

# Wanted: Kingdom Servants



Discovering God's Word  
Bible Study Series

# Wanted: Kingdom Servants

Learn that greatness is found through serving, learn from examples of kingdom servants, learn what God wants from your service, and learn some areas of kingdom service

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

**Study Number:** DGW176

Written by Eric Krieg

**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# Wanted: Kingdom Servants

Therefore, please consider that God wants *you* as a kingdom servant! Through this lesson, please consider the evidence that God wants those who are servants in His kingdom. Then, consider what kingdom service really looks like. And, honestly evaluate yourself to see whether you are living as a true disciple of Christ by being a kingdom servant.

## ***Greatness Through Serving***

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God is searching for kingdom servants. He is looking for individuals who will selflessly love others and will do whatever they can to serve in the kingdom of Heaven. Although God knows that this will require sacrifice during life on this earth, He promises a great reward for those who will respond to this call.

As God is searching, this call comes to each one of us through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants *you* for a kingdom servant. He teaches you about the greatness involved in serving in this capacity and He shows you what this work will look like. The only thing that may be lacking is your response.

Will you choose to serve the Lord by serving those who are in His kingdom (His church, those under His rule)? Or, will you choose to call yourself a “Christian” and a “disciple” of Jesus Christ, while refusing to answer this call for servants? Please remember that those who are true disciples of Christ are those who follow the Lord by *learning* from Him and *imitating* His ways.

As we will see, true discipleship involves being a kingdom servant. Sadly, few are willing to deny their own pleasures and desires so much that they will truly follow Jesus Christ and serve in the kingdom. Yet, there are some who will consider that sacrifice for the cause of Jesus Christ and for God, who have sacrificed so much for us, is the least that they can do!

It is common for people to wish they could be “great” in the sight of others. They wish for power, prestige, and authority. But, most people look for greatness in the wrong ways. So, when faced with such a situation, Jesus teaches a lesson about true greatness in the kingdom.

### **James and John go for greatness**

Listen to Matthew 20:20-21. “Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’”

Zebedee’s sons are none other than the apostles James and John. Now, this was far more than just a mother’s desire for her two sons to be great. Instead, James and John were active participants in making this request (evidently making the request through their mother). Mark’s account of this situation records that “they” made this request of Jesus (Mark 10:35-37). Even in Matthew’s record, you can see that “they” were involved (as “they” responded to Jesus’ question in verse 22).

On one hand, it is good that they aspired for greatness. Some people have no ambition about themselves to excel in any area. This is certainly true in the kingdom of God. There are some “Christians” who think that just attending the assemblies of the local church is all that they need to be doing (when they are capable of far more). So, much good that could otherwise be accomplished just gets wasted as unused *potential!*

But, on the other hand, James and John evidently did not recognize the true nature of Jesus' kingdom. Evidently, they were still looking for an earthly kingdom and wanted to be given a position of honor in this kingdom. Many people today make this same kind of mistake. They see opportunities to be "great" in Christ's kingdom through the prism of an earthly focus. So, they want to be honored by others, recognized for their contributions, and (sometimes) desire to have power over others.

## Greatness is God's to give

Continue reading in Matthew 20:22-23. "But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.'"

The "cup" with which Jesus was "baptized" (overwhelmed) with was suffering. He knew that He was about to suffer greatly (as He had just told them in Matthew 20:17-19). So, Jesus wants these two apostles to recognize that what they are asking for does involve great suffering. Yet, to their credit, they were not looking for mere prestige. Instead, they believed that they would be willing to suffer. Ultimately, they *were* both willing to suffer, as James was beheaded and John was severely persecuted.

But, no matter how much Jesus loved these two apostles, Jesus said that these positions of honor were not His to assign, but the Father's. So, even if Jesus had desired to elevate these two apostles, God had already set the qualification for achieving greatness in the kingdom. Therefore, your greatness is not going to be measured by anything different than whether you have met this same standard the Father has set!

## The world's view of greatness

Matthew 20:24-25 says, "And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said,

'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.'"

