

The Ministry of the Believer

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[0 : 00] Do you sometimes need reminders? Boy, I do. You know, those appointments to the doctor or to the dentist or wherever will creep up on you.

And you just know you're going to remember them. But then you get that phone call. Mr. Brown, you do know you have an appointment today.

You know, those kind of phone calls. And I'm grateful that now they're really good. They'll text you several times or they'll make a phone call. Sometimes just putting it on the calendar doesn't necessarily work.

But we all really, let's just, a group of us today, let's just admit we need reminders. Well, God has placed reminders in His Word that if we'll just read them, we'll say, Oh, that's what He thinks is really important.

And I do that all the time, don't you? It's like you'll be reading a passage you know you've read several times before. And you'll think, that's what God needs to do in my life.

[1 : 08] He needs to continue working through scriptures like that to change me and change my mind. And those reminders can be very powerful.

And today is no different. I just need to remind you. And maybe a different voice reminding you of something that you have heard before might be the one thing that you need today.

That reminder from God's Word. Today, I need to remind you that every believer is a minister.

And so I want to talk about the ministry of the believer today. But I need to ask you the question right at the beginning. Do you really believe, I mean deep down in your heart, do you really believe that every believer is a minister?

Now, most of us grew up knowing that the minister was the person who stood behind the pulpit on Sunday morning.

[2 : 16] And eventually, they finally got around to calling the choir leader the minister of music. So you got included in that minister. And then, of all people, the person who works with the youth, the teenagers, do they call you a youth minister here or minister to youth?

It doesn't really matter. So, you know, for most people who are sitting in a pew on Sunday morning, the minister are the professional people who probably get paid to do what they're doing.

That's how we grew up. Those were the ministers. Those were the ministers who's the minister at your church. I'd say, well, Dr. Batson. I mean, that's just how we grew up. But it doesn't match what the scripture says.

In fact, I don't know who put it on that old brick sign over there in front of the Sunday school building. Just right over there in the grass.

It says, Pastor Fred Stone, right? But then it also says right below that, as a reminder, if you'll notice, every member, a minister.

[3 : 35] I hope you'll see that more often and be reminded. Every time you come to church, I hope it reminds you that you, as well as those who stand up and do leadership type things, you are a minister of God's church.

Now, I know that for many of us, it's not that easy to see ourselves that way. But let me show you from a couple of scriptures where God says we are all ministers.

Starting with Ephesians chapter 4, verse 12. Ephesians 4, 12. Now, focus on that verse, but let me begin reading in verse 11.

It describes how God has given people to the church to lead and to guide and to equip. And so, beginning in verse 11, it says, And he himself, meaning God, gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

And then it tells us why God gave those to the church. Verse 12, For the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying or the building up of the body of Christ.

[5 : 02] Let me just stop here just for a moment. As I was young, growing up, and probably long before that, most people would have read that particular verse in scripture, seeing that it was the job of the minister of the church to equip the church and to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

I mean, that's just how we looked at it early on. As if God had put a comma after the building up or the equipping of the saints. But God didn't put a comma there.

No, the job of the leaders of a church are to equip each of you, as a believer in Jesus Christ, to do the work of ministry, so that the body of Christ can be healthy and strong and effective and vibrant. That's how God designed it. And I give thanks for all of those who are leaders in this church. And they work tirelessly, well, I started to say tirelessly, but that's not necessarily true, is it?

If you're a leader, I know that you do sometimes get weary, but you are already leading this church to do and to be what it is.

[6 : 27] And I'm so, so grateful. But God also speaks in places like 2 Corinthians about this ministry that He has given to every believer.

This is 2 Corinthians 5, verse 18. It talks about how God has reconciled us to Himself.

But there's more to it. 2 Corinthians 5, 18 says it this way. Now, all things are of God or from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

And there's so much we could say about that. Thank God He did that. But it continues. And has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciling. That's what God has done, isn't it? He has reached out in His love to us. Those of us who were just sinners, who did not trust in Him yet.

[7 : 36] He reached out because of His love for us. And He revealed Himself to us. And He called us to Himself. And He called us to believe in Him and trust Him for salvation.

That's what He called us to. But then, when we responded by faith, He also said that needs to continue. There are others who need to be reconciled.

And I want to give you, the believer, the ministry of reconciliation. Now, it is true that we don't reconcile people to God.

It would be great if we could. I know some relatives that I have that if I could reconcile them to God, I would do it right now. Knowing that they would have a good standing of faith in God.

But I can't do that. Only God is able to reconcile things so that we have a right standing before Him. But, we can bring people toward God that He may reconcile them if they'll respond in faith.

[8 : 46] In a very real sense, what God has called us to be are bridge builders. Bridge builders. In fact, the Bible actually tells us that we are a kingdom of priests.

