.
 - b. *Prophecy.* Ministry gifts *are not* set in the Church by prophecy. However, a confirmation to the ministry may come through prophecy.

ACTS 13:1,2

1 Now there were in the church which was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon . . . and Lucius . . . and Manaen . . . and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I HAVE CALLED THEM.

Barnabas and Saul were not called by prophecy. They were not set in the ministry by prophecy or by man. God just confirmed their call through prophecy.

Personal experience: In the last church I pastored, we were all praying around the altar one night in united prayer. I was laying hands on various ones and praying over them as the Spirit of God seemed to lead me.

Suddenly, I was drawn like a magnet to a very quiet young lady who was actually timid in a sense. When I laid hands on her head to pray, I was surprised to find myself saying, "This is the confirmation of what I said to you at 3 o'clock this afternoon as you were praying in the storm cellar. I told you I would confirm it."

I didn't know what that meant. And I didn't ask her about it right then because she began to cry and pray even more.

I telephoned her later and asked, "Did that mean anything to you? Were you in the cellar praying at 3 o'clock?"

"Yes," she said, "the Lord said that He called me to the ministry and that He would confirm it in the service tonight."

Notice she was not set in the Church as a ministry gift by prophecy. It was confirmed that way — but she wasn't set into the ministry that way.

1. If a so-called prophecy does not confirm what you have in your own spirit, forget it.

Personal experience: Several years ago a man told me that a year before, a "prophet" had laid hands on him and had given him five spiritual gifts, including gifts of healings and the word of knowledge.

This so-called prophet had said to him, "I've been observing you, and I've noticed that the word of knowledge and gifts of healings operate in you."

This man said to me, I must have these gifts because that prophet said I did. Maybe you can tell me how to operate them."

I said, "In all these months have these spiritual gifts ever manifested in your life?"

"No," he said.

I said, "If I were you, I would just forget it. In the first place, that so-called prophet didn't give you anything. Only God can give spiritual gifts. In the second place, if spiritual gifts were there, they would endeavor to come into manifestation. You would have some kind of intuition about it. If I were you, I would just stay in the church here and be faithful."

I was preaching in the area some time later. I noticed he had remained a layman, faithful to God, and was a blessing to the church. Had he tried to enter some other office, he could have become a curse, instead of a blessing.

G. Seeing a *need* is not a *call* to the ministry.

1. If we are not careful, we slip into the attitude of the Church in general that seeing a need is a call. This is not scriptural. *There is a divine call, given by God alone.*
2. Naturally, as Christians, anytime we see a need, we are concerned about that need and will endeavor with all the ability we have to minister to that need. That is scripturally correct. But it is not to be confused with the divine call to the ministry.

H. An anointing evidences a divine call.

Personal experience: Many years ago I heard a man preach at a great convention of 5,000 people or more. "Seeing a need is a call," he stated. Although he was in the ministry, he said, "If I have ever been called to the ministry, I don't know it."

I thought to myself, *If he hadn't told us, all of us would have known it in 15 minutes anyway.* There was no anointing on him.

When a person is called to the ministry, there is an anointing that just comes upon him or her to stand in an office. Otherwise the person would just stand up and talk. It's good to talk and share whatever you have, but that's different from being called to a ministry and being set in the Church.

- I. If God didn't call you to full-time ministry, don't try to get into it; you will be a misfit.
- J. Knowing that you *know* you are divinely called settles the matter once and for all. There should be no confusion on the subject.

Personal experience: As I said, I entered the ministry without any kind of supernatural visitation. I just went by the inward intuition — the inward witness. And I have never been confused on the subject.

Yet through the years, especially during the 12 years I pastored, I've seen many ministers who were up and down, even wondering whether or not they were really called.

And I can tell you why they were. It was because they were living by flesh and in the mental realm instead of in the spiritual realm.

If Sunday School was down, they were down. Their faces were long. If finances were down, they were down.

You'd hear them talk like this: "I don't know whether God called me to preach or not anyway. If I can ever get the Sunday School back up where it was . . ." "If I can get the finances back where they were . . ." "I think I'll just leave."

