

Transformation of Ministry from Within: The Integration of Theology and Spirituality in the Formation of Specialised Church Ministers

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		Abstract
Received:	07 July 2025	The ministry of specialised servants within the dynamic context of the contemporary church faces significant challenges, ranging from spiritual fatigue and psychological pressure to a crisis of meaning in fulfilling their calling. This phenomenon demands an approach that is not solely structural or technical but also addresses the deepest dimensions of ministry, namely theology and spirituality. This study aims to explore how the integration of profound theological understanding and consistent spiritual practice can restore and sustain specialised ministry from within. The method employed is a descriptive qualitative study, utilising library research and contextual theological reflection. The findings indicate that a holistic understanding of the nature of ministry in the light of Christ's redemptive work, combined with spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, fasting, and silence, constitutes an essential foundation for building spiritual resilience and ministerial integrity. Formation that integrates theological and spiritual aspects has been shown to foster renewed motivation, strengthen commitment, and produce authentic and transformative ministry. Thus, the restoration of ministry from within is an ongoing process requiring personal awareness, communal support, and a church ecosystem that nurtures spiritual life holistically and contextually.
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INTRODUCTION

Ministry within the church context is a divine calling imbued with deep theological significance, serving as the foundation for the growth of faith and the life of the Christian community. In this calling, Jesus Christ is the primary exemplar and centre of ministry. He is the Great Servant who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Through His redemptive work, Jesus not only saves humanity from the power of sin but also transforms the lives of believers entirely, including the specialised ministers who serve within the body of Christ. In this light, ministry is not merely an institutional task but participation in Christ's ongoing work through the Holy Spirit.

Specialised ministers—those officially appointed to perform specific functions within the church—hold a strategic role in maintaining the spiritual

vitality of the congregation. However, their responsibilities extend beyond liturgical or administrative duties to include spiritual, moral, and social accountability, demanding integrity and a living relationship with Christ. Amidst the changing dynamics of the era, secularisation, spiritual identity crises, and community fragmentation exacerbate the challenges of ministry (Irawati, 2023). Under such circumstances, ministers are required to be not only structurally competent but also spiritually mature.

Pambayun (2021) highlights that contemporary ministers face demands to master multiple aspects of ministry simultaneously. Without the sustaining spiritual strength derived from a living relationship with Christ, ministers risk burnout, confusion about direction, and loss of their calling's passion. As stated in Romans 12:11, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord," true ministry must be fuelled by the fire of the living Spirit.

Regrettably, many church renewal efforts have focused predominantly on technical aspects such as training programmes or organisational restructuring, without addressing the deepest dimension of ministry—the inner life and spirituality of the minister. Cahalan and Mikoski (2014) emphasise that Christian ministry must be rooted in the spirituality of discipleship, formed by a personal relationship with God rather than merely external religious activity.

Therefore, the restoration of ministry must begin from within: from a correct theological understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, His redemptive work, and an intimate relationship with Him. Ministers who live in the light of the cross will serve not out of obligation but as a response of love to God's grace. As McNeal (2011) asserts, the heart renewed by God's love is the essence of Christian ministry.

This paper seeks to revisit the ministry of specialised servants from theological and spiritual perspectives, positioning Jesus Christ as the centre of ministry transformation. The focus is not merely on ministerial actions but on the minister's personhood: their spiritual condition, their understanding of the divine calling, and how their relationship with Christ shapes the quality of their ministry. When ministers experience inner renewal through Christ, their ministry becomes a tangible means of the Gospel's saving and restorative power.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research, aiming to deeply explore theological and spiritual understandings of specialised ministry, with the person and work of Jesus Christ as the focal point of reflective analysis. This approach is appropriate given the existential and spiritual nature of ministry, which cannot be quantified but must be comprehended through interpretation, contemplation, and integrative meaning-making (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Data were gathered through a review of relevant literature, including theological books, academic journals, scholarly articles, and church documents addressing the essence of ministry, ministerial identity, Christian spirituality, and the transformative role of Christ's work in believers' lives. Particular emphasis

was placed on writings that explore ministry in the light of Christ's redemptive work and the necessity of holistic spirituality as a basis for ministerial renewal.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through theological and reflective methods, interpreting key concepts in the literature to construct a synthesis of understanding concerning the internal restoration of ministry. The analysis focused on integrating theological perspectives on ministry as participation in Christ's work and the formation of ministerial spirituality grounded in an intimate relationship with the Saviour. Particular attention was given to how true ministry is rooted in awareness of grace rather than human effort alone (Mawikere, 2024).

