

Discovering Our Ministry



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Preface

All Christian people are called by God to participate in the ministry of Christ. All ministry is his ministry. That which we call "our ministry" is, more accurately, our role in his ministry. This workbook is designed to help people understand the many facets of lay ministry, to discover the gifts God has given them for ministry and to identify the special areas of ministry to which God calls them.

A helpful way to begin this process is to have a definition of lay ministry from which to work. One of the best definitions is in the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. It reads:

"The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church."

THE MANY FACETS OF LAY MINISTRY

Let us look at this definition of ministry in its many manifestations with an eye toward gaining some perspective and reaching some conclusions. What are the many facets of lay ministry?

1. *Ministry as an Attitude of Life.* This is what the definition of lay ministry in the Book of Common Prayer appears to mean by saying that the ministry of the laity is, among other things, to bear witness to Christ wherever we may be. We are to see each of our roles in life as an opportunity to minister. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (served) but to minister (serve)." As Christ's people in the world today, that is what we are here for—to minister, to serve. We should see ministry as an attitude of life, and we should minister to those around us (often by listening and loving) all day, every day. This aspect of ministry is foundational. But, to serve God effectively and intentionally, it is important to determine the specific ministry or ministries to which He calls us.

2. *Ministries of Reconciliation in the World.* These represent what the Book of Common Prayer definition has in mind when it says that we are, "according to the gifts given us, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world." The dictionary says that reconciliation is the act of restoring to friendship. God has always wanted to be in relationship (friendship) with people; Jesus came to make that clear. As Christ's people in the world today, that continues to be our ministry, to make friends for God, to help people come into relationship with Him. And, as we

are told in Scripture, we are given specific supernatural (i.e., beyond our own education, skills or training) gifts for ministry. See, for instance, Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4. These gifts enable us to carry out the ministries God has for us in the world.

Specifically, those ministries might be divided as follows:

a. *Vocation*. The layperson's vocation is a special area of opportunity to minister. If the individual's gifts for ministry parallel his or her particular opportunities to minister in the workplace, that is an ideal arrangement. In this case, one could argue that vocation is the layperson's "ordination" to ministry.

b. *Special Ministries in the World*. If our gifts do not match our vocation, or if we feel called to minister in the world in addition to ministering through our vocation, at least two primary opportunities exist:

(1) *Ministry through the Structures of Society*. Some people are called to be change agents in the world, dealing with the problems and opportunities in the structures of society: the laws, systems, mores, factors or focuses of government, education, business and other areas of influence.

(2) *Ministry to Those in Need*. Others are called, by virtue of their gifts for ministry, to meet human need in their community and the world. There is as much potential for ministry as there are needs in the world.

c. *Special Assignments*. In addition to the above, God calls people to service in other ways by placing special opportunities before us and empowering us to undertake those opportunities. This also occurs in at least two ways:

(1) *For a Period of Time*. God may call us to serve on the school board, organize a program to feed the hungry or serve with the United Way for a few months or a year. This would not be an ongoing ministry but something God wants us to do for a specified period of time.

(2) *To Perform a Specific Act*. Likewise, God may bestow upon us a particular gift in order to undertake a specific act which we, for one reason or another, are better equipped to handle than someone "more gifted." Thus, a person with no counseling gifts may find him or herself being used to heal a marriage of friends whom no one else could reach.

3. *Ministries Related to the Church*. The Book of Common Prayer definition of ministry of the laity also includes taking our place in the life, worship and governance of the Church. These church-related ministries fall into at least two categories:

a. *Traditional Lay Ministries*. These ministries are often thought of as the layperson's burden: church boards, worship leader, choir, Sunday school teacher, usher. It can be argued that, instead of accepting these ministries as obligations undertaken perhaps out of guilt or acquiescence, we are called to specific areas of service and empowered by God to perform them. They are certainly only a small part of the total picture of lay ministry, but they are important functions that should be performed in a grace-filled manner. We would normally be called to these ministries for only a limited period of time.

b. *Other Church-related Ministries*. These are ministries that laypeople performed in the early days of the church, but somewhere along the line laypeople simply dropped out. Now they are performed by clergy, for the most part. Included would be the teaching and leading of adults, evangelism, visitation and healing ministries of various kinds,

counseling and church administration. Because the burden of these ministries falls upon the clergy, the amount of ministry that can be done in these areas is severely limited. Many people think that the layperson's ministry should be almost wholly in the world rather than directly related to the church. However, if we are to be God's people out in the world, we need to be growing into wholeness within a nurturing, loving community of faith—something that can happen only if these ministries of the church are readily available.