Some of them asked me, "Brother Hagin, don't you ever get down?"

I said, "No, I stay up all the time. If we just have a half a crowd, I'm up just as much as when we have a big crowd. You see, I know God called me. And I know He called me to come here. So I will stay until He tells me to leave. If no one shows up but two snaggle-toothed old women, I'll give them my best and stay faithful.

"I never even think about, *I might be out of the will of God*. Because I know God said, 'Go.' He's an intelligent Being. I'm an intelligent being. He will communicate with me and tell me when to leave."

You see, you can worry and bother yourself and open the door for the devil to have a field day in you.

This was my motto before I ever read that Wigglesworth said it. I guess any person of faith would say it.

I am not moved by what I see.

I am not moved by what I feel.

I am moved only by what I believe.

Learn that spiritual things are more real than natural things.

Learn to look to your spirit.

Your spirit will tell you.

Your spirit knows things your head doesn't know.

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Lesson III
WHOM GOD CALLS, HE EQUIPS

- A. *The ministry gifts are people* — people who are called of God to the full-time ministry.
1. Philip is called an evangelist.
 2. Peter is called an apostle.
 3. Paul is called a prophet and a teacher first, and later on an apostle.
 4. Other people in the New Testament are called ministry gifts.

- B. Those people (ministry gifts) whom God calls, *He equips with spiritual gifts*.
1. These ministries are not based on *natural* gifts, but on spiritual gifts — *supernatural* gifts.
 - a. Not realizing this, results in the Church and the ministry getting away from the supernatural into the natural.
 2. When a person is born again, God has in mind what He called that person to do. With the new birth, one is equipped with certain spiritual talents to equip him to stand wherever he is set in the Body of Christ.
 3. Being filled with the Holy Spirit enhances that.

Personal experience: I preached two or three years without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, yet the same anointing came on me to preach then as it does now.

4. *God equips people with the spiritual gifts necessary to stand in the office He calls them to.*
 - a. Laymen can have spiritual gifts operating through them. But ministers will be equipped to minister regularly with those gifts necessary to stand in the office they are called to.
 - b. The same spiritual gifts operating through the ministerial level will carry a greater anointing than it does operating occasionally in a layman's life.

Example: Tongues and interpretation or prophecy operating through the ministerial level carry a greater anointing than when operating through the laymen level.

5. Education is good — but we need more than education. Ambition, if it is legitimate (seeking that for which Christ has apprehended) is good — but we need more than ambition. *We need a ministry equipped with supernatural gifts.*

C. The ministry gifts consist *not in name, but in power*.

1. It is easy to call yourself something, but that doesn't make you that.

You can sit in a garage and call yourself a car, but that doesn't make you one.

2. You can call yourself a pastor, but that doesn't make you one.

You can call yourself an apostle, but that doesn't make you one.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In other words, the ministry to which you are called will be evident in your life. You will have the divine enablement or endowment to stand in the office to which you are called.

D. All the work of the ministry comes under the *lordship* of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus Christ is the Head of His body, the Church. The Head and the body are one; therefore, Jesus directs all operations of His body from the right hand of God the Father.

MARK 16:20

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, THE LORD WORKING WITH THEM, AND CONFIRMING THE WORD with signs following. . . .

- a. Notice it was their Lord working with these early disciples.
 - b. It was as their Lord and not merely as their Helper that Jesus worked with the disciples. Although He is our Helper, through the Holy Ghost, He is also our Lord.
2. The *Lord Jesus Christ* is the Head of the Church.
 - a. He is the One who gave.
 - b. He is the One who calls.
 - c. He is the One who equips.
 - d. Let *Him* do it.

STUDY: THE MINISTRY GIFTS

Lesson IV
FAITHFULNESS TO THE CALL

Introduction: Some people in the ministry were either never called, or they are hopelessly unfaithful. Why? Because God didn't plan any spiritual failures. Whether we are individual members of Christ, or we are called to be a ministry gift, He did not give some to be failures and some to succeed. No, He planned that all would succeed. Therefore, some ministers are either hopelessly unfaithful, or they were never called. You see, you have to apply yourself to the calling of God upon your life. Ministries don't just happen any more than marriages just happen. You have to work at a marriage, just as you do the ministry.

