



When the Consultants Replace the Servants

But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (1 Corinthians 12:20-21)

The state of most of the Western Church finds its parallel in the many “ministries” accepted as such which cannot be found in Scripture complimented by those which seek to operate independently from the Church. Even within the worst of the English translations of the Bible one cannot find such things as a “music ministry”, “discernment ministry”, “single’s ministry”, or any of the specialized niches dedicated to either a single demographic or topic such as prophecy or just a narrow aspect of same. Without truly studying, understanding, and putting into practice that which Scripture teaches concerning the gifts and offices provided by Christ through the Holy Spirit to His collective Bride, the secular concept of specialization has crept in further and further until we have an alarmingly large number of “consultants” who attempt to act autonomously from the rest of the Body of Christ. In the secular vernacular, these are called “outside contractors”—those who are not official members of the organization and who operate solely for their own benefit. They only contribute to the degree that it enriches and benefits themselves, and are never integrated or accepted into the ranks of the company to whom they bring their services. They are perceived to have a talent or skill not found in the company proper.

While this is not a brand new problem, modern technology has multiplied this phenomenon to a scale of unprecedented levels. One can become a specialist with just a Twitter account, a Facebook page, a website, blog or YouTube channel—all without the need for a physical headquarters—or in most cases, doing all of these simultaneously to enjoy the broadest base of attention possible. Anyone who so decides, without the requisite need for accountability or representing anyone except their own interest, can become an authority unto themselves for little or no cost through the simultaneous posting of text, articles and even video, establishing their own “ministry”. Once upon a time it was very difficult, without the aid of others and the development of some kind of

“When the Consultants Replace the Servants”, Page 1 of 2

base of financial support, to bring a new “ministry” into the world whether it ultimately turned out to be good or bad, but now it’s a one-stop-shop affair which involves little more than a series of free or very cheap registrations and use of the equipment already in one’s possession. **Anyone** can do it, and on a daily basis, more and more are doing so.

However well-intentioned, the end result all too often achieved is something which no longer functions as a part of the Church, but independent of it and its supporting members. It begins to see everyone and everything through the singular filter of its touted specialty. A “music ministry” sees everything through the prism of music; a “prophecy ministry” through just the prophetic portions of God’s Word alone; a “discernment ministry” making distinctions according to its narrow, singular standard. In other words, they cease to function as one part of the Body of Christ which need all the others in order to biblically succeed, and fulfill what Paul stated in the opening Scripture: “*I have no need of you*”. Too many have become outside contractors working only to enrich themselves and propagate the narrow niche they are attempting to occupy.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4–7)

Each of these “consultants” would, of course, passionately defend themselves by responding, and often sincerely, that they believe they **are** working “*for the common good*”, but within the majority ranks of those actually failing to do so, they don’t seem to see how they attempt to work completely independently of the rest of the Body of Christ. They see everyone **else** as needing **them** without understanding how much they also in turn equally need everyone else. Notice in the above verses that we have the Triune Godhead working in harmony as the ultimate example in the specific mention of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are likewise supposed to work together in harmony just as They do.

If one’s ministry were operating like a church, it would require the presence and support of **all** the gifts to achieve its goals. But in such narrowly focused efforts, they attract just those who are singularly like them while rejecting the differently gifted. They have become the embodiment of what Paul makes an exaggerated example of, something made up of nothing but eyes or exclusively of ears.

“When the Consultants Replace the Servants”, Page 2 of 2

¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? (1 Corinthians 12:14-19)

Paul expresses the division which comes with this phenomenon, where one divinely designated part thinks it should be something else. This comes about not just solely from someone wanting a different position or role for themselves, but often engendered by those exalting their "ministry" above all others to bring about the best visibility. Especially when it comes to the charismatic gifts, there are far too many claiming **every** authentic Christian must have a particular gift, or even worse, hold seminars or even entire schools through which they claim participants can be "trained" to attain them.

¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11}

So much for the leading and authority of the Holy Spirit, eh? But there are actually two extremes of this syndrome. The first is the authentically gifted who over-realize their particular area, often to the exclusion of everything and everyone else. This is often seen in the otherwise much needed areas of teaching and evangelization.

A "teaching" ministry often centers around a particular individual, and without the encouragement and incorporation of all the other gifts, becomes at the least singularly academic, and at most cultic. Without the support to grow the knowledge to full maturity enabled by the other gifts working in concert with it, it eventually either heads in the direction of a metaphorical cul-de-sac, or toward a final destination of false beliefs and even a falling away from the faith. Scripture is replete with warnings regarding knowledge for knowledge's sake. Biblical Christianity is a practicing faith which puts God's Word into effect through our behavior and relationships, the knowledge ultimately attaining to wisdom—that is, **living** according to it.

Ministries exclusively devoted to evangelization suffer similar ends when making converts without the requisite follow-up Jesus mandated for discipleship. Particularly among the "Generation X" demographic, we have a significant number who have received the Word

"When the Consultants Replace the Servants", Page 3 of 3

of the Gospel in what might be described as the “good soil” from the Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:1-9; 18-23), but are not producing the subsequent fruit normally expected because they continue on with no follow-up to develop their root. The number of these I have met personally and through the website is astonishing, people who are authentically saved but continue to wander spiritually for years because all they seem to encounter is one bad church or fellowship after another. This is a prime example of why one, single gift cannot claim success by merely asserting, “Well, **we** did **our** job...that’s for someone **else**”. If properly integrated into and functioning with the rest of the Body of Christ, such a thing could never happen.

Yes, even the authentically gifted can work to detrimental extremes when over-realizing a single focus of expertise, but what about “ministries” which don’t actually exist in Scripture? The most abundant example is probably the so-called “music” ministry.

Without a doubt, music—like many other things, can most certainly be a tool of ministry, but it is not a ministry in and of itself. A properly gifted and operating Christian may use music in the exercise of teaching, evangelization, or building up the faith of the fellowship to cite but a few, but it is never found among the New Testament lists of gifts or offices. One has to take out of context the Old Testament structure set up through David consisting of the choirs dedicated to worshipping the One True God in the Temple. Take special note of their focus: to lead God’s people in the praise and worship of God **IN** His House. They weren’t making and selling albums to the public, they never went on tour, and they certainly never charged believers the equivalent of secular concert ticket prices to join in with their “worship”. Ultimately it’s actually worse than its worldly counterpart because of the pretense. Biblically such is called “hypocrisy”.

If you have a worship team who spends most of their time in Bible study, fellowship, and equally participating in the rest of your church’s or fellowship’s activities instead of rehearsing and recording, immediately let them know how much you love and appreciate them and never, **ever** let them go. Such rare occurrences have not substituted music as their god. But the prolific presence of the false and deceived in this area are very easy to spot: they measure everyone by their musical talent alone, they are singularly focused on rehearsal as the fulfillment of their “ministry”, and they gage their ultimate success as to whether their talents and efforts will take them higher in the idol food chain to recording opportunities, dedicated concerts, and more groupies—er, followers. There is a reason one of the most popular television shows in American history was named “American

“When the Consultants Replace the Servants”, Page 4 of 4

Idol". Church is now a viable avenue for musicians to launch a career and "make it", and even worse than their secular counterparts, deceive themselves into believing they can have fame and fortune and Jesus, too.

This is but one example of many, but the common denominator in all of them betrays them as actually being a conduit to incorporate something originating in the world into the Church and call it a "ministry". It is not misusing an authentic gift or calling as such was never present to begin with. It is a compromise cloaked in terms and appearances of the authentic, when in reality it is not just an outright counterfeit, but often something Scripture warns not to allow to be adopted and accepted within the Body of Christ in the first place. Something God never intended for His people is brought in from the outside world.

In between these extremes is the case of those who only focus on a narrow aspect of a gift or calling and elevate it over and above everything and everyone else. No better example of this can be found than in the modern rise of the "ministry" which exclusively champions "prophecy" or "discernment".

