

# Ministering Grace in the Spirit

by John Edmiston

## Walking In the Spirit – Series 32 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

One of the key questions of spiritual ministry is: How can we minister grace to the hurting? Hope to the hopeless? And salvation to the lost? How can the overflow of our Christian lives touch hearts and minds? Paul tells the Colossians how to teach and admonish each other:

**Colossians 3:16-17 ISV** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you with all richness and wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts. (17) And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

This is clearly a joyous and thankful process, full of singing and melody. The teaching and admonishing is done through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and singing to God with thankfulness! As the word of Christ dwells richly it produces an abundance of praise and praise glorifies God and instructs and encourages the saints!

The gracious lifestyle is Christ-centered, joyful, thankful and praise-filled! Everything is done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the Father. Grace overflows from gratitude. I once read a book entitled "Gratitude – The Heart of Prayer" indeed as creatures we should have great gratitude to our Creator, and as sons of God we should be filled with gratitude to our Heavenly Father, and as the redeemed we should be filled with gratitude toward our Redeemer!

Once we are grounded in gratitude and have our feet shod with the gospel of peace then we can move forward into the ministry of grace!! (After all how can an unhappy grumbling unthankful Christian radiate faith?)

Some disciplines which are a great help include:

- a) Reading large chunks of Scripture in a systematic fashion and meditating on them.
- b) Listening to worship music that has a definite anointing on it.
- c) Expressing your praise in personal times of worship e.g. by speaking in tongues

- d) Meditating on the Names of God and the attributes of God and the promises of God
- e) Thanking God for His work in your life and for every answered prayer
- f) Joining a small group or prayer group where you actively edify each other

You can 'mix and match' these as you choose and even do several simultaneously for instance listening to praise music while you read the Scriptures in a small prayer group.

As you do these things you will set your mind on the Spirit and reap life and peace (Romans 8:4-6) and it is from this life and peace that you can minister to others (far too much ministry comes from deadness of spirit, striving and turmoil). We have to invest TIME – big chunks of TIME if we are to have this grace-filled overflow of a thankful spirit. Two or three brief quiet times a week simply will not do. The world is too much around us for that!

You have to carve out the time!! Take the time you spend on TV, novels, magazines, daydreaming, materialistic window shopping, coveting, fretting and other such nonsense and turn it into time for God! By all means spend time with your family or time in the garden or time exercising. Do good constructive things. Just delete the 'junk' that nibbles away our days and use that time for God.

Figure out how to cultivate a praise-filled life. Have praise music in the car or on your MP3 player as you exercise. Give real THANKS at meal times. Make a habit of thanking God at the beginning and end of each day. Bless other people. Write encouraging emails. Plant the positive deep down into your life.

The tone of your ministry is 90% of your ministry. Content is quickly forgotten unless it is delivered in love. No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Think over the pastors who have impressed you and ministered deeply to you. Sure their messages were important but their attitude toward God and toward you probably is the dominant thing you remember e.g. "Pastor Bill always had a kind word for the hurting..."

The tone of your ministry is set in the prayer closet. Those who hunger and thirst after God will be filled and as they are filled they will be a blessing to others also.

The thankful lifestyle is a decision we make over and over again. The thankful person and the grumbler can go to the same church, hear the same sermons and have much the same income and life circumstances but they are worlds apart in their levels of faith! The grumbler looks intently for the flaws in his or her life then blames God for them or says 'how can I be thankful when X is happening'. They always have a reason or an excuse for being negative. The faith-filled person is like Habakkuk who praised God even when 'the fig tree did not blossom'. Even when life is dull and ordinary or difficult and painful we can always find some reason to praise God (salvation, His nature, the Scriptures).

Once we are filled with the Spirit and joy and thanksgiving and are making melody in our hearts to the Lord, then we will have the correct spiritual tone in our lives and we can think about the issue of the actual content we will impart when we minister in grace:

The Scriptures are our equipping:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 ISV** *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) so that the man of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The rivers of living water that will flow from our inmost being, consist of the Spirit joyfully applying the Word to the lives of those who need to hear it. The Spirit without the Word is mute, the Word without the Spirit is life-less. But combined they are gracious, powerful and wonderful!

The ministry of grace takes a Spirit-filled person, who is thoroughly equipped with the Word, and puts them alongside those who are needy. God may give a word of knowledge or wisdom or just enable the person to act wisely and graciously to touch lives in ways that fill them with peace.

Lets aim to bring God's peace to human hearts. Let's slow down and be joyful and come alongside people as agents of timely and much-needed grace. To be so busy that we are prayer-less, grumpy and joyless is to destroy our ministry. As the old hymn says "Take time to be holy".

## **TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY**

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.  
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,  
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

1. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.
2. Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;  
And run not before Him, whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,  
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.
3. Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,  
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.

Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,  
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

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