

LESSON 9 Evidence of Useful Ministry

Christian maturity can be hindered and stopped by enemies of maturity within and outside the believer. Yet, John writes, “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Specific evidences mark a believer who is moving toward the image of Jesus Christ. First, the believer bears the unmistakable family resemblance and expresses the character of Jesus Christ in his habits and attitudes. The maturing believer is an answer to the world as the world!

The believer’s work is also a clear evidence of maturity. A growing believer is a useful believer. As maturity increases, the believer is better able to accept responsibility. One of the greatest thrills of a parent is to see his or her child grow and become a useful member of society. Similarly, useful ministry is proof that we are coming to our goal as believers.

lesson outline

Christ's Ministry

Christ's Example of Usefulness

The Father's Glory

The Believer's Ministry

Fulfilling Jesus' Ministry

Showing Maturity Through Works

Continuing by the Holy Spirit

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the difference between the witness of Jesus and that of John the Baptist.
- Explain the relationship between Jesus' work and the Father's glory.
- State how the ministry of Jesus is being fulfilled in the world now.
- Explain how the seven men chosen in Acts 6:1–7 showed evidence of their maturity.
- Explain how the Holy Spirit wants to relate us to Christ through character and works.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson.
2. Do the exercises in the lesson development, referring as needed to the textbook.
3. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully. Review those items answered incorrectly.

key words

commend
equipped
glorify

paralyzed
qualification
redeem

reminder

lesson development

Our earliest glimpse of man is of his usefulness in the Garden of Eden: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). God is shown throughout the Scriptures as creating the world and working in it. When God made man, His intent was that man would “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26). God further commanded man to live all over the earth and bring it under control (Genesis 1:28). At this point, God was very pleased with His creation.

Then sin interfered with man’s fulfilling this ministry. He was driven from the Garden and from his place of shared dominion over the earth. But there was still to be work for man. God told Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. . . . By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground” (Genesis 3:17–19).

Thank God that through Jesus Christ, humans can be redeemed from sin by faith! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can again do the useful works that God intended. The pattern for our useful ministry is Jesus himself.

CHRIST’S MINISTRY

Christ’s Example of Usefulness

Objective 1. *Identify the difference between the witness of Jesus and that of John the Baptist.*

Luke begins *The Acts of the Apostles*, “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1:1). Later, Luke emphasizes the *usefulness* of Jesus’ work: “He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38).

Early in His ministry, Jesus healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath. Then Jewish authorities persecuted Him because He had done this on a Sabbath. Jesus answered them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (John 5:17).

Application

1 According to John 5:36, what is the greater witness than that of John the Baptist’s?

- a) Jesus’ miraculous power
- b) Jesus’ acceptance of common people
- c) Jesus’ works



The Father’s Glory

Objective 2. *Explain the relationship between Jesus’ work and the Father’s glory.*

Jesus would do nothing against the Father’s will. He lived entirely to accomplish the Father’s purpose. Jesus said, “My food. . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). And at the end of Jesus’ life, He proclaimed to His Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

Application

2 According to Jesus’ words in John 10:25, what will speak on His behalf?

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3 According to John 17:4, why did Jesus’ work bring glory to the Father?

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THE BELIEVER'S MINISTRY

Fulfilling Jesus' Ministry

Objective 3. *State how the ministry of Jesus is being fulfilled in the world now.*

In John 14:12–14, Jesus declared:

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Do you understand this declaration from Jesus? The believer will give proof of Christian maturity by doing the works Jesus did. These works will *glorify* the Father as did the works of Jesus himself.

Application

4 Through whom is the ministry of Jesus being fulfilled in the world now?

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We have seen in our earlier study that the subject of maturity in the Bible is sometimes compared to farming. Jesus used this illustration in a powerful teaching on the believer's ministry. Jesus said, "I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:16). In this teaching, Jesus also stated that He is the vine and the Father is the gardener. The believer is likened to a branch that bears fruit only as it remains in union with the vine.

Application

5 According to John 15:7, what condition must the believer fulfill to receive from Jesus?

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6 According to John 15:10, what must the believer do to remain in Jesus' love?

.....

The believer's fruitfulness is evidence of his ministry. But each believer must remember that his or her ministry is a fulfillment of Jesus' ministry. The believer "can do nothing" without Him (John 15:5).

Showing Maturity Through Works

Objective 4. *Explain how the seven men chosen in Acts 6:1–7 showed evidence of their maturity.*

Growing Christians must be useful. Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The phrase "thoroughly equipped" in the original language expresses the idea of maturity. God's purpose is to bring us to maturity or completion through His Word. Then we will be able to do works that glorify Him. Again, the good deeds which follow will be evidence that we have been fully qualified to do them, and that we are maturing in Jesus Christ.

Application

7 Read Acts 6:1–7. Because of a great need in the church, the apostles ordered the church to select seven mature men for service. In Acts 6:3, two evidences of maturity are stated as necessary qualifications for those to be chosen. Indicate these evidences by completing the following statement.

These seven men were to be full of and

.....