Here is one of the things that happens whenever people try to put themselves forward in order to achieve greatness: People begin fighting over who will be great. Notice that the other ten apostles did not think too fondly of the request their two fellow apostles made. Now, I don't know whether they were jealous over their request or disappointed that they requested such. Regardless, there are times in God's kingdom today that people begin to fight over being "great" and "power struggles" develop in local churches between people who want to put themselves forward to achieve greatness.

But, Jesus points out that this is the way of those who are not God's people (note that, at this time, this was the Gentiles). These are the ones who are interested in lording and exercising authority over others. And, so it is in many churches today. People like to be "at the top" of the ladder for the sake of the prestige that they feel it gives them, the sense of importance they feel from such, and the opportunity they have to control what other people do. Yet, while this may be the world's standard for greatness, it is *not* God's standard for greatness!

## True greatness in the kingdom

This encounter concludes with Matthew 20:26-28. Jesus said, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Make no mistake about it! Jesus said that such a standard for greatness has no place in the kingdom of God. Greatness in His kingdom is *not* about people putting themselves forward as being great. Instead, true greatness in the kingdom of God is about serving!

So, if you really want to accomplish something for the Lord and do your part in the body of Jesus Christ, you must make yourself the slave of others! Rather than focusing on the things that you

want to accomplish, you must focus on the needs and desires of others. You must be searching for opportunities to be selfless, not selfish.

Sadly, this is not appealing to most people. For, worldly thinking often clouds our minds whenever we participate as members of local churches (or, just generally as a member of the kingdom of God). People are commonly focused on what they want others to do for them, how other people make them feel, and how others have mistreated them. Instead, they should be focused on what they can do for others, how they make other people feel, and whether they are mistreating others. And, there should be a great shift in thinking from “How little can I get by with doing?” to “How much can I do to serve in Christ’s kingdom?”

After all, this is the way of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that even He did not come to earth to be served by others. Rather, He was focused on serving – even to the point of giving His own life as the ransom sacrifice needed to take away the sins of the world. Now, of everyone to ever live on this earth, Jesus could have come and demanded that people serve Him, exercising the great power and authority He really does have over others for physical purposes. But, He was focused on other people and what they needed (namely, the forgiveness of sin).

Therefore, those who are true followers of Jesus Christ *must* learn from what Jesus teaches in this passage and imitate His perfect example of humble service. If you do not, you are not really following Christ (even though you may call yourself a “Christian”) and you are not really great in the kingdom of God (no matter what other people may think about you)! So, you must challenge yourself to see whether you are truly conducting yourself as a servant in the kingdom of God.

## ***Examples Of Kingdom Servants***

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Fortunately, the Bible is full of examples of servants. So, we can easily learn what this kind of selfless service looks like. Specifically, I want you to

briefly consider four examples of kingdom servants in the New Testament.

### **Jerusalem Christians**

Whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in Jerusalem and people began obeying the gospel so as to become part of Jesus’ kingdom, the Christians began demonstrating the heart of a servant. For instance, Acts 2:44-45 says, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”

Later, in chapter 4 (when the same kind of need arose), these Christians responded in the same kind of way. For instance, verse 32 says, “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” So, there was no one among these disciples of Christ who did not have whatever they needed. For, those who were in possession of houses and lands were willing to serve their brethren and sell such things in order to bring the proceeds to the apostles, who then distributed to those who had need.

Then, after these Christians experienced persecution, some of them were scattered and went to other regions. But, they maintained their attitude of service. For, Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” And, through their service, many people learned and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ so as to be saved (see Acts 11:19-26).

These early Christians understood what it meant to be kingdom servants. For, if they had been selfish, they would never have sold their possessions in order to help their needy brethren. And, they certainly would never have continued preaching the word of God after being persecuted and forced to flee from their homes! Yet, they recognized that God wants kingdom servants – and they were willing to do what they could to fill that need.

### **The seven**

In Acts 6:1-7, a need developed in this early Jerusalem church. In fact, this was the first internal

problem that we read about the church having. A complaint was raised by the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (Hellenists) against the Hebrew Christians because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

The apostles called the disciples together and identified why they could not just take care of the problem themselves. They said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables” (verse 2). They recognized that taking on the responsibility of making sure that none of the widows were neglected would cause them to *not* be able to be as committed to prayer and serving the word of God.

