Philosophy of ministry

"Ministry philosophy is the result of leadership emergence – the ideas, values, and principles whether implicit or explicit that a leader uses as guidelines for decision making, for exercising influence, or for evaluating ministry."[1] In this paper, I will construct my own philosophy of ministry. In the first section, I will share my theological foundations for ministry (including statement of faith), in the second section I will share my core ministry values (1) Spiritual Formation, (2) Community, and (3) Empowerment; and finally, in the last section, I will share the non-negotiable spiritual practices that I currently practice in my personal life and ministry.

One of my grandmother's favorite phrases is "disfruta el momento" – "enjoy the moment", and since I was very young, she would always remind me that life was not about the next season or the next experience, but that it was a 100% about the moment that I was living. To be honest, is easier said than done, but it did not take me too long to realize that those three words can change anyone's life, and they have definitely changed mine. As I write this paper, I have been reflecting on how God has brought me from a place of lack of awareness, superficiality, and brokenness, to a place where I have learned to love my self and the things that I do. I am learning to fall in love with God every day, and to be a little more present in the moment, present with Him and with people around me.

Theological Foundations for Ministry

What do I believe?

I believe that as Christians we are called to (1) have a personal relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and (2) from that place of fulfillment share the good news with others. As Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

[1] The Making of a Leader, Chapter 8.

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age". We are called to share with others what we have already received, as Jesus said, "freely you have received; freely give"[2].

I believe that every person has a specific calling in their lives, that God has created each one of us with specific gits in order that we may fulfill the purpose that He has prepared in advance. As Paul said, "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."[3] One of the most important questions that every person wonders is: what am I doing on earth?, and the Gospel not only responds that question, but it gives a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and a supernatural empowerment to the believer.

Statement of Faith

1. The original Bible[4] is God's written Word and is the final authority, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."[5]
2. There is one God in three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit[6].

[2] Matthew 10:8, NIV.
[3] Acts 20:24, ESV.
[4] 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.
[5] 2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV.
[6] Matthew. 3: 16-17, John 14: 16-17, Romans 14: 17-18, 1 John 5: 7-8

3. God created the whole world, He created humanity in His image[7]. The fall is the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Because of their sin, humanity was separated from God and the Garden of Eden[8].
4. Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is fully God and was fully man on earth[9]. Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross to forgive our sins and give us eternal life[10]. He died, resurrected, and was ascended to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father[11].
5. Jesus death restored the separation between God and humanity[12], He is the only way to salvation, he is interceding for us in heaven. Salvation is by grace alone, there is no work that can be done to earn it, it is a gift from God through believing in Christ[13].
6. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to empower all Christians and testified His mission on earth[14]. The Holy Spirit bears fruit in the lives of the believer to glorify God and His kingdom. Christians need the Holy Spirit in order to live lives align with God's character[15].
7. There is one Universal Church, Jesus Christ is the head of the church and every believer is necessary for the fullness of the body of the Church[16].

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[7] Genesis 1:27
[8] Genesis 3
[9] Matthew 1:23, Luke 2: 7, John 3:16, Zechariah 9:9, Isaiah 11: 1
[10] 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
[11] Acts 1:6-11
[12] Matthew 27:51
[13] John 14:6
[14] Acts 2
[15] Galatians 5:22-23
[16] Ephesians 5:23

8. Jesus commanded all believers to proclaim the Good News, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to follow all He has commanded the Church[17].
9. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth to consummate the final judgment.[18]
10. At physical death, the believer goes to everlasting fellowship with the Lord, and the unbeliever goes to everlasting judgment and condemnation[19].

Core Ministry Values

In this section I will focus on three core values: (1) Spiritual Formation: a personal relationship with God and inner-transformation, (2) Community/Justice: embodying God's intended society, and (3) Empowerment/Multiplication: upside-down values of God's kingdom.

- **Spiritual Formation:**

"And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, 'Which commandment is the most important of all?' Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."[20] Just as the scribe (within his own Jewish context at the time) asked Jesus "which is the great commandment?", I believe that nowadays people are asking themselves a similar question, "what is the most important thing in life?". Sadly, many of them do not

[17] Matthew 28:19-20
[18] Revelations 22:20, Hebrews 10:37.
[19] Revelation 20:11-15
[20] Mark 12: 28-31

have Jesus responding to that question, but on the contrary, the "standards of society" are the norms in which people base their answers. Therefore, the younger generation is more passionate than ever about philanthropic work, "healthy habits", and finding new ways to "feel inner-peace"; however, the majority of these "standards" are external/worldly, and little do they know about a deep transformation in their hearts and souls.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible, which represents this deep desire to live a more purposeful life, is found in John 4: 13-14 "Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." In this story, the Samaritan woman had a personal encounter with Jesus, which led to a life transformation. She was trying to find a momentary physical need; however, as Jesus was talking to her, He pointed out that her thirst was not really a physical need, but a spiritual need.

