

Philosophy of Ministry

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Program: Masters of Divinity

Alliance Theological Seminary

July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

### **Philosophy of Ministry**

In The Making of a Leader, Robert Clinton states, “Ministry flows out of being,<sup>1</sup>” There must be an inward development in an effective leader. Ministry is first and foremost about being connected to God rather than doing things for God. When this aligns, ministry is partaking in the redemptive work of God. An effective leader incorporates his or her life experiences, maturity, beliefs, values, and theology into a clear philosophy of ministry. According to Clinton, “effective leaders who are productive over a lifetime have a dynamic ministry philosophy that evolves continually from the interplay of three major factors: biblical dynamics, personal gifts, and situational dynamics.”<sup>2</sup> My philosophy of ministry is centered on uniting people to Christ and uniting people to people.

The first and most important priority of ministry is to unite people to God. Romans 3:23 states that “all have fallen short of the glory of God,” and unless people are born again of the Spirit, they cannot enter into heaven (John 3). Therefore, God sent his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, as atonement for people’s sins so that they could be forgiven and have access to God in an intimate, personal way (John 3:16). God desires to have personal relationships with His children. Scripture is full of verses that state God’s redemptive work in people’s relationship to God. For example, Romans 5:10 and Romans 8:14-17 demonstrate God’s heart for restoration in the broken relationships with His people. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 outlines the ministry of reconciliation with God. Every aspect of ministry must lead people to Christ and must prioritize an intimate relationship with God. Second, ministry is to unite people to people. As people have reconciled with God, they are also called to reconcile with each other. Ephesians 2:14-18 states that Jews and Gentile are reconciled through Christ, who is our peace, destroyed the barrier of

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<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, Alternate Formats Library, 2015, 231.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 297.

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the dividing wall of hostility. In the same manner, the people of God are called to together be the body of Christ.

### **Statement of Faith**

I believe there is one God (Deuteronomy 4:35, Isaiah 46:9) who created the heavens, the earth, and everything in it (Genesis 1-2). Although there is only one God, He exists in Three Persons of the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal in divine perfection but execute distinct yet harmonious roles in the redemption of the world (1 John 5:7-8; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 3:16-17). Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully god. He was born from the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18), was crucified on our behalf (1 Peter 3:18), and resurrected after three days to the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:20). Man and woman were originally created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) but from the sin of disobedience in Genesis 3, humanity lives with the consequences of sin in a broken world, incurring physical and spiritual death (Genesis 3:14-19). All humanity is born with a sinful nature and can only be saved through the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10). Those who repent and believe that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Savior receive the gift of eternal life and become the children of God (John 3:16). Salvation is a gift from God that comes by faith through grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is the will of God that the believer is continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, who was sent by God as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 1:22). We are living in the tension of the “already but not yet.” The Word of God is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12), God-breathed, and infallible and inerrant (2 Timothy 3:16). The Church consists of all of the believers of Jesus Christ, who are saved through his blood, and are born again of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the body of Christ, and Jesus is the head (Ephesians 5:23). The local church is a gathering of believers coming together for worship, the Word of God, prayer,

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fellowship, gospel proclamation, and Communion (Acts 2:42-47). The second coming of Christ is imminent, and God has appointed a Day of Judgment in which God will judge the world with justice (Acts 17:31, Revelation 20:11-15).

### **Core Ministry Values**

#### *Worship*

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) outlines my theology of worship. Although praise, music, and the creative arts are all forms of worship that people more commonly see and experience during a Sunday service, worship in essence, is a lifestyle. Worship is glorifying God in all that we do. It is dethroning every other idol and enthroning God to His rightful place. As Scripture states in the verse mentioned above, worship can be found in the everyday, mundane places. Even in the service that seems small or insignificant in our everyday lives, the devotion we have to God is worship. I want to inspire others to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24) and to glorify God in our everyday lives. Rather than wait for a certain atmosphere or a certain timeslot during the week, it is possible to worship God on an everyday, continual basis. Romans 12:1-2 states that true and proper worship is offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This definition of worship extends to all believers to glorify God in every aspect of their lives including their professions, their families, their money, their time, and even their thought patterns.

