

## I. Introduction

- A. It's important we understand there are boundary lines we should respect and not cross while ministering to others. When the Holy Spirit is moving and believers are ministering to one another by praying for one another, giving prophetic words, etc., we must not become presumptuous and think that "anything goes" in the Holy Spirit. It's all too common for well-meaning believers to become quite fleshly in the midst of times of ministry, believing that whatever they do is being led by the Spirit. The truth is, the Scriptures provide clear guidelines to ensure that times of ministry are done in a proper, wholesome and edifying manner.

**1 Corinthians 14:40** | Let all things (*including personal ministry*) be done decently (*properly*, NASB; *fitting*, NIV; *with regard to decency and propriety*, AMP) and in order.

- B. **The P-R-A-Y Model of Prayer Ministry**—Position (body / hands properly); Relax (to avoid being eccentric); Affirm (who they are in Christ); and Yield (to the Holy Spirit).

## II. PRAY—Position

- A. **Position of Body and Hands**—Stand (or kneel, if they are) in front of the person you are ministering to, not behind them. Stand close enough to be heard, but not awkwardly close, respecting the person's comfort zone. Gently place your hand on their forehead or a shoulder. Guys with guys / girls with girls is a safe rule of thumb if you're questioning praying for someone of the opposite gender. Take another person with you if you feel led to pray for someone of the opposite gender and think it may be a hindrance if you are the only one ministering to them. There's strength in numbers here. Do not assume you can touch the person just because they have indicated they need prayer. Do not rub, press on or push the person. Our ministry to one another should be done in a way that is proper, meaning with decency. This includes being cordial, friendly and thoughtful in regard to the person you are ministering to.
- B. **Position of Heart**—Be humble and lowly in your approach, not overpowering and overwhelming. If you feel led to touch the actual injured body part (such as a knee while praying for the healing of a torn ACL), first ask the person if you can touch their knee. Do not assume you can. Touching people without permission is presumptuous, can make them uncomfortable and even leave them with a feeling of being defrauded or violated. Love is not rude (1 Corinthians 13:5). Two of the fruits of the Spirit are kindness and gentleness (Galatians 5:22, 23).

**1 Corinthians 14:12** | Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

## III. PRAY—Relax

- A. **Being Natural in Ministry**—Oddly, some Christians become a totally different person than they really are when they minister to others. They take on an alternate persona to appear super-spiritual, but end up intimidating and in some cases spiritually injuring others with their insensitive style. In the spirit of Galatians 5:22-23, we simply must avoid the temptation to be someone we're not. The most common-sense solution is to simply be yourself. Notice that one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. Some believers "go crazy" in ministry times and, when confronted, say the Holy Spirit "made them" do it. This is not true.

**Galatians 5:22-23** | <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control ...

- B. **Self-Control is Evidence of the Spirit**—We actually demonstrate we are in the Spirit more when we exercise self-control—control over the urges to become overly melodramatic. Of course, this does not mean we can't get excited, enter in and have fun with the movement of the Holy Spirit. But, again, the goal of our ministry should be to edify. There is **nothing** we can do in our flesh that will increase the Holy Spirit's power. God responds to persistent faith, not overexcitement or drama. So dial down, relax and be you. That's freeing, isn't it? Also, know that Jesus is never in a hurry. We need not rush ministry. Usually, in a ministry context, you will pray for people for just a couple of minutes, but every once in awhile you may feel led to linger and just "soak" someone in prayer.

**1 Corinthians 14:3** | He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. (*Also see 1 Corinthians 14:26.*)

- **Edification:** building up others by giving confirmation that brings them hope or focus. A common way to do this is by giving them a Scripture that has been important to them or by confirming their ministry calling (evangelist, school teacher; full-time ministry, full-time marketplace, etc.)

- **Exhortation:** calling people to persevere in their ministry calling as they believe and contend for promises, etc.
- **Comfort:** speaks of giving God's perspective in a time of difficulty or uncertainty

#### IV. PRAY—Affirm

- A. **Stay Positive**—Seek to exhort and encourage through your ministry. Speak in a positive tone. Focus the vast majority of your ministry on who they are in Christ (obedient, loved by God) versus who they are in the flesh (sinner, worthy of judgment). You should avoid correcting or rebuking during personal ministry (that is for another context such as an accountability meeting with an accountability partner). Remember, God is not mad at people. Even the most indignant murderer is only one touch of God's power away from being a devoted apostle (just read about Paul if you struggle with that line of thinking). *(See John 1:47 and Matthew 16:18.)*

**2 Corinthians 5:17** | Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- B. **What to Avoid**—Avoid turning prayer times into lengthy counseling sessions. Ask basic questions so you can pray specifically, offer a few concise encouragements if needed and then move on. Do counseling in another context such as a one-on-one meeting over coffee or during an accountability meeting. Avoid the temptation to be overly cryptic in your prayers or prophetic words. A true word from the Lord should not leave someone mostly confused and trying to figure out what all the symbols mean. Although “we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9), we should not use that as a license to be obscure.

**1 Corinthians 14:9** | So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

#### V. PRAY—Yield

- A. **Do Yield**—The more sensitive we are to the Holy Spirit, the more effective our ministry will be. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit requires we be yielded to Him. We must seek to recognize the difference between our thoughts and opinions, and God's still small voice (1 Kings 19:12). Do pray for God's thoughts about the person you're ministering to. Claim His mind toward the person. We should pray for interpretation when we sense the Lord showing us a revelation about the person we're ministering to. *(See Proverbs 3:5.)*
- B. **Don't Yell**—Also, keep in mind that whether you're releasing encouragement, praying for healing or casting out a demon, you really don't have to yell. In fact, you shouldn't yell. God, angels and demons all hear the name of Jesus quite well. His name really is enough. People should come away from our ministry thinking about Jesus' goodness, not us or our style.

**James 3:17** | But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

- C. **Guidelines, Not Rigid Rules**—Keep in mind these are guidelines and *not* hard and fast rules that are completely inflexible. There will always be times when we're praying and the whole room starts yelling and the person receiving ministry for, say, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, starts yelling too. Don't go and start telling people to hush because it violates church “rules”. Ministry etiquette isn't mostly about rules; it's mostly about being sensitive to the Lord, to people and the atmosphere. We want to hear from God and seek to strengthen people while not violating the atmosphere. Meaning, if there is a sweet presence of the Lord, go with it in your ministry. If the atmosphere is charged and intense, there is obviously more freedom to be intense, but keep in mind the person you are ministering to and your proneness to get overly emotional. Remember, maturity isn't being emotionless; maturity is having the ability to recognize our elevating emotional state and temper our heightened emotions for the sake of building up others. It shows maturity when we can demonstrate deference, which has been defined as, “Limiting my freedom in order to not offend the tastes of those whom God has called me to serve”. When we're serving others through personal ministry, we must at times exercise the discipline of even holding back our zeal so that the recipient of our prayer is most fully blessed. People should experience Jesus through you. They should walk away loving God more, again, not thinking about the style of the person praying for them.
- D. **Rectify Mistakes**—Obviously, if you are friends with the person you are ministering to, there is much more freedom in how to minister to them. The above recommendations are geared mostly toward ensuring your ministry to people you don't know leaves them with the feeling of a very positive experience. If you make mistakes in your ministry and hurt or offend someone, have the character and integrity to go to your brother or sister, humble yourself, confess where you were wrong and seek to get things right again so that relationship is restored.