8 How did these men show evidence of their maturity?

In Colossians 1, the apostle Paul tells of his prayers for the early Christians:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9–10)

Application

9 In Colossians 1:10, what is an evidence that the believer pleases the Lord?

- a) That the believer is maturing in general
 - b) That the believer does not sin any longer
 - c) That the believer’s life will produce good work
 - d) That the believer always fellowships with others
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Ephesians 2:8–10 combines the subjects of how and why God saved us. While focusing on the importance of the believer’s good deeds, let us not forget that a person can be redeemed only by means of *something else*.

Application

10 According to Ephesians 2:8, how is a person saved?

Let us conclude this section by reemphasizing two points concerning the believer’s works:

1. A person is not forgiven or saved through his or her works. Salvation comes only through faith in what Jesus Christ did on the Cross. The death of Christ paid the price for

humanity’s sinfulness. Now we can be saved through God’s grace. This grace is undeserved and free.

2. Although works do not save the sinner, or redeem the believer, they are an important part of our purpose or goal as Christians. We are born to glorify the Father through useful lives.

Continuing by the Holy Spirit

Objective 5. *Explain how the Holy Spirit wants to relate us to Christ through character and works.*

Evidence of the Holy Spirit’s control of our personality is Christ’s character in us. But the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s control over our mind and will is works that continue Christ’s ministry.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are special abilities given to the believer. Romans 12 and Corinthians 12 teach on these special abilities. Romans 12:5–6 says,

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

Different functions of the members of our physical body illustrate well the spiritual ministries of believers. The fingers must be able to do specific tasks, but the toes are not like the fingers. Very few people could use their toes like their fingers! Yet, the toes help us hold our balance, walk, run, and so forth.

Application

11 In Romans 12:6–8 is listed seven ministries for believers. The first two are noted below. Complete the list.

a Prophesying

b Serving

c

d

e

f

g



First Corinthians 12 is the most studied Scripture concerning *gifts* from the Holy Spirit. Paul writes,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4–7)

Application

12 What follows in 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 is a listing of nine special abilities or gifts. Three of these gifts have to do with speaking. List these speech or utterance gifts.

- a
- b
- c



Another three gifts in this passage have to do with unusual scriptural spiritual power: (1) the power of special faith, (2) the power to heal, and (3) the power to work miracles. These powers enable the believer to do many of the amazing works Jesus did.

The last three gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 have to do with special abilities to think and understand above the human level. These are: (1) a message of wisdom, (2) a message of knowledge, and (3) the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not.

Each of these special abilities makes it possible for believers to do works that show the likeness of Jesus Christ. These gifts must draw attention to Jesus, not to the person through whom they operate. First Corinthians 14 instructs us how these gifts are to function.

Application

13 How does the Spirit want to relate us to Christ through character and works?

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Jesus told a story about work, which involved two sons (see Matthew 21:28–31). When the father asked the older son to work in the vineyard, the son refused but later changed his mind and did the task. The father made the same request to the other son, who promised to work in the vineyard but did not follow through on his promise. Then Jesus asked those who were listening, “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” The people who were listening replied, “The first.”

The message in that story is clear. It is *doing* the will of God that counts—not talking about it. A powerful evidence of Christian maturity is a life of usefulness.

Application

14 In Matthew 25:34–36, Jesus mentions six good works that righteous people have done. List those works below. (The first answer is provided.)

- a Feed the hungry
- b
- c
- d
- e
- f



Jesus informed the righteous that good works they had done for needy people were counted as having been done for Him (see Matthew 25:37–40).

There are many such Scriptures that we could study. Our purpose, however, is to demonstrate usefulness as evidence of Christian maturity. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

self-test

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false.

-1 God wanted man to have power over the fish, the birds, and the animals.
-2 The witness of John the Baptist was a greater witness to Jesus than the deeds that Jesus himself did.
-3 The gifts of the Holy Spirit enable the believer to produce works like those of Jesus Christ.

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answers to the questions on the lines provided.

4 What idea does the phrase “thoroughly equipped” express?

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According to 1 Corinthians 12:8–11, what three special gifts of the Holy Spirit give Christians supernatural ability in speaking?

- 5
- 6
- 7

List three of the six good works for which Jesus commended righteous people in Matthew 25:34–36.

- 8
- 9
- 10

answers to the study questions

- 1 c) Jesus' works
- 8 By doing useful work for the church
- 9 c) That the believer's life will produce good work
- 2 The miracles He did in His Father's name
- 10 By God's grace through faith
- 3 Because He completed the tasks His Father gave Him
- 11
 - a See example
 - b See example
 - c Teaching
 - d Encouraging others
 - e Giving
 - f Leading
 - g Showing mercy
- 4 Through Christian believers
- 12
 - a Prophesying
 - b Speaking in different tongues
 - c Interpretation of tongues
- 5 He must remain in Jesus, and Jesus' words must remain in him.
- 13 The Spirit wants to form the character of Christ in us and show the works of Christ through us.
- 6 Obey Jesus' commands
- 14
 - a See example
 - b Give drink to the thirsty
 - c Receive the stranger
 - d Clothe the naked
 - e Take care of the sick
 - f Visit those in prison
- 7 the Holy Spirit, wisdom.