A. *Study.* Preparation time is never lost time.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

B. *Dedicate.* Along with the call goes a dedication.

C. *Consecrate.* Along with the call goes a consecration.

D. *Submit to the will of God.* Along with the call goes a submission to the will of God.

Comments: When you're first beginning in the ministry, you don't start out on top. Even in climbing a ladder, no one starts out on the top rung. They start on the bottom rung and climb up. You have to do that in ministry. And sometimes the first years of ministry are a great sacrifice. But if you know the call is there, you will stay in there no matter what it may cost you.

You have to make this kind of a consecration to God: *Go under or over, sink or swim, live or die, I'm staying with it because God called me.*

Because you are going out by faith, you know it's not going to wind up that way — but it will look that way sometimes. It will look as if you are going to do all of them — go under, sink, and die.

But if you will stay faithful at those times when it looks as if you're going under, when it looks as if you're sinking, when it looks as if you're dying — **YOU WILL GO OVER BECAUSE YOU ARE CALLED OF GOD!!!**

Example: Many years ago a man and his wife and two small children went on the foreign mission field. They were Full Gospel missionaries before there were any organized Full Gospel churches. He told me that the first six months it looked as though he and his wife and both children were going to starve to death. "It would have been easy to come home," he said. "But we stayed put because we knew God had called us. And we knew what God's Word said. I made this dedication to God. 'We will stay with it even if all four of us die.'"

They didn't die. Before the year was out they were flourishing financially.

But if they had not been faithful, it would not have happened. Had they griped and complained and said, "I don't know why this happened to us. If God

called us, why doesn't He provide for us?" God would not have been able to do what He wanted to do for them, and they would have been failures.

E. *Be a person of integrity.*

1. Psalm 15:4 gives one of the characteristics of a spiritual pilgrim as, ". . . *He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*"
2. People who have the call of God on their lives and who are also people of integrity — honest and sincere — will stay hooked up with God.

F. *Develop. Mature. Grow.*

1. Ministries are developed. If you are called to the ministry, take time to develop the ministerial gift.
2. It takes time for people to become equipped to do what God has for them to do. They must not only be equipped spiritually; they must mature naturally and spiritually.
3. Usually people start out in a different area of ministry from what God called them to.
 - a. Saul (Paul) is named as one of the five prophets and/or teachers in Acts 13. Later the New Testament calls him an apostle. But he didn't start out with an apostle's ministry. He started out as a preacher (Gal. 1:11,15,16,23).
 - b. Philip started out in the ministry of helps (Acts 6:1-6). He was faithful in that office. Later he was moved to the office of the evangelist (Acts 8:5-7; 21:8).
 - c. If God called you to pastor, you will not begin pastoring a church of 2,000. You would not know how to handle the job. You may start with a small flock, or as an assistant, or associate pastor, youth pastor, and so forth.
 - d. God may have called you to be an evangelist. You may eventually preach to 5,000. But you won't start out preaching to 5,000. You may start out by preaching to five.
 - e. Do not despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10).
4. Take time to wait and see what God wants you to do. Let God make you the minister He wants you to be.
 - a. Don't say, "I choose this office." You cannot choose. God alone sets people in ministry gift offices.
 - b. Don't try to be like someone else. Just be yourself. Take the truth of God's Word that is revealed to you and let God use your personality to inject it. Then it becomes your message.

- c. Don't just say, "I'm a teacher." Stop and wait and find out whether that is what you are or not.
- d. Just because you had one revelation or have given a few words of prophecy, don't say, "I'm a prophet."

From all probability you are not.

Even if your call were as a prophet, you couldn't enter that office right away. You wouldn't be capable.

God will not violate His own rules. His Word says not to put a novice in the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:6). God will not put an immature Christian or an immature preacher into the office of prophet.