Consequently, this study is expected not only to enrich academic discourse in practical theology but also to provide practical contributions for the church in nurturing specialised ministers holistically: theologically, spiritually, and pastorally. Through a Christ-centred approach, the restoration of ministry from within can be understood as an integral part of the faith journey, whereby ministers are transformed by God's love to serve with faithfulness, humility, and the power of the living Gospel.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the fragility of women in the church, often perceived as weakness, can actually become a means to experience holiness and a deeper knowledge of Christ. This fragility invites women to acknowledge their limitations and participate in God's redemptive work, challenging the common view that associates fragility with failure. Moreover, the theology of fragility has the potential to deconstruct the patriarchal structures of the church, encouraging a reorganization of women's roles in church leadership and recognizing the equal value of women in ministry. This fragility serves as a reminder that all humanity, regardless of gender, has an equal role in serving God. Acceptance of fragility paves the way for a more inclusive, just, and loving church, bringing transformation to church structures toward greater equality.

Jesus Christ, the Servant Who Transforms Holistic Spirituality

In Christian theological understanding, human beings—including those who serve God—are essentially creatures fallen into sin. This sinfulness affects not only the moral dimension but encompasses the entire existential aspect of humanity—mind, emotions, will, and relationships with God and others. Therefore, ministry carried out by sinful humans is vulnerable to misguided motives, spiritual exhaustion, and loss of spiritual direction if it is not restored by the redemptive power of God. This condition underscores the necessity of a transformation originating from the comprehensive work of Christ, which not only restores humanity's status before God but also renews life in its entirety.

Jesus Christ appears as the greatest Servant and the foremost example of transformational ministry. Mark 10:45 asserts, "For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." This statement situates the work of the cross at the heart of Christ's ministry, which liberates and

saves humanity from the power of sin. Through His sacrifice, Christ not only settles the juridical problem of sin but also opens the way for holistic life transformation for every believer, including God's servants.

The spiritual transformation effected by Christ is holistic, touching the inner, moral, social, and existential dimensions of the person. This process not only reshapes human identity as a restored creation of God but also reorients life according to God's will. Mawikere (2024) emphasises that healthy Christian spirituality can only grow when it is grounded in the awareness of God's grace, rather than solely in human efforts at self-improvement. He states, "True spirituality is rooted in an awareness of human limitation and dependence on the saving God, not on one's own capabilities." This serves as a reminder that every servant of God must continually open themselves to be formed by Christ's redemptive work, so that their ministry emerges not from ambition or image management but from authentic personal transformation.

Thus, genuine ministry can only arise from a life wholly transformed by Jesus Christ. A servant who recognises their sinfulness and embraces Christ's redemptive work by faith will experience profound spiritual restoration, which will be reflected in serving the congregation with love, humility, and faithfulness. Herein, holistic spirituality finds its expression: a life filled with God's grace and wholly oriented towards His glory through ministry that restores, strengthens, and liberates.

Restoration of Ministry from Within: The Spiritual and Theological Foundation

True restoration of ministry does not commence from external factors—such as structural reform or organisational efficiency—but must originate from the inner transformation of the servant themselves. This process demands the involvement of every aspect of the spiritual life of the servant as the starting point for renewing ministry. Trisno Kurniadi (2015) asserts that authentic ministry is not born out of mere obligation or routine but from a profound awareness of the divine calling motivated by love and obedience to God. Intimate relationship with God becomes the foundation from which Christian ministry derives its meaning and strength.

As Messakh (2018) emphasises, meaningful pastoral ministry is always rooted in the personal experience of a servant who has undergone spiritual restoration. When a servant experiences healing from within—emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically—they become more sensitive to the context of the congregation, more authentic in conveying Christ's message, and more open in fostering liberating relationships. Therefore, before discussing strategy or ministry effectiveness, the renewal of the character and spiritual life of the servant must be prioritised.

Theological Understanding of the Nature of Ministry

Ministry in the church must not be regarded merely as routine religious activity but as participation in God's saving work rooted in a personal relationship with Christ. True ministry is an expression of a life touched and transformed by

God's grace. Dr Lourine S. Joseph (2024) states that true servants are those who reflect Christ's character through the Holy Spirit: full of love, integrity, and humility. Such ministry cannot be separated from the servant's personal spirituality, for without character formation stemming from relationship with God, ministry acts easily become spiritually empty formalities.