I won't go into that passage, but I just want you to know, not only does God call you to ministry, or to be a minister, He's called you to be a priest. You know what the word priest actually means?

That's where you get the word in Latin. It's pontifex. You know what it really means? A bridge builder. That's what a priest does. He drills bridges.

Not literal bridges, but spiritual bridges so that those who do not yet know God in a personal way through faith may find a way, may somehow be led toward God by someone who knows Him.

That's how we are bridge builders. In fact, more deeply, we are the bridge. For many people to come to know God by trusting Him, by faith.

[9 : 54] Bridge builders. The ministry of reconciliation. But do you see how this ministry is almost formed by two bookends? Ministry of all believers is about building up the church and reconciling people to God so that they may have eternal life.

But there's a word of warning and it comes really from a young man named Matt Carter. He's a pastor out in Texas from Austin Stone Church.

And he said this, I found this. I thought it might be helpful for you to see it. The church, any church, won't grow in a biblically healthy way.

It will not happen unless each part of the body, meaning the congregation, is fulfilling their personal calling to the Great Commission.

The personal call of ministry to the Great Commission. Now just a reminder, when he says the body, he's talking about the body of Christ.

[11 : 12] Now, the body of Christ is the group of believers all around the world. But more locally, it's this congregation.

And the congregation that I guess is still meeting, I don't know what time they're out, the Methodist Church over here and the Presbyterian Church down here and the Church of God down there and all these other local congregations are also the body of Christ.

It's that gathering of believers that trust in God and have trusted Him for salvation. Each part of the body fulfilling their personal calling to the Great Commission.

Now, basically, the Bible is saying that we're body parts. If we're, if this is the body, you're a part of it. A very, very important part of this particular body of Christ.

Paul uses a whole chapter of Scripture to talk about this. In Romans, excuse me, in 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12, whole chapter.

[12 : 32] Now, I'm not going to read the whole chapter, but I challenge you sometime this afternoon, maybe after your nap, read 1 Corinthians 12.

He's talking about spiritual gifts, those gifts that are given to every believer through the Holy Spirit. And let me just begin reading in verse 4 of 1 Corinthians 12.

Paul says there are diversities of gifts, but it's the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There are diversities of activities, but it's the same God who works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. The whole congregation, this particular body.

And then he begins to name some of them. Now, when I read these, I want you to listen carefully to see if anything sounds familiar to your own gifts, passions, strengths, or skills.

[13 : 39] Listen to this. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit. To another, the word of knowledge by that same Spirit.

To another, the gift is faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healings, by the same Spirit. Another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy.

To another, discerning of spirits. And to another, different kinds of tongues. And to another, the interpretation of tongues. Now, I know that many of you have done a study of spiritual gifts, and you're very familiar with all of these.

And there are good resources on the internet and through books and CDs. CDs. Does anybody still use CDs? Maybe a podcast or something somewhere?

But I encourage you, look more deeply. But this is a short list, isn't it? I don't think God ever intended on this representing all the gifts.

[14 : 44] In fact, even in Romans chapter 12, you'll find that he lists even more. Romans 12. He talks about having gifts.

This is verse 6 and following. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Listen to this. Let us use them. Sounds like a biblical command.

So he said, if it's prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. Or is it ministry? Let us use it in our ministering. He who teaches, use your gift in teaching.

He who exhorts or encourages. He who gives. There are some who are especially blessed to give with liberality.

He who leads, lead with diligence. He who shows mercy, do it with cheerfulness. Now again, that's a short list because there are many gifts that are not necessarily just named specifically in Scripture.

[15 : 48] You see people every Sunday who are using a gift when they sing or play an instrument up here. That's a gift that they use for the glory of God.

It's not listed here. But we all know that it's part of the giftedness that God has given to us. The gifts can be wide variety.

I was told this morning, I did not know this until this morning, that Ray Reese had a gift of woodworking. Somebody told me he made that.

I mean, literally made it. Is that a gift that he could use for the glory of God? Absolutely. What do you do well? What do you enjoy doing?

What is your passion? What is your, what skill do you have that you could use to build up the body of Christ and to bring people toward God so that they may be reconciled?

[16 : 50] Whatever it is that you have that comes from God's spirit as a gift, use it. It doesn't even have to be named right here in these short verses.

Make sure you know what it is. Make sure you're willing to use it. Well, let's get back to this idea of the Great Commission.

Let me show you another slide by Matt Carter. I sometimes just call it the mission and it looks like that's what he is doing as well.

This is what he says and I agree with him wholeheartedly. The responsibility for the mission that I'm talking about doesn't, and I would add the word just, doesn't just fall on the shoulders of the pastors, but every person in the church that names the name of Christ.

The responsibility for the mission is not just for those who stand up front and do things. The responsibility for God's mission is yours from the youngest to the oldest.