Our focus now will be on finding those gifts for ministering in the world and the church which God has especially given to each of us. We'll then look at other ways God has equipped us to minister. Then we'll try to match up our gifts with specific ministries. Finally, we'll consider God's life plan for each of us.

Section 1. Discovering My Gifts

The **Gifts Discovery Exercise** which follows is a means by which we may discover the gift(s) God has given us for the ministry or ministries to which God is calling us.* We believe it is both spiritual and practical. By spiritual we mean that it should be undertaken prayerfully, seeking God's guidance, and that it should involve trying to discern the supernatural gifts (of the Holy Spirit) through which God empowers us to do His will in ways beyond our own natural ability. By practical we mean that it is not complicated yet is reasonably reliable in helping people find their gifts or affirming the giftedness they have already discerned. If feasible, it is strongly recommended that each person completing this exercise review the results with his or her spiritual director or other Christian friend who can be objective in discussing the results.

In order to approach gift discovery from a spiritual standpoint, the exercise should begin with unhurried prayer that God will guide you toward your particular gift(s). This is important; please take the time to do it.

As you begin the first step of the exercise, answer the questions (that is, put the checkmark in the proper slot) spontaneously. Don't labor over the questions; put what first pops into your head. Also, be honest. False modesty will only thwart the purpose of the exercise; after all, you are seeking to discover ways in which God is working and will work in you, not how good or smart you are!

<p>The theory behind this exercise is that you will feel most fulfilled (i.e., will sense a greater portion of inner spiritual satisfaction) in doing those things that God particularly empowers you to do through supernatural gifts of the Spirit.</p>

Therefore, in completing the questionnaire, be led accordingly. In a sense, you might think that you should be greatly fulfilled in doing all of the things listed; but, if you are honest with yourself, you know that you would be—proportionately—more fulfilled in doing some things than others.

**While many more spiritual gifts have been identified in the Bible, these 13 have been chosen because they appear to be gifts for ministry in the church today.*

I would feel fulfilled in the following ways (don't be modest: answer spontaneously and honestly).

	Greatly	Somewhat	Slightly	Not At All
26. Meeting new people.				
27. Seeing the light of understanding click on in someone else.				
28. Encouraging people toward goals they should be accomplishing.				
29. Forgiving someone who has wronged me.				
30. Cleaning up after the party is over.				
31. Planning things properly.				
32. Having people borrow things from me.				
33. Making important decisions.				
34. Talking about what my faith means to me.				
35. Distinguishing between God's truth and phony substitutes.				
36. "Hanging in there" because God said to.				
37. Being an instrument of God's healing power.				
38. Fighting, through prayer, for the needs of others.				
39. Making people feel at home.				
40. Being responsible for imparting knowledge to others.				
41. Bringing out the best in others.				
42. Calling on the sick and shut-ins.				
43. Relieving distress of various kinds.				
44. Overseeing what needs to be done.				
45. Looking to God to supply my needs.				
46. Directing others toward accomplishing a goal.				
47. Seeing an "unlikely someone" in church.				
48. Perceiving evil in time to combat it effectively.				
49. Getting guidance from God that defies human predictions.				
50. Seeing someone healed through the power of God.				
51. Being persistent in prayers for others.				
52. Being prepared to care for guests who drop in unexpectedly.				
53. Telling others what I have learned from the Bible.				
54. Showing a person "a better way."				

I would feel fulfilled in the following ways (don't be modest: answer spontaneously and honestly).

	Greatly	Somewhat	Slightly	Not At All
55. Helping someone who is "down and out." _____				
56. Helping others achieve their goals. _____				
57. Seeing that all the "loose ends" are tied together. _____				
58. Having things available that other people need. _____				
59. Seeing a program I have devised put into practice. _____				
60. Leading a person toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. _____				
61. Protecting people from evil. _____				
62. Trusting God rather than circumstances. _____				
63. Being sought out by others for healing prayers. _____				
64. Knowing God answers my prayers for other people/situations. _____				
65. Opening my home to those in need. _____				
66. Helping others become dedicated Christians. _____				
67. Assisting those who feel defeated. _____				
68. Doing something about people's needs. _____				
69. Supporting people in their ministries. _____				
70. Solving problems. _____				
71. Sharing what I have with others. _____				
72. Knowing that others share my vision. _____				
73. Taking a stranger to church. _____				
74. Thwarting Satan in some way. _____				
75. Seeing God "come through" in a situation. _____				
76. Giving time for the benefit of others who are hurting. _____				
77. The first thing that occurs to me is to pray. _____				
78. Remembering other people's special occasions. _____				