Jesus Himself modelled selfless service, as recorded in Mark 10:45: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve." This verse affirms that the core of Christian ministry is humility, sacrifice, and a willingness to be present for others. Special servants, within the church context, are called to be witnesses to this Christ-like spirit in daily actions, not only within liturgy or administrative duties. Ministry is a reflection of identity as Christ's disciples and a concrete manifestation of love through action.

Moreover, ministry is participation in the ongoing work of Christ. Stephen Seamands (2009) states, "Christian ministry is participation in the ministry of Jesus Christ, carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit and in fellowship with others." This statement highlights that ministry is not an individual endeavour but a collaboration with God and the body of Christ in the Spirit's power. Such awareness protects servants from spiritual burnout caused by reliance on their own strength.

Formation of Personal Spirituality as the Foundation of Ministry

Personal spirituality is the core that sustains the continuity of ministry. Without this foundation, ministry is vulnerable to being reduced to mere technical activity devoid of divine meaning. Nego and Mondolu (2017) emphasise that the quality of ministry cannot be separated from the quality of the servant's relationship with Christ. Healthy spirituality deepens the commitment to ministry and strengthens the servant's life testimony.

Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, biblical meditation, fasting, and inner stillness are primary means to cultivate and maintain such spirituality. Aprilia (2024) asserts that contextualised spiritual disciplines help servants endure emotional pressures, internal conflicts, and high ministry expectations. With this spiritual depth, servants can act wisely, patiently, and lovingly amid complex situations.

Beyond this, strong personal spirituality transforms ministry into a response of gratitude rather than mere obligation. This also requires the church's support in the form of consistent spiritual nurturing, mentoring, and a community that fosters holistic faith development for the servant.

Challenges of Spirituality in Ministry Practice

Special servants often face intense expectations—from congregations, fellow servants, and themselves. Gagola (2024) notes that psychological pressure and imbalanced ministry demands are primary causes of spiritual burnout. Such exhaustion can result in loss of motivation, withdrawal from community, or even spiritual identity crises.

Internal conflicts, church political dynamics, and lack of personal time also pose serious challenges. Tanggana (2024) observes that many servants

become trapped in unhealthy work patterns without rest and recovery rhythms. This threatens the integrity of ministry and personal relationship with God.

Additionally, the temptation to use ministry as a platform for self-promotion or ambition often arises. When ministry loses its spiritual orientation and becomes a tool of power, it ceases to be a channel of God's love and grace and instead becomes a burdensome, dry institution.

Integration of Theology and Spirituality in Ministry Restoration

Restoration of ministry demands a full integration of theology and spirituality. Nainggolan (2023) affirms that servant formation which emphasises integrity and pure motivation will produce spiritually strong servants resilient to pressure. Theology shapes understanding of who God is and His will, while spirituality brings that understanding into existential experience that transforms life.

When ministry is practised as collaboration between theological conviction and personal relationship with God, it becomes a means of transformation—not only for the congregation but primarily for the servant themselves. Bonde (2021) reminds us that in the digital age, the spiritual dynamics of the people change, thus necessitating contextual and relevant approaches in theological and spiritual formation.

Mawikere (2024) emphasises that healthy Christian spirituality can only flourish from an awareness of grace, not human effort to perfect oneself. Therefore, the restoration process must begin with humility to acknowledge limitations and dependence on God. Deep spiritual reflection becomes a means to redirect the servant to Christ as the centre of ministry, as highlighted by Budi and Hidayati (2024), who stress the importance of faith reflection in shaping resilience and spiritual integrity.

Spiritual Disciplines as Means of Sustaining Ministry

Spiritual disciplines constitute a vital component in maintaining meaningful ministry. Mutak (2016) states that spiritually healthy servants can perform their duties lightly and in a manner pleasing to God. Practices such as prayer, fasting, scripture reading, and stillness are not mere routines but encounters with God that renew motivation and impart new strength.

According to SABDA (2023), spiritual maturity grows only through consistent practice of disciplines. Their module stresses the importance of humility and commitment in the character and faith formation process. The Church of Christ in Indonesia also affirms that spiritual disciplines form integrity and build the servant's life testimony daily, not only on the pulpit.