- e. Get some spiritual growth and development under your belt before you try to ascertain and advertise what office you are in.
 - f. If God called you and set you in an office, you won't have to advertise it, anyway. People will find out eventually. If they do not, it is not your ministry.
 - g. If the ministry is there in embryo stage, it will develop as you are faithful.
 - h. You must first determine whether or not the call of God is there. Then be faithful to work for God wherever you are. (To preach and to teach the Word is always right.) Eventually — when you reach some maturity, both mentally and spiritually — God will let you know what your calling is.
5. Take time to wait on God. Take time to fast and pray. Take time to find His perfect will for your life and ministry.

- a. I shall never forget the day I was kneeling at the altar in my church when I said to the Lord, "Lord, I've been waiting on You for 10 years."

Just as plain as some man talking to me, He said, "No, you haven't. I've been waiting on you for 10 years. I've been waiting on you to make up your mind to obey me. I've been waiting on you to make up your mind to do what I want you to do."

- b. In the first vision when Jesus appeared to me, He said, "When you left your last church you entered into the first phase of your ministry."

I was shocked. I'd been in the ministry 15 years. I said, "Lord, I spent 15 years in the ministry, and You blessed me."

He said, "Certainly. I blessed you all I could. I blessed the Word you preached because I honor My Word. That doesn't mean I was honoring you."

Then He said this, "*Many ministers live and die and never get into the first*

phase of the ministry I have for them. That's the reason many of them die prematurely."

(You see, if you are not in the perfect will of God, you are in a place where Satan can attack you. If you are not in the perfect will of God, it is difficult to claim the highest that belongs to you.)

"Many ministers live and die and never get into the first phase of the ministry I have for them." I thought about it through the years. I could have done the same thing.

"Oh, yes," somebody said, "the Lord singled you out, though."

No, He never did a thing until I started seeking Him. He never moved. He never told me a thing.

c. *Stay open to God.*

If you settle down into another call, or another area of ministry and don't keep the communication lines open between you and Heaven, God will let you go on and suffer the consequences of being out of the perfect will of God.

d. When you're only in the *permissive will* of God, something won't seem right to you. You can tell the difference. It's sort of like washing your feet with your socks on.

G. *Do not intrude into the wrong office.*

1. I think the thing that hinders people in the ministry more than anything else is trying to stand in the wrong office. The tragedy is that people live and die there and never know it.

2. *It can cost you your ministry.*

a. Charles Finney was the greatest soulwinner and evangelist since the New Testament days. When he was about 80, he wrote, "I know many things, deeper things of God, than I am able to teach. If I do teach these things, I lose the ability to win souls."

Why, if he knew these things, couldn't he teach them? (Of course he could share them with others individually, but he didn't teach them to the Church at large.) Because that was not his calling. Let the teachers do that. His calling was the evangelistic office. His calling was to win souls. If he got over into the wrong office, he ceased to be a blessing.

b. Part of my calling is to be a teacher. I get more people saved by teaching than I ever did by preaching evangelistic sermons because that is what God told me to do.

3. Intruding into the wrong office *can cost you your life.*

- a. Holy things are holy. In the Old Testament if someone besides the High Priest intruded into the Holy of Holies, he fell dead instantly. He had intruded into the wrong office.
- b. It is dangerous to play with holy things.
- c. The calling of God is holy.
- d. The ministry of God is holy.

H. *Develop Character.*

- 1. More is required of people who are separated unto an office.
- 2. Set the right example always.
- 3. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.
- 4. Fill your place with dignity.

If you are called of God to stand in an office, that office demands respect. If you have respect for the office you are in, you will teach people to have respect for that office.