Step II: WHICH SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Determine which spiritual gifts you appear to have by placing a value on your answers to the questions in Step 1. The values are: greatly = 4, somewhat = 2, slightly = 1, not at all = 0, (note: 4, 2, 1, 0 rather than 4, 3, 2, 1). Be sure to place the score for each question in the corresponding numbered box — **It's easier if you work down the columns rather than across.**

After the boxes are filled in, add the total horizontally. You can get an indication of which spiritual gifts you may have by determining the one, two or three gifts that stand out in comparison to the others on the list.

GIFT	RESPONSES						TOTAL VALUE
	1	14	27	40	53	66	
TEACHING	2	15	28	41	54	67	
ENCOURAGEMENT	3	16	29	42	55	68	
MERCY	4	17	30	43	56	69	
HELPS	5	18	31	44	57	70	
ADMINISTRATION	6	19	32	45	58	71	
GIVING	7	20	33	46	59	72	
LEADERSHIP	8	21	34	47	60	73	
EVANGELISM	9	22	35	48	61	74	
DISCERNMENT	10	23	36	49	62	75	
FAITH	11	24	37	50	63	76	
HEALING	12	25	38	51	64	77	
INTERCESSION	13	26	39	52	65	78	
HOSPITALITY							

You are looking for the one, two or three gifts that scored high in proportion to other gifts. One person may score the maximum of 24 points on two or three gifts while another person scores only 14 on his highest gift. That is not important; the difference in total scores attained by one person as compared to another simply reflects how a person evaluates his own feelings. What is important is that you determine the one, two or three scores that stand out in comparison to the other scores you attained. For instance, if you have a 24 and then four 20's, two 19's, etc., the gift that you scored 24 on is your gift. If, on the other hand, you have a 20, a 19 and an 18, then two 14's and on down, your top three scores indicate your three gifts.

Section 2. **Discovering Myself**

In this section of the workbook there will be an opportunity to learn something about ourselves. What we learn should help us in better understanding ourselves, God's purposes in our lives, His specific plan for us, and the ministry or ministries to which He calls us.

Please give each exercise due consideration (prayer, thought and time). It is not recommended that you do more than one exercise per day. For best results, do not read over an exercise or any part of it until you have completed the immediately preceding step.

A. People I Admire

In addition to Jesus Christ, who are the five people—past or present—whom you most admire? They can be people from your own life or ones you've simply read or heard about. Place the names of these people in the appropriate slots on the left side below. To the right of each name, list the person's five most significant (to you) characteristics. After completing this work, follow the instructions on the next page.

Outstanding Characteristics

Person #1 _____
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Person #2 _____
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Person #3 _____
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Person #4 _____
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Person #5 _____
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What are the most common characteristics among these five people (or any 2-4 of them)?

Common Characteristics:

How are these characteristics (or some of them) demonstrated in your own life?

What does the above information tell you about who you are and/or what you want to be?

B. My Most Satisfying Moments

After giving the matter proper reflection, write down below the five most satisfying moments in your life. These could be things you accomplished, dreams that came to fulfillment, or "serendipities" (surprises that broke into your life). Describe each in the space provided, then answer the questions on the next page.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Is there common thread or threads running through these events? If so, what?

What did you have to give of yourself to make these events (any one or more of them) satisfying?

To what extent did you have to rely upon others to join with you (team effort) in bringing about the satisfying result?

To what extent do you see God as a factor in what happened in each event?

What new insights about yourself has this exercise given you? As a result of this exercise, how have your ideas about ministry changed or been reinforced?

C. My Favorite Activities

List below the activities you most like to do. There is a space for 25 answers, but do not feel compelled to fill all of the blanks.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.

Now turn the page and answer the next questions.

Now go back and circle the five activities you most like to do. Is there a common thread or threads among these five things? What?

Are these things you do for yourself or for others, or both?
What is the nature of the things you do for others?

If you found that you had a year to live, would that change your list? Why or why not?

What new insight about yourself has this exercise given you? As a result of this exercise, have you discovered ways that your favorite activities might incorporate ministry?