When spiritual disciplines are practised consciously and continually, the servant can maintain balance between personal life and public ministry. They become whole persons, resilient to external pressures, capable of sharing God's peace and wisdom with the congregation and wider community.

With this approach, restoration of ministry from within is not merely an ideal discourse but can be realised as a transformative spiritual process. Servants who live in intimacy with God, shaped by sound theology, and nurtured by

consistent spiritual disciplines will become individuals able to serve with power from above rather than by their own strength.

CONCLUSION

The ministry of specialised servants within the church cannot be separated from a profound integration between theological and spiritual dimensions. These two aspects are not merely complementary; rather, they constitute the foundational basis that shapes the meaning, direction, and transformative power of the ministry itself. Ministry is not simply an institutional activity or the execution of routine religious duties, but a living response arising from an awareness of the divine calling and an intimate relationship with God. In an increasingly complex ministry context—characterised by structural pressures, social expectations, internal church relational dynamics, and contemporary challenges—the quality of ministry is largely determined by a correct understanding of the servant’s identity alongside consistently nurtured spirituality.

Theological understanding of the nature of ministry provides strong conceptual direction and foundation, especially in helping the servant recognise that their task is participation in God’s salvific work. However, profound theological insight alone will not yield genuine impact unless accompanied by a living, deeply rooted spirituality. Spirituality, cultivated through consistent spiritual disciplines, becomes the internal strength that enables the servant to face ministerial challenges with steadfastness, faithfulness, and sensitivity to God’s will. With such robust spirituality, the servant not only maintains integrity under pressure but also ministers with sincere love, not out of institutional obligation or personal ambition.

Challenges in ministry practice—such as psychological burdens, internal church conflicts, and the temptation to use ministry as a means for recognition or self-promotion—require the servant to engage in ongoing, deep reflection on their motivations and ministerial orientation. Ministry conducted without a solid spiritual foundation and comprehensive theological reflection is prone to emotional exhaustion and spiritual dryness. Therefore, the restoration of ministry cannot begin merely with systemic changes; it must be initiated by a personal transformation process that touches relational, spiritual, and existential aspects of the servant.

Spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, Bible reading and meditation, fasting, and the practice of silence—serve as vital means of maintaining intimacy with God. Through these practices, the servant is inwardly renewed, redirected towards the centre of their calling, and strengthened to face the demanding realities of ministry. These disciplines are not mere religious habits but expressions of a heartfelt desire to live continually in God’s will and experience authentic spiritual growth. In the fast-paced and pressure-filled modern world, such disciplines become spiritual anchors that keep the servant stable, faithful, and focused.

Yet, the primary foundation of all these processes is the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Great Servant. Christ came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). In Him, we see the model of true ministry: full of love, sacrifice, and absolute obedience to the Father's will. Through His redemptive work on the cross, Jesus not only resolved humanity's problem of sin but also opened the way for holistic spiritual transformation. He transforms hearts, shapes character, and renews the motivations of His servants so that they serve not by their own strength but through abundant grace.

Mawikere (2024) affirms that true spirituality can only flourish when rooted in the awareness of God's grace, not merely human efforts at self-perfection. Therefore, the inward restoration of ministry is a response to Christ's transformative work, which has changed sinful humanity into servants who live by grace, walk in truth, and radiate the light of Christ in every aspect of life. Without a living relationship with Christ, ministry becomes an empty activity devoid of life. However, when Christ is central to ministry, it brings life, hope, and genuine restoration to the congregation and society.

Hence, the restoration of ministry from within must be understood as a long-term process requiring self-awareness, humility, and openness to formation by God through Christ. This is not only a personal endeavour but also a communal responsibility within the church. The church as an institution needs to create a nurturing ecosystem that supports the holistic spiritual growth of its servants. Spiritual formation programmes, retreats, growth groups, and mentoring should be designed not only to strengthen the technical aspects of ministry but also to deepen the relational and contemplative dimensions of the ministerial life.

The integration of theology and spirituality centred on Christ is the key to ensuring that ministry not only endures amid challenges but truly brings renewal and a living testimony. When servants experience inward restoration—through ongoing spiritual growth, deep theological reflection, and lives rooted in Christ's redemptive work—the resulting ministry will reflect the love, integrity, and power of the Gospel that transforms the world. Such ministry stands as the true witness of God's Kingdom amidst a society longing for restoration and hope.

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