



Collegiate Quarterly

## Teacher's Guide

# Ministry in the New Testament Church

## Surveying the Source

Matt. 25:38–40; Acts 5:12–16; Gal. 2:10; James 2:14–16

## Plotting the Course

### The students will:

- ▶ Know and articulate the conceptual basis of New Testament ministry.
- ▶ Express the difference between spectacle and godly power.
- ▶ Define the connection between the commission Jesus gave and the outcomes in the early church.

## Preparing to Lead

One of Jesus' many accomplishments during His ministry on this earth was the training of His disciples in ministry. Think of all the principles He taught them to live by, such as: the last will be first; the meek will inherit the earth; the pure will see God; it is more blessed to give than to receive; and so on. His act of

washing their feet was perhaps the crowning moment of training, because God Himself took the role of a servant that the disciples themselves thought was beneath them. The ministry conducted in the early Christian church arose from the ministerial training that Jesus held for the twelve.

## Getting Started

**A.** As far as we know, the Christian church did not have a Working Policy when it began. We assume that no one said, "Here is how we are going to do this." There was no need. The ministry model had been shaped by the truths Jesus made plain, and these truths, imputed by the Holy Spirit, defined the thinking and therefore the actions of the first Christian ministers. Talking about ministry in the early church begins with identifying the foundation, the source, the thesis that defines it. For example, we could float the statement, "Not my will, but Yours be done." How about, "As you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me"? We want to know, what is the core idea of New Testament ministry?

**B.** In their time with Jesus, the twelve disciples had become used to subsisting from what could be called the "common purse," which was maintained by donations and managed by Judas. Although they had come from jobs and homes, in their time of ministry the disciples lived simply and as though they owned nothing. *Ask:* "What model did Jesus set?" When Jesus sent them out to minister, the disciples didn't take extra clothes or stay at hotels. He taught them to live by the grace and provision of God alone. It might seem natural, then, that as the disciple group expanded from tens to hundreds to thousands, this way of living and serving extended into the early church.

## Materials

Reproducible Activity, Bibles, pens

## Delving Into the Word

**A.** For many in the secular Western world, the idea of “communal living” is politically charged and has a social stigma. Governments have attempted communal living as a way of ordering society, and they have failed. Read Acts 2:38–47 as a class. *Ask:* “Was the early Christian church a study in communal living?”

The church in Acts 2 was motivated to change their lives, and the change began in their hearts. *Ask:* “What or who motivated them? Philosophy? The Spirit of God? Can we identify some reasons why the community of new believers lived and served the way they did?”

One way to look at the ministry of the new believers is to consider what was most important to them. They believed that their salvation, and the salvation of others, was a far higher priority than anything else in this life. Love for God and fellow human beings completely filled their minds and hearts, and the daily needs of life seemed insignificant.

**B.** Read Acts 6:8; 5:12; 4:13 (in that order). In His ministry on earth, Jesus never allowed His works to become a spectacle. He also avoided creating a cult of personality and refused to legitimize His mission through a show of supernatural pageantry.

The same risks were present in the early church. The episode of Peter resurrecting Dorcas after she died might potentially have been a time when the early church ministry could gain fame of the wrong kind. After all, this miracle “became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord” because of it (Acts 9: 42). And yet that did not happen. The spiritual service given by the apostles and converts in the early church was motivated by love for God and for humanity. No supernatural occurrence would alter the path or corrupt the influence of an early church minister who was surrendered to God.

## Discussing the Ideas

1. What is it about the ministry of the early church that resulted in there not being “a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34; cf. Deut. 15:4)? See Acts 4:32.

2. The general description of ministry in Acts 5:12–16 sounds very much like the atmosphere and activities of Jesus’ life on earth. How long did this go on? Did it fade away? If so, why?

3. What do you make of a period of Christian ministry characterized by miraculous healing and prison escapes, res-

urrection from the dead, and instant death for two people who lied to the Holy Spirit?

4. How would you characterize the mix of social and gospel ministry conducted in the early church? Who defined it? How was it done?

5. When the apostles said, in so many words, “We should not take time to wait tables,” were they rejecting the idea of serving the poor and suffering? If not, why not?

## Closing the Activity

Hand out the Reproducible Activity and writing tools. Ask the class to help you make a list of the different types of ministry activities of the early Christian church, including as many spiritual gifts as they can identify with specific narrative evidence from the book of Acts. For

example, one of the first “gospel” ministries was the exercise of the gift of tongues at Pentecost. The first social ministry was the sharing of daily supplies among the new believers baptized after Peter’s first sermon. And so on.

**Tim Lale, Bowie, Maryland, USA**

Copyright 2019  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®

## Aspects of Ministry in the Early Christian Church

---

Gospel Ministry	Social Ministry
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

---