D. My Philosophy of Life

Here, we want to discover the five messages that have come across to you "loud and clear" from life. What are the five most important lessons you have learned that you would want to share with others?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Please go on to the next page and answer the questions there.

From whom did you learn each of these things; to whom would you give primary credit?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What, if anything, have you done or are you doing to share each of these insights with others?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Is there a common thread or threads running through these insights? If so, what?

What new insights about yourself has this exercise given you? As a result of this exercise, do you see ways in which you are already ministering to others that you have perhaps not thought of as ministry before? How might those ministries be refined and enhanced?

E. My Equipment for Ministry

God has given each of us gifts for ministry and has called us or is calling us to particular ministries. We also bring into our ministries various types of "equipment" we have acquired over the years—those attributes which, by God's grace, have become a part of us—which may or may not be useful for the ministry or ministries to which God calls us. This "equipment" includes natural talents given to us by God, specific education and training we have received, skills acquired, experience we have had (some of which may have seemed tragic at the time but through which we may now help others facing similar experiences), our vocation, our hobbies, and perhaps other factors.

1. **Talents.** What are your primary talents or skills? (List approximately 5):

2. **Education and Training.** For what have you been educated and trained, vocationally or otherwise? (List up to 5 categories):

3. **Vocation.** What vocation or vocations have you successfully undertaken?

4. **Hobbies.** What are your hobbies?

5. **Experiences.** In addition to the above, what experiences of life (traumatic or not) are carried with you or are available to you in helping yourself and/or others?

Please go on to the next page.

What are the common threads from your answers on the last page? What are the primary ways in which you are "equipped"?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How do the above conclusions fit with other things you have learned about yourself in this section of the workbook?

How do the conclusions above fit with your giftedness as determined in the first section of the workbook?

F. Conclusions

What have you learned about yourself from this section of the workbook?

1. From "People I Admire":

2. From "My Most Satisfying Moments":

3. From "My Favorite Activities":

4. From "My Philosophy of Life":

5. From "My Equipment for Ministry":

Section 3. Discovering My Ministries

A. Areas of Ministry

In Section 1 of this workbook, there was an opportunity to find our gift or gifts for ministry. Subsequently, in Section 2, we have (hopefully) learned some things about ourselves that also shape our ministry potential. In this section we will prayerfully seek the ministry or ministries to which God calls us.

In trying to discover our ministries, we will look at our vocation, at the ways God would use us in the community and world, and how He calls us to ministries related to the church. (Only a few examples are given in each category; please note that these are only a few examples out of the many possibilities). Finally, we will consider ministry as a lifestyle.

First, however, we want to focus upon the area or areas of ministry to which God may be calling us based upon our giftedness and the other factors we have uncovered. Thirteen areas of ministry are listed below. They parallel the thirteen gifts for ministry considered in Section 1.

Check your gift or gifts for ministry from Section 1, recall your conclusions about yourself from Section 2, and then review the thirteen areas of ministry described below. After finding yourself in at least one but no more than three areas of ministry, write them down at the appropriate place on page 21.

1. **Teaching:** effectively imparting information or proclaiming precepts of truth either vocally, visually or by example. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:
 - a. Vocational: teaching; managing.
 - b. Community/world: teaching illiterates to read and write; volunteer tutor.
 - c. Church: teaching Sunday school; leading adult Bible study.
2. **Encouragement:** calling forth the best from others. It is helping others to be more dedicated to Christ, to bolster them up when they are discouraged or downhearted, to challenge them to set the goals to which God calls them. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:
 - a. Vocational: sensitivity to and encouragement of fellow workers, customers.
 - b. Community/world: working with the aged, youth, handicapped or prisoners.
 - c. Church: working with the youth group, shut-ins, newcomers, grief support groups, parenting groups.
3. **Mercy:** kindness and compassion, especially that which is demonstrated to those who seem least deserving of it. Manifestations of this area of ministry may include a continual readiness to forgive those who have erred, comfort the bereaved, help those who face a crisis, minister to the sick, become a peacemaker, or offer assistance to those in need. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:
 - a. Vocational: social worker; crisis counselor.
 - b. Community/world: organizing or participating in programs to meet social needs; assisting unwed mothers; ministering to patients.
 - c. Church: calling on sick, shut-ins or bereaved.
4. **Helps:** giving assistance or relief from distress where it is needed. The person who has an innate willingness simply to "pitch in" and do whatever needs to be done—no matter how detailed or tedious—evidences the ministry of helps. Examples of this ministry in each ministry

category might be:

- a. Vocational: secretary or clerical worker; waitress; housekeeper; gardener.
- b. Community/world: assisting in social outreach programs.
- c. Church: assisting with worship; gardening and church maintenance; preparing meals; setting up for meetings and special events.