[18:01] It's still yours. Whether you're young and have a lot of energy or whether you're tired and you want to quit and sit down, you still have the responsibility for the mission.

Now, I don't know if anybody's asking the question or not, but let me ask this. But isn't the Great Commission given to the church? Haven't we talked about that?

If you've been in church, you know it's been talked about all the time. The Great Commission or the mission of the church. We put it in the context of the church. Well, the answer to the question is, yes, it has been given to the church.

But no, it's not just simply to the church as a whole. In other words, if it was just to the church, you could say, well, I'll just give my money to the church and let them do the mission.

That'd be easy, wouldn't it? In fact, the truth is, many people do that. Let somebody else do it. But no, God's given to every believer ministry of building up the body, reconciling the world to Christ.

[19:18] I think our problem has been this. And it's a problem that I think has been true for a long time. Is that our definition of church can sometimes hinder or distort our view of God's call to ministry, meaning our personal call to ministry.

You know, it's when we say, where are you going this morning? I'm going to church. What are they doing up there at the church? Right? We use that language and there's really nothing terribly wrong with it, except that church began to mean building or organization.

When God never intended for church to be some brick and mortar and beautiful decorations and stuff, I mean, he's not against this by any means, but church is you.

In fact, you don't go to church, the church comes here. You are the church. I mean, you know, the, I don't even know my fingers are letting me, you know, the, here's the church and here's the steeple and open.

Well, no, actually, this is the church. All the people. So we need to get our head around the fact that we are the church and as the church, we are responsible for the mission that God has given to every single believer.

[20:48] it's not just an organization, it's more like an organism, a body of people working together. Some of you are hands and some are feet, some are mouths, you know them, they're always talking.

Thank God that some of you are ears because you're willing to listen. Some of you can smell a problem. Some of you see a little bit further than others about what we need to do ahead, like next year or something.

You see, we all have a part in this body and that's the way God designed it. We're an organism. Imagine with me just for a moment. And I know that God is blessed, First Baptist, in really, I think, unusual ways.

But you are not all that you could be. I think it's probably true that I've heard it most of my life that in any given church about 20% of the people do about 80% of the work.

Now, I don't know if that percentage is correct. I really have no idea, but I do know this. And this is from, I don't know, 30-something years in ministry. In any church you go to, it's a few people who do most of what needs to be done.

[22:12] It's not the majority. I don't know why that's true. It shouldn't be. And I don't even know if it's true for First Baptist. But here's what I do know, that even in your church, most people are not fulfilling their call of God to do the mission of the church.

If it were true, you'd have to have more room. If it were true, you'd have to have more services. If it were true, you'd be having so many people, you'd have to start another church on the other side of town as a, what do they call, like a satellite church somewhere else.

Do you hear what I'm saying? If every one of you were to take your responsibility seriously and a full commitment to it, God would grow this church in ways that you never imagined.

That's how I know. So what if every believer read the Great Commission as that personal call to make disciples?

What a transformation would happen. What a revival would happen. At my last church, they asked me one time, they said, what do you think it's going to take for Griffith Baptist Church to experience revival?

[23 : 35] And I told them very simply and plainly and they didn't necessarily appreciate it but I said, when every member does what God told them to do in the scriptures.

And they said, maybe, maybe there's something else. Don't we need some revival services or something? And I said, no. If every member would do just what God tells them to do in the Bible, then you couldn't contain the revival that would happen.

Let me finish by saying this. And by the way, I think that somebody told me that we can stop at around 1230. They may not have been correct.

Don't start leaving. I'm not going that long. I promise. Let me just share some observations. And these are just observations from having been in ministry from this side of the pulpit and having been around God's people for a long time.

This is observations that I think may help you understand what God is saying in the scriptures we've looked at. Number one observation is this. You, in order to make disciples, you have to be a disciple.

[25 : 01] Now, I may be wrong in this. I can't say this that I'm right 100%. But not every believer is a disciple.

There are believers who will come, I saw some faces. There are people who truly trust Christ for their salvation. 100%. 100%. And they'll come to church and they'll sit and they may even smile at the preacher sometimes and shake his hand on the way out but they never make any other kind of contribution to the health of the church.

To the mission of God. They believe in God. They believe in Christ. They're saved. But that's all. They're basically pew sitters.

And that's not a bad thing. It's good to come. But what if that's all you do? No, a disciple is really a learner.

It's someone who faithfully follows a leader or a mentor. A disciple is someone who's learning and growing and changing. That's a real biblical disciple.

[26 : 18] And you can disagree on the definition if you need to. In fact, thank God for the guys up in the booth. I saw a picture this morning between services that I wanted to show to you.

And I want you to see this picture that I found. I hope you can see it all. Yeah. It says this. I'm going to have to read it because I haven't met. A disciple is someone who has moved from being the recipient of the church's mission to being responsible for the church's mission.