³But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

I don't mean that such actually make predictions in the Lord's name (we'll save **that** whack-a-mole for a future discussion), but those who dedicate all their effort into a myopic, hyper-directed effort on just the prophetic portions of God's Word. The core reason for their perpetual error is they don't know how to handle the **whole** Word of God, and thus never realize how they are perpetuating things contrary to Scripture. But even if someone were a legitimate "watchman" on behalf of the Body of Christ, they would understand the true role and nature of a prophet's message as provided above by Paul. Notice that "*edification*", "*exhortation*" and "*consolation*" are all about the Word of God designed to build up, correct and comfort His people. These are evident in the documented Old Testament prophets, these activities occupying far more space than merely uttering a future prediction.

Even worse, so many of them have missed the point that a true prophet or prophetic message only comes when **God** designates. The authentic found in Scripture spent far more of their lives in silence, waiting and serving God, and repeating what He spoke to them in parallel with His already given written Word. They never felt they had to

"When the Consultants Replace the Servants", Page 5 of 5

repeatedly come up with something new to stay in business. The fruit of these false efforts in our time is affirmed by the fact that these “ministries” cannot be found to be living in the same character as biblical prophets, instead most often found running from one over-sensationalized proclamation to the next, regularly asserting their superior place in the Church’s chain-of-command. It is most telling that they forego Paul’s requirement that such need not only *parallel* confirmation of their message, but to actually be *judged*.

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. (1 Corinthians 14:29)

And yet there is no end to their ilk claiming an exclusive revelation belonging to them and them alone which so often conflicts with the next guy or gal claiming membership in this caste.

But where did the notion that “discernment” is a “ministry” come from? Yes, in a list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, the King James version reads, “to another *discerning of spirits*”, which later English translations such as the NASB more accurately render, “to another the *distinguishing of spirits*”. (1 Co. 12:10) But even in the KJV “discernment” is not highlighted, but rather the ability to make a distinction as to what is taking place *spiritually*. “Discernment” in and of itself as encouraged in the whole of God’s Word is something learned, most closely associated with knowing Scripture so well that a maturation takes place so as to understand what is of God, what is of the world, and what is of the flesh. The true goal of biblical discernment is the working of God’s Word to properly guide us in this life so as to ultimately produce the final results of salvation.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; (Philippians 1:9–10)

But the term as employed by so many of these “ministries” bears no semblance to a biblical quality or working, and instead is a license to ridicule, criticize and rail against whatever narrow standard they have deceived themselves as their mission to uphold. Granted, they are rarely wrong about everything, but not only does outright error and false teaching inevitably characterize them, but in actual practice they are most often found to be the worst examples of Christian behavior on public display. Having deceived themselves into the notion that their niche takes priority over all else, they implement a self-exemption when it comes to behaving in accordance with the whole of God’s Word,

“When the Consultants Replace the Servants”, Page 6 of 6

much less in concert with the rest of the Body of Christ. And like the prophecy “ministries”, in order to justify their existence, are never satiated; they just simply move from one target to the next. It never ends with them.

The bottom line is that if someone has a whole and biblical “ministry”, they are operating within a group comprised of many, complimentary gifts. They are themselves so grounded in and practicing the Word, that their efforts in combination with those aligned with them are reshaping them into the image and likeness of Christ, not the image and likeness of a reality television show or other such worldly ways of working and behaving. But when someone measures their spiritual success by the number of those who read and listen to them, rather than the degree to which they are exclusively devoted to their Lord and Master and His Word, I am not suggesting that they are automatically enrolled in the Lake of Fire, but are in danger of experiencing a personal loss nonetheless.

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

To continue to pursue these avenues for these individuals is to risk entering eternity with far less than they could have obtained; for those following them an equal threat to one's treasure is likewise at risk. Aside from the danger to the Body of Christ at present, there is a tangible consequence for those who make it in, but with little to show for it.

Don't try to build on Christ the foundation by yourself or allow someone to talk you into letting them be your lone, general contractor.

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

In Him,

Servant@WalkWithTheWord.org