

Introduction

What does it mean to minister? Who is really called to minister?
Aren't pastors the only real ministers?

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:10 - 12

The word layman has crept into our vocabulary to describe the laity, that is, the vast majority of Christians who do not belong to the “professional” ministry known as the clergy. The use of this distinction has crippled the impact of the church on the world. Thousands of Christians have shirked their God-given responsibilities because they expect their pastor, minister, or priest (or whatever designation their church adopts) to perform all spiritual functions. The minister is expected to execute his duties so well that the people need not have any meaningful involvement in the church of Jesus Christ. The more competent the minister, the better, so that fewer requirements fall on the shoulders of the congregation.

Erwin W. Lutzer

What does minister mean anyways?

Several Greek and Hebrew words are translated as our English word

“minister”

shârath: Worshipper, server, to contribute to

My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me. Psalms 101:6

pelach: minister of religion

“If it be so, our God whom we **serve** is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. “But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to **serve** your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” Daniel 3:17 - 18

shemash: to serve ,minister, implies something done in the daylight (ie visible)

“A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were **attending** Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened. Daniel 7:10

hupēreteō : to minister to; Serve

Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from **ministering** to him. Acts 24:23

hupēretēs : Under oarsman

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My **servants** would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” John 18:36

Let a man regard us in this manner, as **servants** of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. 1 Corinthians 4:1 - 2

diakonos: Waiter on tables, deacons, minister

“If anyone **serves** Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My **servant** will be also; if anyone **serves** Me, the Father will honor him.
John 12:26

latreuō: To minister, to serve

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; Hebrews 12:28

God’s Model for Ministering

Correspondence View

Just as the Levitical priest served in the Temple, believers now serve in the “temples of God”

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

Order of the Levites (see chart)

All of the Levites served, although not all had the same responsibilities or authority.

Body View

Just as a body is made up of many separate parts, but still functions as one body. So too is the body of Christ one body with many members.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
Romans 12:1-5

Future Service View

Our lives today are simply practice for heaven.

In heaven, we minister to God and to each other.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;
Revelation 22:3

Application

- God has called all Christians to be ministers
- Not only is it our duty to minister, but it is part of our worship
- The call to minister is the same for all Christians, in that there are some ministries which all Christians are called to do
- The call to minister is different for all Christians, in that there are different positions and responsibility in God's ministry.
- Not ministering, is not an option for the believer, it is disobedience and invites the punishment of God upon our lives, families, and church.