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Lesson V
VARIETY AND BALANCE

- A. One of the most fascinating things concerning the ministry gifts of Christ is their variety.
 - 1. *Apostles.* The apostle's office seems to embrace almost every type of ministry.
 - 2. *Prophets.* The prophet's ministry is inspirational. He speaks by direct, divine inspiration and revelation.
 - 3. *Evangelists.* The evangelist has a direct endowment from the Lord to PREACH the Word for the salvation of souls.
 - 4. *Pastors.* Pastors are the shepherds of God's sheep.
 - 5. *Teachers.* Those who fill the office of teacher teach the Word, not by natural ability, but by the divine ability of the Holy Spirit.
- B. These ministry gifts have been given to the Church to bring a balance in the Church.
 - 1. We see an example of ministry gifts working together in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1).
 - 2. The matter of a balance of ministry gifts in the Body of Christ is vitally important to be effective.
 - 3. One ministry gift office alone cannot hope to effectively be able to minister to all the needs of the entire Body of Christ.
 - 4. At the extreme are those who think a minister doesn't have a valid ministry unless he ministers mostly by manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit, rather than by teaching or preaching the Word.
- C. The Body of Christ needs to realize that Christ gave a diversity of ministry gifts to the Church for a reason. All of them are essential in order for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to come unto full stature in Christ.
 - 1. Teachers can sometimes think evangelists are too flamboyant and sensational.
 - 2. Evangelists can think teachers are dry and dogmatic.
 - 3. Evangelists and teachers often agree saying that prophets can sometimes be intense and extreme.
 - 4. All such attitudes are wrong.

5. There can be extremes in all usage of ministry gifts. Yet we must not repress the gift of God, for we may quench the Spirit of God.
- D. It is God's divine plan that each ministry gift provide a check and balance to correct and complement the other.
1. The prophet is to inspire the teacher.
 2. The teacher is to steady the prophet.
 3. The evangelist is to continually remind us of the lost and dying world and its need for the gospel.
 4. The pastor is to demonstrate to us that souls still need much nurturing and care after they have been won to the Lord.
 5. And the apostle, above all, is to inspire and lead the way for gaining ground by establishing new works for the Lord.
- E. The ultimate goal of all ministry is to unite — not divide.
- Ephesians 4:13 reads, "Till we all come in the unity," and not, "Till we are all divided into splinter groups."
- F. A person can stand in more than one office; we separate ministry offices to define them.

STUDY: THE MINISTRY GIFTS

Lesson VI
THE APOSTLE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28

28 And God hath set some in the church, **FIRST APOSTLES**, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

EPHESIANS 4:11

11 And he gave some, **APOSTLES**. . .

- A. The ministry gift which heads the list is the apostle. However, that does not mean it is the most important ministry gift in the local body today, nor does it mean that apostles are to dominate over other ministry gifts in the Body of Christ. In other words, Paul was not establishing a hierarchy for local church government by the way he listed the ministry gifts here.
1. Actually, Paul was probably listing these offices in the order he did because of the way God “set” or *developed* ministry gifts in the Early Church.
 2. You see, in the establishing of the *universal Church* following the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles and prophets were obviously the most important ministry offices because they were the first ministry gifts to be developed or “set” in the Body of Christ.
 - a. Also, they were foundational apostles and prophets — they laid the foundation for the New Testament.
 - b. In other words, they were initially the most important offices when the Early Church was just beginning because they brought forth the revelation of the New Testament, which is the foundation upon which the Church in all generations is to be established.
 3. However, in terms of the operation of the *local church* today, First Corinthians 12:28 is not a list of the offices of apostles and prophets in their order of importance. Neither is it a list indicating that apostles and prophets are the *governing* offices within the *local church*.
 - a. Apostles and prophets do not make up the office of “governments” found in First Corinthians 12:28. For one thing, Paul listed “governments” as an entirely separate office. It probably refers to the pastoral office.
 - b. For another thing, some offices are listed in a certain order in the ministry list in Ephesians 4:11, and in another order in the ministry list of First Corinthians 12:28.
 - c. Therefore, this list in First Corinthians 12:28 does not indicate that the offices of the apostle and prophet are the most important or the governing offices in the *local church* today.

- B. The most significant statement of fact in the Bible regarding this office is that it was *filled by Christ Himself*.

HEBREWS 3:1

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

- C. The Greek word APOSTOLOS translated apostle means *one sent forth, a sent one*.
- D. *Jesus Christ is the greatest example of a sent one.*

JOHN 20:21

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: **AS MY FATHER HATH SENT ME**, even so send I you.