So, they said, “seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (verses 3-4). By searching for these other men who were willing to serve the widows, the apostles could focus on serving in the capacity they were capable of serving. So, seven men were selected who met these qualifications and were willing to serve.

Now, the result of the willingness of these seven men to serve in this capacity can be seen in verse 7. “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Just think about all of the excuses that these seven could have made. They probably had other demands on their time. They probably had things that they would have liked to do. They may not have wanted such a great responsibility. Perhaps some/all of them had family responsibilities. They may have had other jobs to do. Yet, there was a need and they were capable of serving in the kingdom to fill the need. So, they served and, not only were widows cared for, but the word of God was spread because their service gave the apostles the ability to serve the word!

## **Phoebe**

Whenever Paul wrote the letter to the Roman Christians, he commended a woman named Phoebe to them in Romans 16:1-2. “I commend to you

Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.”

We don’t know much about this woman. Actually, this is the only passage in all of the Scriptures to tell us about her. But, we definitely know that this Christian woman gave herself to the Lord as a kingdom servant! For, this is exactly how the apostle Paul (who knew plenty about what being a kingdom servant looked like) described her. He said that she was a “sister,” a “servant of the church in Cenchrea,” and a “helper of many and myself also.”

In addition to this, her recommendation to the Romans is interesting. She was, evidently, traveling to Rome for some reason and Paul saw fit to recommend her to these brethren. Therefore, it is commonly believed that she was carrying the letter Paul wrote to the Romans (remember that this was in a time prior to the postal service).

Whether this is the case or not, she is a wonderful example of how a woman can serve in the kingdom of God. Although she probably had other responsibilities and things that could have occupied her time, she was a habitual servant in Christ’s kingdom. In her local church (at Cenchrea, near Corinth), she demonstrated that she was interested in doing her part! Whenever she had the opportunity and ability to do anything to help the cause of Christ, she was ready and willing to serve!

## **Aquila and Priscilla**

In the next few verses of Romans 16, the apostle Paul sends his greetings to two other kingdom servants named Aquila and Priscilla. He said, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house” (verses 3-5).

Paul’s history with these two disciples goes back (at least) to Acts 18. On this occasion, he met Aquila and his wife Priscilla in the city of Corinth. Paul shared their occupation (tentmakers) and stayed

with them. Then, not only does Acts 18 picture this husband and wife team of kingdom servants allowing the apostle Paul to stay with them while he labored in the city of Corinth, but it also shows them teaching a man named Apollos whenever he was not accurately preaching the gospel of Christ.

Later, as Romans 16 identifies, this kind of service can be seen as a way of life for these two disciples of Christ. Paul acknowledged them as “fellow workers” who even risked their own lives for him. Not only did this cause Paul to give thanks for them; but also the churches of the Gentiles (likely those Paul had taught the gospel). Then, this couple also served by allowing a church to use their house as a meeting place.

Now, these two people would have had other things they could have done with their time. It is doubtful that they had to take in Paul to stay with them while he was in Corinth. They certainly did not have to risk their lives for him. They did not have to correct the error in Apollos’ teaching. And, it would have been a sacrifice to open their home as a meeting place for a local church. Surely, they could have been selfish in all of these areas. Yet, they did what they could as kingdom servants.

## ***What God Wants From Your Service***

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You should learn a great deal about what kingdom service looks like from these four examples. These were real people who had to make real sacrifices in order to serve others. But, as you consider their examples, you should consider how God desires the same from your service as He desired from theirs!

### **Supply your part**

There is an interesting account in Mark 14:3-9 about an unnamed woman (though she appears to be identified as Mary in John 12). This woman came to Jesus bringing some very costly perfuming oil. The text says that this oil was worth more than 300 denarii (note that one denarius was worth a day’s

wage). So, this was nearly a full year’s salary for an average worker. But, she brought this oil and poured it on Jesus.

The people who saw this woman do this were quick to sharply criticize her, saying that she had wasted this money. Rather than doing what she did, they said she should have sold the oil and given the money to the poor. But, Jesus had a different perspective of what she did. He said, “She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial” (verse 8).