#### *The Word of God*

The Word of God must be a fundamental truth and foundation that every believer must stand on. Scripture is inspired by God and is infallible, and Psalm 12:6 states that the words of the Lord are flawless. The enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy, and there are so many lies that

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the enemy will twist, manipulate, and utilize to separate God and His children. Ephesians 6:17 states that as part of the armor of God, the word of God is the sword. Every believer needs this sword in spiritual battle because it will be a weapon of truth in the midst of lies. The truth is what overcomes and triumphs over the lie, but it is impossible for the believer to walk in true freedom and wholeness if the Word of God is not an essential part of their everyday life. Even in my personal times of testing, meditating and believing in the Word of God and what it says about who God is has strengthened me and kept me holding on to the goodness of God. Without the Word of God, there is no truth that anchors our faith. Furthermore, Scripture is used to teach, rebuke, correct, and train (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Word of God teaches us about the essence and character of God, so that we can live godly lives of love, power, and righteousness. Without Scripture, believers can base their faith more on experience than on truth. However, the Word of God ensures that it is a “light on one’s path (Psalm 119:105) that guides the believer’s every step. Every truth that is preached and believed must be able to be backed up by Scriptural text; otherwise, it cannot be true. The Word of God provides sanctification (John 17:17) and purity (Psalm 119:9). The believer must first know the Word of God, and then he or she must obey and live out the Word (Luke 11:28).

### *Prayer*

Prayer is a crucial part of every believer’s life. It is the foundation for relationship and intimacy with God as it allows us to converse with God. It allows us to speak to Him, pour out our hearts to Him. Prayer allows us to hear from God and receive guidance, counsel, encouragement, rebuke, knowledge, and all that we need. The addressing of God as “Our Father” from The Lord’s Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13 establishes and solidifies an intimate relationship between God and His children. Philippians 4:6 states, “do not be anxious about anything, but in

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every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. This passage, along with Colossians 4:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 remind us that there is a reason for prayer in every and any situation. In addition, prayer moves the heart of God (1 John 5:14-15, Psalm 66:18-20). “Jesus was a person of prayer. He prayed regularly; he prayed often. The busier he got, the more he talked with God because he *knew* God.”<sup>3</sup> Prayer allows us to approach God and to remain close to God (Psalm 145:18).

As Christians, we are called to model the life of Jesus. Countless times throughout Scripture, Jesus prayed. Jesus valued prayer and experienced validation in prayer. We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12) and we need to pray both offensive and defensive prayers on behalf of ourselves and also for others. Offensive prayers advance and move forward whereas defensive prayers protect and guard. Offensive prayers from a righteous person are powerful and effective (James 5:16) Defensive prayers protect us from the evil one and his schemes that tempt us (Matthew 26:41). We need to be constantly communicating with God and praying for ourselves and for others.

### *Discipleship*

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus commissions his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” This is a missional mandate that every Christian is responsible to uphold. Discipleship is one of the greatest evangelistic tools. Even during Jesus’ ministry, Jesus had twelve disciples whom he invested into. They were able to model who Jesus was and everything He did because they were his disciples. Effective discipleship leads people into deeper relationship with Jesus and produces genuine life change. Before they met Jesus, the disciples came from various professions and backgrounds, but they left everything to follow Jesus. There was something that

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<sup>3</sup> James Bryan Smith and Richard J. Foster. *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*. New York: HarperCollins E-books, 2010, 33

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radically shifted once they had an encounter with the living God and learned from Him. They learned how to pray, how to love, how to heal the sick, how to cast out demons, and learned everything that Jesus did. Jesus' disciples were the ones who went after Jesus to preach the good news and bring revival to the world. As exemplified through Jesus' discipleship model, we must first be disciples and then disciple makers. We must first learn and then teach. There must be an active discipleship and mentoring culture within the body of Christ that teaches, trains, and equips believers in order to reach non-believers from all over the world.

### *Community*

From the onset of creation, God was in community and created community. The Three Persons of the Trinity represent that even God himself was in community. When God created Adam, He also created Eve because "it is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). One of the biggest lies in Western culture is that one must fight his battles on his own. In the early church of Acts 2, the community of believers met together, ate together, and worshipped together. As a result, the Lord blessed the community by "adding to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47). There is something so supernatural and evangelistic that happens when the community of God comes together. Community is also life-giving and it is better when we are together than when we are alone (Romans 12:4-5). Each of us has a specific, unique role in the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 explains that "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." 1 John 1:7 states that if we walk in the light with God, this will lead to fellowship with one another. Therefore, to be in relationship with God also means that we are in community.

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### *Supernatural Living*

In Matthew 10:1 Jesus gave his disciples “the authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” Since Jesus was a human empowered by the Holy Spirit when he healed the sick, cast out demons, and set people free, we also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and can live empowered by the Holy Spirit. Supernatural living is part of the Christian lifestyle because “the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in us,” and “through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature.” (Romans 8:11-14). In addition, in John 14:26 Jesus tells his disciples that God will send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who will “teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.” The Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity and its role cannot be overlooked in the Christian walk. To live with the Holy Spirit inside of us means that the same Spirit that resided in Jesus resides in us. Therefore, even Jesus states that whoever believes in Jesus will do the works that he has been doing, and do even greater things (John 14:12-14)!