- E. A true apostle is always *one with a commission* — not one who merely goes, but one who is sent by the Holy Spirit.

1. Acts 13 gives a picture of the sending forth of Barnabas and Paul to be apostles to the Gentiles.

- F. *The signs of an apostle.* The Bible speaks of the signs of an apostle:

2 CORINTHIANS 12:12

12 Truly **THE SIGNS** of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in **SIGNS**, and **WONDERS**, and **MIGHTY DEEDS**.

What are these signs?

Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds.

- G. *The fruit of an apostle.* The Bible also talks about the works or fruit of the apostolic ministry:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye **MY WORK** in the Lord?

1. In defending his apostleship, Paul could rightly say, “. . . *are not ye my work in the Lord?*” The fruit of Paul’s apostolic ministry were *people* who were solidly established in the *Word*.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:2

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

2. Paul could also point to solidly established churches and say that they were the seal or the *fruit* of his apostolic ministry. In his epistle, Paul addresses many of his letters to those churches he had established. And in First Corinthians 4:15, we see the true nature of the apostolic call.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:15

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, **YET HAVE YE NOT MANY FATHERS**: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

3. Paul was really a spiritual father to those whom he had established in the faith. Although Paul founded and established many churches, he didn't rule over those people, any more than a father dictatorially rules over his children whom he loves.
 - a. Paul's apostolic office didn't give him the authority to tell people and churches what to do in every area of life. Yet some of the so-called "apostles" today try to run every aspect of the local church, including people's personal lives.
 - b. Notice Paul's statements to every church he wrote in the epistles. He didn't command them. He wasn't a dictator over them. He addressed them in fatherly tones of genuine care and concern: "*Not I Paul myself BESEECH you by the MEEKNESS and GENTLENESS of Christ . . .*" (2 Cor. 10:1).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:6-12

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, **AS THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST.**

7 But **WE WERE GENTLE AMONG YOU**, even as a **NURSE CHERISHETH HER CHILDREN:**

8 So being **AFFECTIONATELY DESIROUS** of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because **YE WERE DEAR UNTO US.**

9 For ye remember, brethren, **OUR LABOUR and TRAVAIL:** for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, **WE PREACHED UNTO YOU THE GOSPEL OF GOD.**

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how **HOLILY and JUSTLY and UNBLAMEABLY WE BEHAVED OURSELVES AMONG YOU** that believe:

11 As ye know how we **EXHORTED and COMFORTED and CHARGED** every one of you, **AS A FATHER DOTH HIS CHILDREN,**

12 THAT YE WOULD WALK WORTHY OF GOD, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

- c. Paul demonstrated his attitude in these passages of Scripture. It is not an attitude of trying to lord it over people and rule them. What did Paul *exhort, comfort, and charge* believers?
- d. Did Paul demand his right to dominate them? Assuredly not! Did he command all churches under his "authority" to tithe to him as some so-called "apostles" today are doing? A thousand times, no! He exhorted and charged believers *to walk worthy of God*.
- e. Paul's apostolic care and concern for the churches is made even more clear in *The Amplified Bible*.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7,11 (Amplified)

7 But we behaved gently when we were among you, **LIKE A DEVOTED MOTHER NURSING AND CHERISHING HER OWN CHILDREN. . . .**

11 . . . like a **FATHER [DEALING WITH HIS CHILDREN]**, we used to exhort each of you personally, stimulating and encouraging and charging you.

- f. There is a vast difference between Paul's attitude demonstrated in his letters to the churches, and the attitude of some so-called "apostles" today who are dominating people and trying to rule over them harshly in pride and superiority.
 - g. Some of these so-called "apostles" today, command people by saying, "You have to listen to me and do what I say because I'm an apostle." That's not scriptural. A statement like that can't be proved by the Bible.
- H. *Characteristics of an apostle.* An apostle is first and foremost a preacher or a teacher, or a preacher *and* a teacher of the Word.

1 TIMOTHY 2:7

7 Whereunto I am ordained a PREACHER, and an APOSTLE, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a TEACHER of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2 TIMOTHY 1:11

11 Whereunto I am appointed a PREACHER, and an APOSTLE, and a TEACHER of the Gentiles.

1. Notice Paul didn't say, "I am first ordained an apostle." No, Paul said he was first ordained a preacher because he was first and foremost a preacher and a teacher of the Word of God.

- I. To stand in this office, one must have a deep personal encounter with the Lord and an ongoing spiritually strong relationship with Him and His Word — something beyond the ordinary.

1. *Paul.* Notice something Paul said in defending his apostleship: "*Am I not an apostle? am I not free? HAVE I NOT SEEN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD? . . .*" (1 Cor. 9:1). Paul did not see Jesus in the flesh as the twelve did. But he saw Jesus in a spiritual vision (Acts 9:3-6). Paul had a deep spiritual experience with the Lord. Even his conversion was beyond the ordinary.

Paul had such a deep spiritual experience with the Lord that he could say concerning what he knew about the Lord's Supper, "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you . . .*" (1 Cor. 11:23). Paul didn't learn what he knew about this subject from the other apostles. He got it by revelation. Jesus gave it to him.

2. Paul wasn't taught the gospel he preached by man. The Spirit of God taught it to him. "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 1:11,12). We have heard others teach these Bible truths, but Paul had not. Look at the rest of this passage in Galatians concerning Paul's revelation — proof of his deep experience with the Lord.

GALATIANS 1:13-17

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb,
and called me by his grace,
16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen;
IMMEDIATELY I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD:
17 **NEITHER WENT I UP TO JERUSALEM TO THEM WHICH WERE**
APOSTLES BEFORE ME; BUT I WENT INTO ARABIA, AND RETURNED
AGAIN UNTO DAMASCUS.

How long was Paul in Arabia? No one knows. But it was while he was in Arabia that Paul received the revelation of the gospel of which he writes in every epistle.

GALATIANS 1:18,19,21-24

18 THEN AFTER THREE YEARS I WENT UP TO JERUSALEM TO SEE
PETER, AND ABODE WITH HIM FIFTEEN DAYS.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. . . .

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

Three years after Paul *returned* from Damascus, he went to Jerusalem and spent two weeks with Peter.

GALATIANS 2:1,2

1 THEN FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER I WENT UP AGAIN TO
JERUSALEM with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 AND I WENT UP BY REVELATION, and communicated unto them that
gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Paul had been preaching for 17 years by then. He didn't know what the apostles preached. He hadn't heard them. He'd been with Peter only a brief two-week period. After which he preached 14 more years before the Spirit of God revealed to him that he should go up to Jerusalem and communicate with these brethren.

Paul did indeed have a deep religious experience with the Lord Jesus Christ!

J. *An apostle's ministry seems to embrace all other ministry gifts. The distinguishing result is the ability to establish churches.*

1. The apostle has some workings of all five offices, which would include the pastoral equipment of governments. (Weymouth translates the word "governments" as *powers of organization*.)
2. After churches are established, apostles may exercise oversight over those churches they have established themselves (1 Cor. 9:1,2) until those churches are adequately established with spiritual authority of their own.

Comments: There are many who call themselves apostles who want to dominate and rule people. They say, "I'm an apostle. I have authority. You have to do what I say." In New Testament days the apostles only exercised

oversight over the churches they established themselves. Paul never exercised any authority over the church at Jerusalem, nor any of the churches that other apostles had established.

Remember, these offices are in power and not in name only. If the power is not there to establish churches, then a person is not an apostle in the full sphere of the office.

3. A *missionary* who is really called of God and sent by the Holy Ghost is an apostle.

- a. Acts 13:2,4. The Holy Spirit said, “. . . *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*” Then verse 4 says, “*So they, being SENT FORTH by the Holy Ghost, departed. . . .*”

Barnabas and Saul were “sent ones.” They left on their first missionary journey to the Gentiles.

- b. The New Testament never mentions missionaries, yet it is an important office. It is here in the office of an apostle.

- c. The missionary will have the ability of all the ministry gifts.

- 1. He will do the work of the evangelist.
He will get people saved.

- 2. He will do the work of the teacher.
He will teach and establish people.

- 3. He will do the work of the pastor.
He will pastor and shepherd people for a while.

- a. In studying closely the life of the Apostle Paul, we note that he said he never built on a foundation someone else had laid. He endeavored to preach the gospel where Christ was not named (Rom. 15:20).

He always stayed in a place from six months to three years.

- b. His real calling was not to be a pastor, but he stayed long enough to get believers established in the truth, and then moved on.

K. *Are there apostles today?*

- 1. Four classes of apostles.

The Lord said to me in a visitation which took place in July 1987 that there were four classes of apostles and that each class of apostle had a different anointing. After I studied it out in the Word of God, I could see this truth for myself.

- a. *Jesus the Chief Apostle:* Jesus Himself is the Chief Apostle and stands in a class by Himself. We find in Hebrews 3:1 that Jesus is called the Apostle

and High Priest of our profession. He was a "Sent One" from the Father to make atonement for the sins of the world. No other apostle (or sent one) will ever have that calling.

- b. *Apostles of the Lamb*: These were the twelve apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). This was their purpose — to witness Jesus' earthly ministry and to give testimony of His ministry to the world. No one, not even Paul, could be an apostle in the sense the original twelve were. There are only twelve Apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21:14).

The Bible gives the qualifications for the original twelve Apostles of the Lamb when they were to select one to take Judas' place.

ACTS 1:15-22

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men WHICH HAVE COMPANIED WITH US ALL THE TIME THAT THE LORD JESUS WENT IN AND OUT AMONG US,

22 BEGINNING FROM THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, UNTO THAT SAME DAY THAT HE WAS TAKEN UP FROM US, MUST ONE BE ORDAINED TO BE A WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.

To be one of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, one had to have accompanied them — the apostles and Jesus — all the time Jesus went in and out among them for the three and a half years of His ministry. Paul was not with them.

The original twelve were *sent ones* to be *eye witnesses* of the ministry, the works, the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. They stood in a place no other apostles or ministries can ever stand.

- c. *New Testament Apostles*: This includes Paul, Barnabas, and the other apostles of the New Testament. In addition to calling Jesus Christ an Apostle, and the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, the New Testament calls several others apostles:

- 1. *Barnabas and Paul* (Acts 14:14).

2. *James* the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19).
3. *Andronicus* and *Junia* (Rom. 16:7).
4. *Silvanus* and *Timotheus* (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6).
5. *Apollos* (1 Cor. 4:4-9).
6. *Two unnamed brethren* (2 Cor. 8:23).*
7. *Epaphroditus* (Phil. 2:25).*

*The word translated "messenger" in these verses is the same Greek word translated "apostle" elsewhere. It can also mean a *representative* or a *delegate*.

The New Testament apostles were not apostles in the same sense that the twelve Apostles of the Lamb were. For one reason, they were not eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and ministry. Second, they seemed to have more limited callings. Paul, for example, was an apostle (a sent one) to the Gentiles only (see 2 Tim. 1:11).

There is much talk today about the need for modern-day apostles to lay the foundation for the Church. But the foundation of the Church Universal has already been laid! This work was done by the Apostles of the Lamb and the other apostles of the New Testament.

Paul explains this in First Corinthians 3:10:

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I HAVE LAID THE FOUNDATION, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

EPHESIANS 2:20

20 And are built upon THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

The Apostles of the Lamb and the other New Testament apostles laid the foundation of the Church by giving testimony of Jesus' earthly mission, by being the earliest pioneers and preachers of the gospel, and by receiving the Word of God and recording it in written form in what we now know as the New Testament. Modern-day apostles are not called to lay the foundation of the Church. They have an entirely different calling and mission.

- d. *Apostles of Today*: There are no apostles today in the three classes listed above. There are no foundation-laying apostles today. If the foundation was not laid by the apostles of the New Testament and we need modern-day apostles to do it, then we need a new cornerstone as well. Of course, that is foolish. The work of the apostle today is to found and establish individual local churches throughout the world; to go into new territory and pioneer churches where there are no churches just as I've mentioned previously.