Kingdom servants do what they can. Although no one is able to do everything that needs doing in God’s kingdom, every member plays an important part. And, true servants are committed to doing their parts by doing whatever they have the ability and opportunity to do. Consider Ephesians 4:11-16.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

There are many different functions in the body of Christ to accomplish all the work that God wants to be accomplished. Some of these are directly listed in this text. These work (in part) to equip the saints for the “work of ministry” (service). All disciples of Christ fit into this passage in some capacity.

Notice that Paul speaks of “every part” doing its share. That includes you. So, God wants you to evaluate what you have to contribute to His kingdom and determine to serve in whatever way you are able.

Notice that when this happens, the entire body is caused to experience growth. Therefore, by implication, you hold back the growth of the body of Christ whenever you are not willing to be a kingdom servant!

## Use your gifts

The fact of the matter is that you have some abilities and opportunities that are unique to who you are. And, God wants to use those things in His service. But, if you choose not to serve in whatever capacity you are able, you are robbing God of what could otherwise have been accomplished! Consider Romans 12:3-8.

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Notice that every member of the body of Christ has special God-given abilities that can be used in God’s service. Each one has a certain “measure of faith” (i.e. ability to practice the faith God has revealed in the pages of Scripture). So, it is not that God has different requirements for different people, but that each person has different abilities and opportunities to fulfill His commandments. Some can do more, some can do less, but all can do something!

Therefore, God wants you to think about your abilities *soberly*. This is to think about your abilities seriously and sensibly. He does not want you pridefully thinking that you are capable of more than you are. But, He also does not want you thinking that you are capable of less than you are.

Both extremes fail to do your part as a kingdom servant. Those who are prideful do what they do to be seen of men and praised by them or for some other selfish reason. But, those who don’t live up to their full potential also leave much that they could do undone in the Lord’s service.

Instead of going to either of these two extremes, God wants you to honestly and soberly evaluate yourself and commit to serving in whatever capacity you are able. Develop the heart of a servant that says if there is something that needs to be done, you will sacrifice to accomplish it. Be willing to consider all your abilities and opportunities as belonging to the Lord and simply commit yourself to using them for Him!

## Areas Of Kingdom Service

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Having now seen what God wants from you in His service (i.e. to do whatever you can do), it is time to make some specific applications. Although there are more applications than we will be able to make here, do your best to think about all of the instructions God has given you and consider how you can use your unique abilities and opportunities to serve in those ways. We will be thinking specifically in the context of the local church.

### Teachers

God wants everyone who follows Jesus Christ to be a teacher (see 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Consider that the Christians in Jerusalem who were scattered due to persecution went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). These “preachers” were not just men who had committed themselves to preaching from the “pulpit” in local churches and received financial support for doing so. Instead, the preachers were all Christians taking the word of God with them wherever they went and telling the people they came into contact with about Jesus Christ!

God wants servants who will be teachers in His kingdom today. He wants every Christian to do whatever they are capable of doing to serve God by teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. This includes parents teaching their children (Ephesians



6:4; Proverbs 22:6). This includes older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women (Titus 2:1-8). This includes Bible class teachers. This includes men teaching the gospel in the assemblies of the local church. This includes all Christians teaching their neighbors (whoever they come into contact with).

## **Encouragers**

God wants everyone who follows Jesus Christ to be an encourager. In fact, Hebrews 3:12-13 instructs that Christians encourage (exhort/edify) their brothers and sisters in Christ every day. The nature of this edification is building each other up in the faith of Jesus Christ and helping other Christians overcome the trials and temptations of life that try to pull us all away from God.

God wants servants who will be encouragers in His kingdom today. He wants every Christian to do whatever he/she is capable of doing to serve God by building up brethren in the faith. There is no area in which this is more true than in the context of the local church. Although you should be committed to edifying any Christian brother or sister you contact, you should be especially aware of the needs and opportunities to edify your Christian brethren in the local church. You can help serve them and keep pointing them to your mutual hope of salvation in Heaven to overcome the struggles of life.

