



A Pentecostal Theology of Ministry

A Theological Outline for
Spirit-driven Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

God wants every believer to be Spirit-baptized and every ministry to be Spirit-empowered. Jesus' last command to His church was, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5, ref. Luke 24:49).¹

His last promise was, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). All authentic Christian ministry is Spirit-driven.

Throughout Scripture a divine plan of ministry in the Spirit is progressively revealed. This booklet will attempt to present a brief biblical theology of the role of the Holy Spirit in ministry. It will begin with an examination of the Spirit's role in ministry in the Old Testament. It will then examine His anointing and empowering ministry in the New Testament. Finally, it will look at biblical themes supporting ministry in the Spirit. In doing so, it will seek to provide a firm foundation for a Pentecostal theology of ministry. It is my prayer that this exercise will assist the reader in becoming a more effective Pentecostal minister and leader.

CHAPTER 1:

SPIRIT-DRIVEN MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament the idea of ministry for all of God's people had not yet been introduced. Nevertheless, ministry in the Spirit is evidenced throughout, and along the way divine hints are given of better things to come. Ordinary people are used by the Spirit in amazing ways, and His help is given in each major division, including the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Poetical Books, and the Prophets.

The Pentateuch

In the Pentateuch God's plan for mankind starts to unfold. The Spirit works in creation and in the lives of individuals. One of the clearest Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit's active role in ministry is found in Numbers 11.

In this passage Moses complains to God that the burden of leading the stubborn Israelites has become too heavy for him. God responds by telling Moses to choose seventy elders upon whom He will place His Spirit, as He had placed Him on Moses.

Unexpectedly, when the Spirit comes upon the elders, two of them are not present at the place of meeting. They, nevertheless, begin

prophesying in the camp. When Joshua, Moses' servant, hears about this, he becomes so upset that he demands that Moses stop them. Moses prophetically answers Joshua, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!" (Num. 11:29).

This passage demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Spirit of God, prophecy, and the ministry of God's people, and should be viewed as foundational to a Pentecostal/charismatic theology of ministry. This Old Testament passage reveals "divine hints," indicating God's desire that all of His people minister in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8).

The Historical Books

The Spirit also worked throughout the time of the Old Testament Historical Books: What Joshua accomplished for God can only be attributed to his being filled with the Spirit (Deut. 34:9). The Spirit empowered the Judges, including Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson (cf. Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). And the Spirit anointed and empowered certain kings, most notably Saul (1 Sam. 10:11-12) and David (16:13). Throughout the Historical Books the Spirit superintended the events of Israel's history, ensuring that God's plan for the nations remained on track.

Deborah, the prophetess and judge, is particularly important to our topic (Judg. 4). In her story one can see God's willingness to use an ordinary person to accomplish His will through His Spirit. In Israel Deborah represented a Spirit-led alternative to the backslidden priesthood of her day. Her story reinforces the truth that any authentic ministry must be done in the Spirit, by Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered individuals.

The Poetical Books

The Spirit is specifically mentioned in many passages in the Poetical Books (e.g., Ps. 51:11; 104:30; 139:7). In particular, Psalm 23 graphically reveals the believer's dependency upon God, who, through the Spirit, cares for His people like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

This psalm of David describes how Yahweh provides for His people rest, guidance, restoration, peace, companionship, comfort, provision, anointing, goodness, love, and eternal life through the His Spirit, who is the underlying impulse of the entire poem. Further, the references in the psalm to *water*, *oil*, and an *overflowing cup* may well be taken as indirect references to the Spirit of God. Throughout Psalm 23 one is impressed with how God longs for everyone, regardless of station in life, to have an intimate relationship with Him.

The Prophetical Books

The writings and lives of the prophets are clear examples of authentic ministry in the Spirit. From the vast amount of material available in these books, Joel 2 stands out as a prime example of the kind and scope of future ministry God had prepared for His people.

Joel 2:28-29 is directly linked to Numbers 11:29 in that it promises the divine fulfillment of what Moses had wished for: that all of God's people would become Spirit-anointed prophets. Through Joel God promised that the Spirit would be poured out on all people (understood in context as all the people of Judah), with the inclusion of other people hinted at with the mention of men and women servants (slaves).² The beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's promise is described in Acts 2. Further insight into the meaning of Joel 2 would have to wait, however, until the events of the New Testament were well underway.

CHAPTER 2:

MINISTRY IN THE SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the hints from the Old Testament become manifest and understood. Throughout history God had used ordinary people to minister in the power of the Spirit. Now he would use them in abundance. He was ready to grant the wish of Moses and to fulfill the prophecy of Joel. Yahweh would make the Spirit available to all of His covenant people.