5. **Administration:** assuming oversight for the proper execution of an organization or program (being in charge of people or things). This ministry involves being able to put things together, tie up all the "loose ends" and get things done. Adeptness at financing, planning, organizing, delegating responsibilities, and problem-solving can be indication of this ministry. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: office manager; city planner.
- b. Community/world: organizing volunteer or fund-raising efforts; serving on community planning board.
- c. Church: Sunday school superintendent; lay ministry coordinator.

6. **Giving:** sharing what one is or has with others. Those who have a ministry of giving joyfully share more of their resources and themselves than the tithe, which is only the standard for all Christians. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: philanthropist.
- b. Community/world: supporting programs to help those who are unemployed and those in need.
- c. Church: financially supporting the ministries of others; stewardship committee member.

7. **Leadership:** setting the pattern for others to follow—either by direction, instruction, guidance, encouragement or example. Leadership involves conviction about objectives to be accomplished and the ability to inspire others to identify with those objectives and to want to meet them. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: executive; managing people.
- b. Community/world: leading and serving on boards of community organizations.
- c. Church: leading Bible study/prayer group; serving on governing board of the church.

8. **Evangelism:** the person with this ministry has a burning desire in his or her heart to lead other people into a living relationship with Jesus Christ, manifested by testifying to what God has done in his or her life, telling people who Jesus Christ is, ascertaining where the other person is in his or her spiritual perception and calling that person onward to a commitment (or deeper commitment) to the Lordship of Christ. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: salesperson; public speaker; politician.
- b. Community/world: working with prisoners, addicts; seeking opportunities to share faith with fellow workers and neighbors.
- c. Church: visiting newcomers to the church; neighborhood calling.

9. **Discernment:** the ability to tell that which is of the Holy Spirit and that which is of an evil spirit. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: counseling; consultant.
- b. Community/world: serving in a voluntary counseling or advisory capacity.
- c. Church: being a spiritual director; confidant of clergy and church staff.

10. **Faith:** this ministry is evidenced when one is willing to "go out on a limb" in seemingly impossible situations, to trust God rather than circumstances or human inclinations. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: entrepreneur; small business owner/operator.
- b. Community/world: organizing for action to meet various needs.
- c. Church: intercessory prayer; healing.

11. **Healing:** this ministry is manifested in Christians in a variety of ways. Just as Jesus used various means of exhibiting healing power (touching, praying, speaking a word of faith, casting out demons, utilizing the faith of others), Christians also become channels of the ministry of healing through various means: prayers of intercession, the laying on of hands, anointing acts under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Although Jesus alone has the power to heal, he ministers the gifts of healing through those whom he calls to such a ministry. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: doctor; nurse.
- b. Community/world: hospital, school or social agency volunteer.
- c. Church: visiting the sick; healing team at worship service.

12. **Intercession:** prayer for others is often overlooked as a ministry, and yet it is one of the most important ministries in the church. Some people are called to devote the better part of their lives to it. Evidences of the ministry of intercession would be having the desire to be instantly in prayer for a person or situation, having confidence that God acts in response to our prayers, being patient and persistent in prayer concerning problems that don't seem to get solved or people who don't seem to change for the better, and having a continuing sense of responsibility to lift people and situations to the Lord for healing. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: praying for fellow workers and customers.
- b. Community/world: praying for the world, nation, community—their leaders and their needs.
- c. Church: praying for others; intercessory prayer team.

13. **Hospitality:** a concern for the comfort of others may be a manifestation of the ministry of hospitality. Having a knack for making people at ease, so that they feel at home, would be another indication of the gift of hospitality, as would enjoying being in the presence of strangers and desiring to make our home available to serve the Lord by accommodating them. Examples of this ministry in each ministry category might be:

- a. Vocational: homemaker; innkeeper; host/hostess.
- b. Community/world: hospital or nursing home volunteer; foster parent.
- c. Church: greeting newcomers to the church; providing housing for visitors.