Would you consider yourself a disciple or just a Christian who attends church? If you really want to take seriously this mission to make disciples, then make sure you are a disciple.

In fact, you need to be a disciple that is learning to grow in Christ's likeness. What does God want from every disciple?

To be more and more like Jesus. To resemble him more and more. We can't do it alone. That's why God gave us the Spirit and that's why God gave us other Christians to encourage us.

[27 : 37] But are you growing more in Christ's likeness? Do you resemble him more? Just read the scriptures and it'll tell you what he's like.

Just spend time with God in prayer. Spend time reading his word. Spend time putting your gift into practice. You become more like him.

Little by little. It's a supernatural happening. But God has given us a great task in making disciples because he expects us not just to lead someone to Christ.

There's more to it than just leading people to God. You need to continue your opportunity because when we make disciples we are supposed to make disciples who also make disciples.

A quick word from 2 Timothy. Paul is talking to Timothy when he says this. He says Timothy the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses commit these to faithful men and women.

[28 : 48] Well that makes sense doesn't it? What you've heard from me? Pass it on to others. But Paul didn't stop with that word. He says commit them to faithful persons who will be able to teach others also.

it's God's great way of multiplying the ministry so that we're not just leading people to Christ and not just building up the body of Christ, not just bringing people into a reconciling relationship with God. Those disciples also go and make disciples as well. It's this great process that God has set up. So our making disciples ministry is never ending.

It's multiplying in the way that God does it. Another observation is this. Making disciples can be done within the church schedule by all means.

It is often done within the church schedule in the church building. Thank God for that. Thank God for the Sunday school classes that are making disciples and the youth ministry that's making disciples.

[30 : 05] Thank God for Awana. I was amazed at what God is doing through those children. I was here Wednesday night at the big celebration and I just sat back there and was just thankful and amazed and grateful for what God is doing.

All those things are happening within the schedule in this church. But there are opportunities beyond this church. In fact some of those opportunities may be more effective than what happens within the church.

More effective because it's more personal. What if you take a classmate that you have been talking to lately and begin that process of bringing them toward God with a hopefully for the end result is to make a disciple that they may become a disciple maker.

What about a person at work? What about a person out on the golf course or at the lake or wherever you are? Why not use those opportunities outside of church?

The truth is there's a number of people in this community that will never walk into a church on their own. They're just not going to do it. But you can go to them.

[31 : 26] I think that's why the Great Commission says, go, therefore, not invite, therefore. It tells us to go. Use those opportunities beyond the church services to make disciples.

The last thing is this. Well, actually, I've got two. Very quickly. Are you using your natural relationships to make disciples?

I know that God calls us outside of our comfort zone sometimes. I understand that. He needs to. Right? The Bible does say, by the way, spur one another on to good works.

So, sometimes it's uncomfortable. But why not actually use your comfort zone, your natural relationships within your family, within your friendship circles?

in fact, Fred, Pastor Fred handed out the first of the year that concentric circles of concern.

[32 : 29] Remember that? Do you have it in your Bible? It's in the front of mine. That's using natural relationships. I know of people that I can think of right now that I want to use a very natural relationship to begin moving them closer to God.

And you have people like that too. You'd love to see them come to know Christ and maybe even come to church. Use those natural relationships. It's a great place to start.

That's within your comfort zone. So why not? One more thing that I want to share with you. It's really good news. You ready? If you were to take all this seriously and say, I want to do that.

I want to be what the Bible describes. Here's the good news. You ready? You don't have to be perfect to start. I know what it's like. I know most of you.

I still say that. I don't really want to do that until I get a little bit better at something. I don't want to embarrass myself because I'm not really that prepared. I want to study some more. Can't we have some more courses at church before I try and do this?

[33 : 33] Can't we have another program? Can't we have another something? We're always waiting to where something more than we are to start being a disciple maker.

Truth is, he needs you now. What if we don't have tomorrow? The time is now. What does the old cartoon used to say?

Time's a wasting. It's time to be busy about the father's business. Now. The world cannot wait. They need you to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

And to move people toward God that he may reconcile them and make them his child. That they may become a disciple who makes disciples.

Are you willing to embrace this truth? To refresh your commitment to this call of God given to us and his word.

[34 : 40] I know many of you work so hard at doing what God has called you to do. And I thank God for you. But most of us have room for improvement.

Room for growth. We can make that fresh commitment. Would you consider doing that today? I'm going to pray just for a moment and ask you to pray along with me.

and maybe my words just simply don't fit what your heart is telling you. So just ignore my words if you need to and pray your prayer to God. Refresh that commitment to being a minister in God's kingdom.

If you send me to the node of the hell of the of God's kingdom.

And I ask you and