The Gospels

Evidence for ministry in the Spirit is found throughout the gospels. The first thirteen verses of Mark 1 serve as an example of what God has planned for all New Testament believers. In these verses John the Baptist, an Old Testament type of a prophet filled with the Spirit, declared that Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, would be the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. This baptism would be a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-29).

At Jordan Jesus was baptized both by John and by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' Spirit baptism thus became the inaugurating event of His ministry, for the text indicates that it was immediately after His baptism Jesus

began His Spirit-empowered ministry (Mark 1:12; cf. Luke 3:23; 4:1, 14, 18-19).

These introductory verses describe ministry in the Spirit in at least three ways: They show the bridge between spiritual ministry in the Old and New Testaments. They indicate the close connection between the Holy Spirit and ministry. And they bring to light the initiative of the Spirit in directing those who are to minister.

The Book of Acts

The book of Acts is central to Pentecostalism and equally valuable to a biblical theology of ministry. Although the entire book deals with ministry in the Spirit, Acts 2 is central to our study.

In this chapter the promise of Joel 2 was initially realized when the Holy Spirit filled the 120 waiting disciples and they all began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them (v. 4). Peter prophetically proclaimed that what happened was the fulfillment of Joel's promise, saying that the promise was for all of God's people (vv. 14-39). The experience of Pentecost is available to all believers until Jesus returns. The purpose for the baptism in the Holy Spirit received at Pentecost was empowerment for mission.

It was on the Day of Pentecost that God's plan to equip all believers for spiritual ministry was dramatically revealed. Nevertheless, like Joel, the disciples in Jerusalem were still thinking that the "all people" meant only the Jews. This would possibly have fulfilled the wish of Moses, but God had in mind something much bigger. Acts 2 reports the inauguration of a new temple and, indeed, a new day for ministry in the Spirit. Since Pentecost all of God's people, both Jew and Gentile, can now be empowered for service in the Kingdom.

Pauline Epistles

Paul expected every believer to be empowered by the Spirit and equipped for ministry. Galatians 5 is representative of his view of ministry in the Spirit. In this chapter Paul uses four verbs when speaking of the Spirit-controlled life: to *walk* in the Spirit (v. 16), to *be led* by the Spirit (v. 18), to *live* by the Spirit (v. 25a), and to *keep in step* with the Spirit (v. 25b).³

Believers, according to Paul, are to become Christ-like in word and deed under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁴ In Galatians Paul underlines the believer's complete dependence upon the Spirit for character formation, community, and ministry.

General Epistles

First Peter 1:10-12 exemplifies what the general epistles have to say on the subject of ministry in the Spirit:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

These verses contain powerful implications for spiritual ministry. In them Peter acknowledges that the Old Testament prophets accomplished their ministry through the Spirit of Christ, and that what they foretold is now contained in the New Testament evangelistic message. Moreover, the same Holy Spirit “sent from heaven”—a reference to the coming of

the Spirit at Pentecost—enabled the New Testament evangelists to properly interpret the Old Testament scriptures and gave them the power to preach the message.⁵ Authentic ministry, therefore, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, is ministry in the Spirit. Such Spirit-driven ministry is normative for both testaments.

The Book of Revelation

Ministry in the Spirit can be clearly seen in the book of Revelation. An example of this is found in the first chapter:

John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne . . . On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (vv. 4, 19)

Note in these two verses the link between the Spirit and authentic ministry. The “seven spirits” of verse 4 should probably be translated “sevenfold Spirit” since this verse speaks of the “sevenfold manifestation of the Holy Spirit,” a possible reference to the sevenfold Spirit on the Messiah (Isa. 11:2) and the sevenfold lamp (Zech. 4:2, 6, 10).⁶ If this is the case, then 1:4 is another indication that genuine ministry flows from the source of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase “in the Spirit” (v. 10) is clearer still. This phrase indicates the special activity of the Holy Spirit, meaning that, at this particular moment, John was experiencing an intense move of the Spirit. This is an unmistakable indication that John’s ministry was Spirit-led and empowered.

CHAPTER 3:

BIBLICAL THEMES SUPPORTING MINISTRY IN THE SPIRIT

In addition to the evidence from all the distinct genres of both testaments, several themes support a biblical theology of ministry in the Spirit. These themes include the Trinitarian model, the Jesus model, the priesthood of all believers, the prophethood of all believers, and spiritual gifts, as follows:

The Trinitarian Model

God's triune nature is beyond our human ability to fully comprehend. Nevertheless, certain aspects of His nature can be understood and applied to the context of Christian ministry. The tri-personal nature of God can, therefore, serve as a model for ministry.

One particular view of the tri-unity of God is particularly helpful in forming a biblical theology of ministry. Viewing the Trinity as *perichoresis* (literally "circle dance") in which the persons of the Trinity are viewed in a constant circular movement provides a powerful image for ministry in the Spirit. The perichoretic image of the Trinity thus questions the traditional ministerial hierarchies of control, power, and domination, while laying the foundation for team ministry based on

intimacy, equality, unity, diversity, and love.⁷

The Trinitarian model thus serves as a model for authentic spiritual ministry. Ministry is not to be hierarchical but should involve all of God's Spirit-empowered people in a cooperative team effort. Power and responsibility are shared, and everyone is equally important and valuable. Ministry teams are nurtured and held together in loving community.

The Jesus Model

Jesus' earthly ministry is the definitive model for ministry in the Spirit. Laying aside His divine privilege, Jesus identified with man by accomplishing His ministry completely in the power of the Spirit. Living a Spirit-anointed life, Jesus modeled the characteristics of genuine spiritual ministry. Three aspects of Jesus' ministry stand out: shepherding, servanthood, and empowerment.

Shepherding. The shepherd metaphor occurs more than five hundred times in Scripture culminating in the person of the Good (John 10:1-18) or Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). It is through the image of shepherding that Jesus models authentic ministry in the Spirit.

Authentic ministry must be exercised in the same manner as a shepherd caring for his sheep. Shepherding is based on relationship rather than positional or institutional authority. The shepherding relationship requires at least three qualities for effective ministry: trust, commitment, and availability.⁸ Shepherding includes the idea of genuine relationships built upon the good character of the shepherd. The shepherd must be both spiritual and real. His or her personal character and integrity will foster openness and trust.

Ministry should be done in the spirit of the Chief Shepherd who demonstrated how ministry in the power of the Spirit is to be handled.

Jesus ministered like a shepherd tending his flock, not as a chief executive officer, dictator, or chieftain. He was humble, genuine, empathetic, altruistic, diligent, compassionate, and merciful.

Ministry in the Spirit is for all of God's people, and it is to be carried out in shepherd-like fashion. The shepherding model implies that the means are just as important as the ends for any authentic ministry in the Spirit.

Servanthood. Jesus demonstrated servanthood throughout His entire ministry (Mark 10:45). Servanthood thus forms an important part of Jesus' model of ministry. Seven observations can be made concerning the servanthood of Jesus:

1. Jesus humbled himself allowing God to exalt him.
2. Jesus sought the Father's will rather than position.
3. Jesus equated greatness with servanthood and being first with becoming a slave.
4. Jesus risked serving others since he was secure in his relationship with the Father.
5. Jesus took up the towel to serve others.
6. Jesus shared authority and responsibility with those he called.
7. Jesus empowered a team to accomplish the mission of God.⁹

Every aspect of the servanthood of Jesus can be applied to the contemporary ministry context.

Servanthood supports the concept of biblical holism and highlights the need for a seamless gospel of word and deed. One's definition of ministry should thus include service. As a result, all of God's people will

be encouraged to be involved in ministry. Spirit-driven ministry should therefore be holistic, seeking to meet varied needs with God's resources.

Therefore, if ministry in the Spirit is to follow the Jesus model, it should fully embrace the servanthood concept. To do this it must be grounded in humility, selflessness, obedience, encouragement, empowerment, commitment, and service.

Empowerment. In a secular context the essence of empowerment is releasing the under-tapped motivational power, knowledge, and experience within people.¹⁰ Empowered people are more effective and efficient than those who are not empowered, and empowered teams can accomplish far more than empowered individuals. Empowerment is essential, both now and in the future, for individuals and organizations. It is equally important to ministry in the Spirit.

An important facet of the Jesus model is the fact that Jesus empowered His disciples for ministry. He was interested not only in having a following, but in developing empowered disciples capable of continuing His ministry and mission.

Although His whole life was instructional for the disciples, some events reveal how Jesus purposely empowered them for ministry in the Spirit: Jesus called the Twelve and sent them out, giving them "authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt. 10:1). He called them "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). He sent them out "two by two" with specific instructions (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6). Jesus also "appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1).

In addition to appointing them and sending them out, Jesus encouraged His disciples with the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 14:15-31; 16:5-16). Just before He was arrested,

Jesus prayed a special prayer for the disciples (John 17:6-19). Then, after His resurrection, Jesus appeared again to His disciples and said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21). He then breathed on them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (v. 22). He also commissioned them to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

Speaking of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised the Eleven and other disciples, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49). Finally, just before His ascension, Jesus commanded the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Father, assuring them that they would soon be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5).

Empowerment includes helping others discover their gifts and then developing them so that they might be able to put those gifts into practice in ministry. Every person is important in the body of Christ. Each one is uniquely gifted in some way and has a vital role to play in fulfilling God’s plan. All believers should, therefore, be empowered by the Spirit for ministry. Jesus not only modeled servanthood and shepherding for His disciples, He also empowered them for ministry.