### **Non-Negotiables**

#### *Diversity*

From Matthew 28:19-20, the word “nation” is from the Greek word “ethnos,” where we get the word “ethnic.”<sup>4</sup> Every ethnicity and culture is a part of the body of Christ, and each offers something very unique and special. Revelation 7:9 depicts what heaven looks like when it states, “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.” If we are to see heaven on earth, the body of Christ must be diverse.

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<sup>4</sup> David Ireland, *One in Christ: Bridging Racial and Cultural Divides*. Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, an Imprint of Regnery Publishing, 2018, 25.

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However, people may be disinclined to engage with people from different cultures and backgrounds because they may not be comfortable with people who are different from them. There needs to be a shift in perspective when it comes to people who are different from us. Ephesians 2 reveals taking down the wall of hostility through Jesus Christ. Although we may look different, carry different cultural norms, and come from different belief systems and traditions, we are all united under the banner of Jesus Christ. In addition, “crossing cultures and building bridges of racial reconciliation becomes easier when you take the approach that people are God’s priceless heirloom. When you value people, you value God.”<sup>5</sup> In Luke 10:27, Jesus commands us to “love your neighbor as yourself.” We cannot say we love God if we don’t also love His people. Coming from a mono-cultural background and even a family that carries certain prejudice and bias against other cultures, God has been revealing to me the importance of unity even in the midst of diversity. As a female minister myself, I genuinely believe that women must also be included in this picture of diversity. Just as God does not discriminate, people cannot discriminate towards each other. Unity can only start when people embrace the diversity yet actively pursue unity. It isn’t enough to tolerate different people; there must be reconciliation. Actively developing relationships with people who are different than me, including all people in the conversation, and learning from different cultures have really broadened my view of God’s Kingdom. People from all different cultures have a seat at the Father’s Table and in heaven; therefore, the Church must represent heaven on earth.

### *Life Change*

People who encountered and received Jesus Christ throughout Scripture were marked, and they were never the same. The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) was a prostitute who

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<sup>5</sup> David Ireland, *One in Christ: Bridging Racial and Cultural Divides*. Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, an Imprint of Regnery Publishing, 2018, xxi.

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went to the well during the hottest hours to avoid people. After her encounter with Christ, she became one of the first evangelists who was unashamed to preach the gospel and save her entire village (bible verse). Effective ministry must produce life change, because it is impossible for those who genuinely have a living encounter that they would remain the same. People who have not received the gospel yet would experience life change through salvation; people who have gone down a path of darkness would experience a life change through walking in the light; people who are broken would experience healing, restoration, and renewal.

### *Evangelism*

Every aspect of ministry must be centered on reaching the unreached. Every program that is implemented, every event that is coordinated, every message that is preached, every song that is sung must have the heart of evangelism. In the past, when I looked at the church congregation and saw that the congregation consisted of the same exact people every week, my heart felt like this was very incomplete and there was something significant missing. Without being missional, the church becomes a Christian social club. Throughout the gospels, every sign, miracle, and wonder Jesus performed and every interaction that he had was missional. They were all done in the will of the Father, who is reaching out to the lost. Jesus interacted with all types of people—the sick, the lame, the broken, the tax collectors, the Pharisees, the prostitutes, the rich, and the poor. He did this so that he could save the lost. Therefore, the Church needs to have the heart of evangelism at the core of its being. In addition, this missional task cannot be only limited to ministers; the entire body of Christ must be missional. Congregants who work in the secular world must be missional, parents must be missional, and teens must be missional. Everybody has somebody who he or she can reach out to, and everybody has a specific assignment in which he or she is placed. God loves it when the lost are found (Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11).

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### *Abiding*

In John 15, Jesus describes the importance of abiding. He tells his disciples to remain in Christ. Abiding is so important because it keeps us connected and intimate to the Source of love, strength, and power. There is only so much one person can do; but there are so many greater things that God can through a person who remains in God and is intimate with God. Abiding in Christ is what makes believers fruitful, not our best talents and efforts. Jesus himself only does what He sees His Father doing (John 5:19). Abiding ensures that we aren't striving and we are aligned with the will of God. So much of ministry can become programs, agendas, and routines without abiding.

### *Spiritual Formation*

Every believer must go through a process of growth in God. Ministry flows out of being. Under the general category of spiritual formation include identity, character development, and soul care. God is more concerned with the process rather than the outcome. Upon receiving the gift of salvation, this process requires claiming their identity in God and realizing who they are as sons or daughters of the King. People must also address the cracks in their foundations, which are like cracks in their souls. In Ephesians 3:16, Paul prays we may be strengthened with power "through the Holy Spirit in your inner being." Character development requires us to strengthen our inner being and to become more like Christ. Soul care requires us to address lies and wounds that hinder us from living in freedom and wholeness. People must pursue wholeness, as it was Jesus' desire for his disciples to live life to the full (John 10:10). Although it is important for ministers to be effective, it is also even more important that they are healthy.

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