I believe <u>a personal encounter with Jesus</u> is essential for true transformation. This encounter, would not only help us to grow holistically but also, would empower us to live a purpose-driven life, a life that would expand God's kingdom and fulfill the Great Commission. It is through the Great Commandment/Spiritual Formation (inner-healing, prayer-filled life, emotional growth, character development, etc.), that we would be able to be part of Jesus' Great Commission/Missional Endeavors.

- **Community (Justice):**

A verse that has changed my perspective on having a heart for justice is Jeremiah 29:7, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Many times, we want to see our family, close friends, and people that we love do great things in life and prosper.

We pray and intercede for them, and we are always ready to give them a hand. However, in this verse, God is telling the people of Judah to seek the prosperity of a city that it does not feel like home, on the contrary, it is a place that has caused them so much pain and disappointments. How do we seek the prosperity of the city? I believe that we need to start in our microcosm (small community) to be able to impact the macro context (city). As Jeremiah mentions in the verse above, it is not only through "doing" for the community, but also through being present – by praying, interceding and deepening these relationships is that we find true transformation first in once heart, and secondly, in the city.

Being born and raised in Peru and seeing the great physical needs that people have, has made me more aware and intentional when it comes to social justice. On the other, living in the United States during the last three years has helped me to realize the huge need for community, belonging, and true relationships. One of my biggest desires is to be able to intertwine the community aspect with social justice issues, and in this way, embody God's intended society (justice) on Earth. This core value could be represented in different ways, from eating dinner as a small community to advocating for fair-trade in the fashion industry in NYC.

- **Empowerment (Multiplication):**

One of the last conversations of Jesus is narrated in Acts 1:4-5, "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me', for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." A few verses later (7-8), just before Jesus' ascension, He said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when

the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." In the Christian world, the Great Commission (Matthew 28) is the most used verse when it comes to missions; however, I believe that the last words of Jesus (Acts 1) is what we are missing in the mission field. Bible Schools and Seminaries teach, prepare, encourage, and send missionaries to the mission field, but it is only the Spirit of God that will give us the power needed to fulfill His mission on earth.

I believe that true multiplication is only possible through empowerment. First, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and secondly, the empowerment of the body of Christ – the Church. Low control and high accountability in a non-hierarchical structure are necessary to see the organic growth of the Church. I believe that the expansion of God's Kingdom occurs when we embody the upside-down values of God's kingdom: willingly becoming disempowered/weak/last, and fully dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Non-Negotiables

In this section I will focus on the non-negotiable practices in my personal spiritual walk and in ministry: (1) Rest and Balance, (2) Humility, (3) Spiritual Vision, and (4) Celebration.

- **Rest and Balance:**

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" Colossians 3:23-24. I believe that in everything we do, we are called to do it with excellence. Always being fully present in what we do and being faithful in the small and big things that God puts before us. However, balance is necessary. We are not human doings, we are human beings and we need to go back to the source of life, God. As Jesus

said in Luke 10: 41-42, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” It is when we rest in God’s presence, at His feet, that the desires of our hearts are aligned with God’s heart for our lives.

One of the biggest struggles in big cities is “the hustle and bustle”, the busyness that sometimes takes over our daily life, and without realizing it, over our entire life. In my personal life and relationship with God, it is non-negotiable that I practice spiritual disciplines such as sabbath, solitude, contemplation, and silence. In regard to my ministry, I am always looking into new ways and opportunities to practice/teach spiritual disciplines that would take us closer to God’s heart. I have realized that the main obstacle for women in the city to strengthen their relationship with God is the lack of time and ability to organize their agenda in order to spend time in the secret place.

- **Humility:**

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” Philippians 2:5-8. This verse is one of my favorite verses about Jesus’ character because it is almost impossible to believe that someone would do something like what He did. Many times, when I read a verse or a passage, I try to think about how I can see that verse applied in my own life in a practical way. However, when it comes to these verses, I cannot think about any example that is even closer. