

# Lay Ministry Defined and Refined

## Part V

### Self-Analysis of Gifts and Ministries

Once there is a general understanding of the scriptural definitions of gifts and ministries, the next step in finding one's place in lay ministry is self-evaluation and personal analysis. Examine the chart that follows. In each column, prayerfully consider the items listed which are applicable to you. For instance, determine which spiritual gifts have been manifested in your own life with recurring power and with such regularity as to lead you to believe they may be your spiritual gifts to be used in the lay ministry to which you have either already been called or in which you would like to become involved. Then, consider the natural talents and aptitudes you possess. Finally determine the ministries you are interested in or would like to be trained to perform. For each item checked in the three columns, go back and rate the selections in order of your preferences. By comparing your first choices in each column and then your next choices, and so on down through the lists, a preference and aptitude pattern for ministry should begin to emerge.

The survey sheet should then be discussed with someone from the clergy or other approved spiritual adviser, prayed about together, and used as a guide in finding the lay ministry for which you are best qualified.



The following suggestions may help you in finding your calling to lay ministry:

1. Act on Romans 12:1. Surrender. Do not put limitations or reservations around your availability for service. Remember that God's strength is made perfect in weakness, and therefore your usefulness does not depend upon your own adequacy, but God's. For those who still feel that they are too unworthy, unlearned, or unchangeable to be used of God, it might be well to remember that the Lord once spoke through a jackass (Numbers 22:28). He is not limited by human limitations, only by your unwillingness to allow the Lord to be in control.
2. Begin with the proper attitude, seeing each life situation as an opportunity for ministry. You may have received your calling already. God often will not move you to greater things until you have been proven faithful to "bloom where you are planted."
3. Wait on the Lord. God's timetable and yours are not the same. You must not run ahead or lag behind God's leading. The Lord will open the door of service in his perfect time. Moses had to tend his father-in-law's sheep for forty years before God finally moved him into the service to which he was called.
4. Worship. Not just Sunday-in-the-pew or corporate worship, but in small groups, with a prayer partner, and especially alone. Nothing better prepares an individual for service than an attitude of praise and adoration. Sometimes specific outreach ministries emerge as an outgrowth of individuals or small groups meeting on a regular basis to seek the Lord.
5. Pray. Make this a daily and constant habit of life. Pray the prayer of Jesus: "Not my will, but thine be done."
6. Listen. God speaks in different ways. Expect to hear him through sermons, through the reading of Scriptures, through the godly counsel of others, and that still, small voice inside yourself. You may be aided in your meditation by fasting or other spiritual disciplines until you "hear" clearly and completely. Write down what you are receiving as guidance each day, and then reflect over these collected revelations.
7. Avail yourself of opportunities for training and preparation. After you have listed your natural talents and spiritual gifts (see the Lay Ministry Analysis Sheet), make note of ministries you have performed in the past and any in which you are interested for future ministry. Then determine if such ministries require special education or training; if so, ascertain how and where you can best, receive such training.
8. Examine your motives. List reasons why you feel drawn to a particular type of ministry. If you want to be involved in something because of its prestige, your desire to escape a more difficult or demanding role, or for any other reason than because you feel led of the Lord to involve yourself in the ministry he has chosen for you you must stop and pray for better motives. The real motive for any type of service is love - love for God and others.
9. Submit your ministry (or inclination toward a ministry) to be judged. Before beginning a new work, go to your pastor and discuss what you have concluded from following steps 1 through 8 above. No ministry should ever be performed without the approval and oversight of your spiritual head. The Bible warns that we are to be in submission to spiritual authorities. It is also risky to minister alone, especially if you are a novice. Jesus sent out his followers two by two. After the clergy's approval for a ministry, it is still good practice to minister with a partner if at all possible. This not only provides double the prayer power, but also is an effective check against falling into error. Even when you are sure in your own heart that you are moving as God is leading, it is

important to receive confirmation and a commission from the church, the clergy, and others whose spiritual counsel the Lord will provide in order to give you the assurance that you are in the will of the Lord.

10. Act in faith. Once you have your calling correctly determined, confirmed, and approved, begin to follow the Spirit's promptings without delay. Expect God to redeem your mistakes as a leap of faith takes you beyond where you are to where you may never have been before. Do not become overly concerned with results. Although good fruits or positive results of a ministry are often good indicators that God is at work, you may not see the fruits of your labor or they may be delayed in coming. Attention should be focused upon Jesus. Give the problems and the outcomes to him, for he is the one responsible for them. Your responsibility is to be faithful and obedient.

### **Summary**

To summarize, we have seen that the "What?" is lay ministry - the reasonable service of all Christians. The "Why?" is a response to the command to act out our love for Christ and his body, the church, through obedience and unselfish giving of time, talents, money, and energies for the ongoing of the Kingdom, recognizing that when one does not do one's part, an added burden is placed upon someone else. The "Who?" is everyone, including you. The "Where?" is not only at church, but wherever a Christian is. And the "How?" is up to the individual (you) and God as together you set out in faith, exploring his highest will for your life.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also has made us able ministers... (II Cor. 3:5-6).