The Priesthood of All Believers

Peter, Paul, and the author of Hebrews each viewed all believers as priests who are to imitate the priestly role of Christ.¹¹ The priesthood of all believers suggests that spiritual ministry is available to every believer. This concept, when taken to its full implication, means that all believers are priests before God, priests to one another, and priests to the world.¹²

The priesthood of believers also encourages correct practice in ministry. Since ministry takes place in the context of community,

autocratic leadership is disavowed, because it is not compatible with the New Testament pattern for the relationship between Church and the Spirit.¹³

One of the most important results of a correct understanding of the priesthood of all believers is the elimination of the clergy-laity dichotomy. Only one ministry exists, and that is the ministry of all the people of God.¹⁴ All the people of God are, therefore, to be involved in spiritual ministry; they are called to function as priests to the world and to one another.¹⁵ All genuine ministry in the Spirit recognizes the priesthood of all believers.

The Prophethood of All Believers

Since Pentecost all believers are to have a prophetic as well as priestly function. Coinciding with and complementing the theme of the priesthood of all believers is Luke's concept of the prophethood of all believers. Not only are all of God's people to minister as priests, they can and should also receive the empowering of the Spirit for Christian service, and thus be qualified to minister as Spirit-anointed prophets.¹⁶

The prophethood of all believers is a major theme found in Luke's charismatic theology. Luke's unique view of the ministry of Jesus reveals His emphasis on the prophethood of all believers. Pentecostal theologian Roger Stronstad affirms, "Luke portrays Jesus to be a prophet without equal or rival, but not without successors, for Jesus concludes and caps his prophetic ministry by establishing his disciples as an eschatological community of Spirit-baptized prophets. In his absence they will minister by the same power of the Holy Spirit he himself ministered by, and will do the same works as he himself did."¹⁷ After Pentecost the believers are also portrayed by Luke as a community of prophets. Stronstad adds,

In the events which Luke reports in his narrative of the acts of this prophetic community, Moses' earnest desire—"that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them" (Num. 11.29)—is being fulfilled. . . . No longer is the prophetic ministry limited to an individual, or to a select group, but it is now the reality for all God's people—a veritable nation of prophets. Thus, in the weeks, months and early years following the pouring out of the Spirit of prophecy on the day of Pentecost the prophethood of all believers has been inaugurated.¹⁸

Since the inauguration of the prophethood of all believers at Pentecost, the power of the Spirit is available to all of God's people for effective Christian ministry and service. Authentic spiritual ministry is Spirit-empowered and Spirit-initiated.

The role of the Spirit in the prophethood of all believers needs to be emphasized in all contemporary Christian service. If our emphasis becomes inwardly focused on personal blessing and emotion, rather than Spirit-led, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-empowered service, the Church's ultimate impact upon the community and the world is in danger of becoming negligible. However, when Luke's charismatic theology is understood and applied by all of God's people, the Church will move toward functioning as the prophethood of all believers.

Spiritual Gifts

The availability, need, and demonstration of the spiritual gifts are based upon the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the prophethood of all believers. If everyone is called then everyone is gifted. All believers are God's ministers and should have spiritual gifts in operation in their lives and ministries.¹⁹

The nature of spiritual gifts as incarnational, therefore, according to

David Lim, “God makes full use of the vessel—his mind, thoughts, background, and current situation. The vessel himself is *part* of that message, thus his life and way of sharing the gift are vital parts of what builds up others.”²⁰

In the New Testament church the exercise of the gifts was essential. Every believer was involved in spiritual ministry. T. L. Lowery comments: “Ministry, from the beginning of the church, was the task of all believers, not just an elite few. All Christian believers testified about their faith to those they met. All of them prayed for their friends and family. God healed the sick and saved many as a result of the ministry of ordinary Christians. God was the source of their power for witnessing and service.”²¹

Ministry in the Spirit thus involves all of God’s people in the incarnational exercise of the spiritual gifts. Gifted by the Spirit, all believers have the privilege and responsibility to function as priests and prophets to the world and each other.

CONCLUSION

Authentic Christian ministry is a Spirit-driven activity and cannot be separated from the initiative, guidance, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Throughout Scripture the divine pattern for ministry has been progressively revealed as ministry in the Spirit.

From beginning to end ordinary people were used in extraordinary ways as they were empowered by the Spirit. The key to ministry potential, therefore, is not centered in the individual but in God. The Spirit Himself draws, leads, encourages, and enables all believers to participate in meaningful ministry to accomplish the will of Yahweh. God's divinely revealed plan is for all of His people to be involved in ministry in the Spirit.

NOTES

¹All Scripture quotations are from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.

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¹⁵*Ibid.*, 93.

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¹⁸*Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 47.

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