My area or areas of ministry (such as teaching, mercy, etc.):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Vocation As Ministry

How does your current vocation fit with your area or areas of ministry as determined above? (If your vocation does not "fit," please go on to part "C" on the next page.)

If there is a "fit," what do you plan to do more effectively to incorporate your giftedness from God and the things you have learned about yourself into your vocational ministry?

C. Ministry in the Community/World

Regardless of whether your area or areas of ministry fit into your vocation, to what ministry or ministries in your community/world do you believe God may be calling you? In answering that question, consider that there are at least two ways in which God may use us in "ministries in the world:"

(1) **Ministry through the Structures of Society.** Some people are called to be change agents in the world, dealing with the problems and opportunities in the structures of society: the laws, systems, mores, factors or focuses of government, education, business and other areas of influence.

(2) **Ministry to Those in Need.** Others are called, by virtue of their gifts for ministry, to meet human need in their community and the world. There is as much potential for ministry as there are needs in the world.

What ministry or ministries in the community/world do you believe God may be calling you into?

What do you plan to do to make yourself more effectively available for, and involved in, the ministry or ministries you have identified.

D. Ministry Related to the Church

Regardless of what you have discovered thus far about ministries God is calling you to vocationally and/or in the world, also consider what He may want you to do as a part of the Body of Christ. In prayerfully assessing this, continue to have in mind your area or areas of ministry as determined on page 21, consider that there are at least three categories of ministry related to the Church as follows:

(1) **Ministries in the Church.** These would be what we have usually considered to be the traditional roles of lay people in the church: serving on the governing board, lay leader in worship, Sunday school teacher, choir and usher.

(2) **Ministries of the Church.** These are ways the church ministers to its "own" (members, relatives and friends of members and potential members); evangelistic ministries (calling on newcomers, prospective members and lapsed members, for instance); visiting the sick, shut-ins, nursing homes, etc.; counseling; leading adult Bible study/prayer groups; teaching adults; training people for ministries, etc.

(3) **Ministries from the Church.** These are ministries to the community/world *from the church itself*: programs to feed, clothe and shelter the needy; advocacy for the rights of those in need; accommodating community groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Scout troops, etc.; conducting blood drives.

What ministry or ministries in the Body of Christ do you believe God wants you to be involved in at the present time?

What do you plan to do to let your church leadership—or the appropriate person—know of your sense of calling to, and willingness to perform, this ministry or ministries?

E. Ministry Lifestyle

As a concluding portion of Section 3 of this workbook, there are at least three things that need to be said about discovering our ministries.

(1) Some people never discover a particular, ongoing ministry that they can call their own. They identify an area or areas of ministry, and God can use them very effectively in that ministry lifestyle; but they cannot identify with other people who say that their ministry is in their vocation as a teacher, their voluntary social work at the community center or their visiting newcomers to the church. They just know that they are sensitive to, and make themselves available for, a wide range of needs relating to their area or areas of ministry. A man who identifies with discernment as a ministry area simply knows that many people ask him for advice; a woman who has hospitality as a ministry area never forgets anyone's birthday or anniversary; another woman who knows that her ministry area is helps/service does so much *doing* that she gets embarrassed every time she hears the Gospel lesson about Martha and Mary, but she can't identify a particular ministry.

There are two things to consider in such cases. The first is that the person who cannot identify his or her particular ministry after a conscientious effort to do so shouldn't be overly concerned. If a ministry area(s) has been identified and the individual displays a lifestyle of functioning within that ministry area, what more could be asked of him or her? On the other hand, someone who falls into this situation should be very sure he or she is not using it as an escape device; it is too easy to say that "my life is my ministry" and then go about pursuing one's life apart from any sense of serving God as His minister to a very needful world.

(2) Another factor to be considered is how a person's areas of ministry fit together. This is simply something to think and pray about, to give God a chance to say something to us about ministry that we may not have discovered through the other exercises in this workbook. If, for instance, healing and intercession are our ministry areas, it would certainly seem that we should be involved in some ministry of healing prayer. If leadership and faith are our ministry areas, it would certainly seem that God wants us to be change agents in our community and church. If encouragement, mercy and helps/service are our areas, God surely wants us in a ministry or ministries to meet human need. This is something each person simply needs to approach prayerfully based upon his or her own particular set of ministry areas.