## **Shepherds**

The organizational structure God has given to local churches involves shepherds (elders) who oversee that what the congregation is doing is being done according to the will of God and lead every member of the congregation in a way that will result in eternal life in Heaven. This is a role of leadership and has great responsibility attached to it. For, God has even given specific qualifications for those who will serve in this capacity (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7). And, God has said that these men will give an account for the souls they shepherd (see Hebrews 13:17).

God wants servants who will be shepherds of local churches today. He wants men to actively work to prepare themselves to serve in this capacity (even

while they are very young, when they marry, and while they raise their own families). For, how they prepare themselves will make the difference in whether they are qualified and have the opportunity to serve later. Then, God wants men who are capable of serving in this way and qualified to do so to desire this opportunity to serve the congregation.

## **Deacons**

The organizational structure of the local church also involves deacons. These are special servants of the local church. As they work under the direction of an eldership, they will be of great help to the elders in carrying out the work that needs to be done. In many ways, the seven men who served in Acts 6 did the kind of work that deacons should serve in. And, like the office of elders, God has also given specific qualifications for deacons (see 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

God wants servants who will be deacons in local churches today. He wants men to be working to qualify for this office so that they can serve in this capacity. And, whenever men have the opportunity and ability to serve in this capacity, He wants men to be willing to do their part and serve.

## **Worship leaders**

God wants local churches to worship Him whenever they assemble together. We can see an example of a local church worshipping God during its assembly in Acts 20:7. But, as you consider that this is what God wants, you must also consider that God has specified that it is only men who can lead this collective worship (see 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14). This is both a great responsibility and a great opportunity for the men of a local church.

God wants servants who will help to lead people in worshipping Him in the assemblies of local churches today. But, we must appreciate that this work takes preparation. So, men who are interested in serving God in this capacity should work to prepare themselves as best they can and work to grow in accomplishing this great work of service. He wants men to be willing to use their abilities and opportunities to lead as much of the worship they can

– and work to grow so they can lead other areas of the worship in the future.

## **Givers**

The local church receives its funding to accomplish its God-given work in only one way. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 identifies this as a free-will offering of its members on the first day of the week. So, the only way that a local church will have the necessary funding to accomplish the works of preaching the gospel to the lost, edifying the saved, and providing benevolent help to needy Christians is if the members of the local church will be servants and sacrifice some of their own financial goals in order to contribute to the local church in this way. Remember, this was part of the example left by the Jerusalem Christians in Acts 2 and 4.

God wants servants who will give financially to support the work of the local church (and in any way they are capable of giving of themselves). Although every Christian (whether wealthy or poor) has the responsibility to give as they have been prospered, it is certainly true that some Christians have greater abilities to give more. And, rather than being selfish with what God has given you, God wants you to determine to serve in His kingdom – even with your wealth!

## **Conclusion**

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God wants you to be a kingdom servant! There are opportunities to serve in His kingdom all around you. You must simply commit yourself to becoming great through serving, look for opportunities to serve, and use whatever abilities you have to serve at those times. If you will do this, you follow the example of Jesus Christ and will be found pleasing to Him! You see, God does not want you to use your life for selfish purposes, but to selflessly serve in His kingdom!

## **Study Questions**

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Can you be a true “Christian” without being a kingdom servant?

### **1. Greatness Through Serving**

How did James and John want to be great? How do some people make this same mistake today?

Who decides what makes someone great?

How does the world view greatness? How are people guilty of this today?

What is true greatness in the kingdom? How does Jesus perfectly demonstrate this greatness?

### **2. Examples Of Kingdom Servants**

How were the Jerusalem Christians kingdom servants?

How were the seven kingdom servants?

How was Phoebe a kingdom servant?

How were Aquila and Priscilla kingdom servants?

### **3. What God Wants From Your Service**

Explain how God wants you to supply your part.

Explain how God wants you use to your gifts.

### **4. Areas Of Kingdom Service**

Explain how God wants kingdom servants in the following areas:

\*Teachers –

\*Encouragers –

\*Shepherds –

\*Deacons –

\*Worship leaders –

\*Givers –