(3) Finally, God wants us all to have ministry as an attitude of life. Jesus said that the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (served) but to minister (serve). As Christ's people in the world today, that is what we are for: ministry/service. Therefore, regardless of what we have discovered about our ministry areas and our specific ministries, we are to see all occasions of life as opportunities to minister—as parents, spouses, neighbors, friends, employers and employees, civic and social workers and out on the baseball diamond or golf course. Every contact with another person carries the potential for ministry, even if it is simply in listening or being present to the other person. A way to test ourselves to see if we have ministry as an attitude of life with regard to any situation we face: What would Jesus do in this situation?

Section 4. Discovering God's Plan for My Life*

We Christians have always contended that God has a special plan for each of our lives. Few of us, however, have known how to discover the specifics of that plan. This exercise is an attempt in that direction.

God calls us to be obedient to His purpose (Psalm 143:10, Matthew 6:24, John 14:15). He expects us, by abiding in Christ to do His will on earth (John 15:4-9, Matthew 25:23, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 4:14, 2 Timothy 3:14). He promises us the guidance we need to discern His purposes for us (Psalm 32:8, John 16:13). And Christ himself has told us that we are to do works even greater than his (John 14:12).

The steps below need to be taken thoughtfully, prayerfully and unhurriedly and written down on a sheet or sheets of paper. This could be either a significant turning point in your life or an opportunity formally to affirm your lifestyle as a Christian in a manner you have never before considered.

A first step, then, is to find God's single overriding purpose in your life. A single purpose keeps us focused, helps prevent us from drifting from the specific plan that God has for us. It has been said that good is the enemy of the best. God doesn't want us simply doing good works. He wants us to do the very best that we have been peculiarly gifted to do. (See the enclosed planning charts of two individuals for examples of purpose statements.)

Next, we want to establish *objectives* for our life. For our purposes here, an objective is a large-scale aspiration which, if achieved, automatically produces progress toward purpose-fulfillment. To fulfill the purpose you have identified as your own, what are four, five or so objectives toward that end? (Again, see the enclosed planning charts for examples of objectives.)

Then, you want to establish *goals* for your objectives. We will define a goal as a smaller-scale aspiration which, if attained, automatically produces progress towards objective-achievement. (See the enclosed planning charts for examples of goals.)

Finally, for each of our goals we want to have *standards*. A standard is a way of measuring performance. Standards may measure the time to be devoted to our goal, the quantity or quality of our effort. Here are a couple of standards relating to goals:

1. If the goal is to pray regularly, the standard could be to practice the presence of God on a continuing basis. Another standard would be to have at least 30 minutes per day of "quiet time" (prayer and devotional time) with the Lord.

2. If the goal is to support financially the Lord's work through your parish church, the standard could be to give a tithe (10% of your income) each year.

Again, you are encouraged to commit your purpose statement and all objectives, goals and standards to writing. Although this takes time, the effort will be well worth it. Putting this information in writing not only helps to fix it in your mind, but it can become a covenant between you and God. Following on pages 27-29 are two *examples* of plans such as those described above. These have been done by two different individuals (as you can see, the second one is incomplete) and are provided as samples only.

Pages 30-32 are set up to fill in your own Purpose, Objectives, Goals and Standards. Feel free to use additional pages as needed.

**Special appreciation is expressed to Dr. John W. Alexander for material in this section which is based largely upon his ideas and writings.*

A. SAMPLE PLANS

Planning by an individual: EXAMPLE #1

PURPOSE: To serve rather than to be served.

Objective #1: Faithfully to equip myself for service that I may be as effectively of service as I can be.

GOAL 1: To be regular in worship.

Standards: Every Sunday and as possible once during mid-week.

GOAL 2: To be regular in prayer.

Standards: Daily quiet time of 30 minutes or more; practice presence of God.

GOAL 3: To be regular in Bible study.

Standards: Daily Bible study; in depth study weekly.

GOAL 4: To be regular in devotional reading.

Standards: Read some daily, keep journal.

GOAL 5: To receive spiritual direction.

Standards: At least quarterly.

GOAL 6: To put spiritual principles into practice.

Standards: Live vulnerably and reflectively.

Objective #2: To make myself available for those tasks for which God has equipped me.

GOAL 1: Practicing general ministry.

Standards: Seeing life as an opportunity for ministry.

GOAL 2: To minister through my vocation.

Standards: Remember that it is Christ I am serving and not the ways of the world (security, pride).

GOAL 3: To meet other ministry needs.

Standards: Fully sharing my administrative gifts by serving on boards, committees, etc., and organizing people to meet needs.

GOAL 4: To be sensitive to needs around me.

Standards: Pray constantly for guidance.

Objective #3: To practice servanthood in my family as a first priority.

GOAL 1: To be available to my wife.

Standards: Never set my schedule without consulting her; when possible, adapt my schedule to her needs.

GOAL 2: To be available to other family members.

Standards: Be willing to adapt my plans to fit theirs when possible.

GOAL 3: Provide for my family.

Standards: Free them from concern for basic needs commensurate with the best income I can reasonably produce while doing what God would have me do.

GOAL 4: Give and receive love.

Standards: Be conscious of their needs and sensitive to their feelings.

Objective #4: To practice servanthood in my church and community as a continuing conscious commitment.

GOAL 1: Tithe (10%) to the church, and give generously otherwise as well.

Standards: In case of doubt, give.

GOAL 2: Preach and teach when asked.

Standards: Prepare adequately and give generously of myself.

GOAL 3: Be willing to help.

Standards: Do my share of the "nitty-gritty"; give blood regularly.

GOAL 4: Work for peace and justice.

Standards: Be a reconciler, but also challenge injustice when encountered.

Objective #5: To maintain my physical and mental health that my body might be an adequate support system for my ministry of servanthood.

GOAL 1: Allow time for myself.

Standards: Provide reasonable means of recreation.

GOAL 2: Exercise regularly.

Standards: Tennis at least twice weekly; yard work, walking.

GOAL 3: Maintain good reading habits.

Standards: Use reading for recreation (escape) and enlightenment; avoid trash.

GOAL 4: Relax.

Standards: Seven hours of sleep per night. "Know when to quit."

GOAL 5: Maintain health consciousness/diet.

Standards: Avoid harmful foods, eat in moderation, get check-ups.

Planning by an individual - EXAMPLE #2

PURPOSE: The single overriding purpose of my life is to walk so closely with the Lord Jesus Christ through each day's routine that, at my Final Examination, He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Objective #1	Objective #2	Objective #3	Objective #4	Objectives #5	Objective #6
<p>To be a maturing disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing the fruit of the Spirit.</p> <p>Goal 1. To develop a hunger and thirst for God.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To read, feed on Scripture.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To become a man of prayer.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Other goals and standards?</p>	<p>To be a Christ-centered member of my family, building relationships with my family members.</p> <p>Goal 1. To build good relationships with my wife.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To build good relationships with my children.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To build good relationships with my grandchildren.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Other goals and standards?</p>	<p>To be a productive worker in my vocation.</p> <p>Matthew 5:16</p> <p>Goal 1. To understand and be committed to the purpose, objectives, goals, standards of the organization which employs me.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To possess a satisfactory job description and be making progress toward fulfilling it.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To build good rapport with my supervisor.</p> <p>Std. 1.</p> <p>Goal 4. To build good rapport with my supervisees.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p>	<p>To build relationships with other members of the Body of Christ.</p> <p>Goal 1. To be a faithful participant in my local parish.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To relate with other Christians in my community.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To relate with other Christians around the nation and the world.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Other goals and standards?</p>	<p>To be a good citizen in society.</p> <p>Goal 1. To be honest and considerate in all my dealings.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To be a good neighbor in my neighborhood.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To pray for and encourage public officials.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 4. To be doing something to help at least one person in need.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 5. To work to correct at least one unjust condition in society.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p>	<p>To be a good custodian of my body, my time, my wealth.</p> <p>Goal 1. To attempt to maintain physical health.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 2. To develop intellectual potential.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 3. To attempt to maintain emotional health.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 4. To have a plan for using my time wisely.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p> <p>Goal 5. To work with my wife in handling our finances.</p> <p>Std. 1. Std. 2.</p>

B. MY OWN PLAN

PURPOSE:

Objective #1:

Goal 1:

Standards:

Goal 2:

Standards:

Goal 3:

Standards:

Objective #2:

Goal 1:

Standards:

Goal 2:

Standards:

Goal 3:

Standards:

(Plan - pg. 2)

Objective #3:

Goal 1:

Standards:

Goal 2:

Standards:

Goal 3:

Standards:

Objective #4:

Goal 1:

Standards:

Goal 2:

Standards:

Goal 3:

Standards:

(Plan - pg. 3)

Objective #5:

Goal 1:

Standards:

Goal 2:

Standards:

Goal 3:

Standards: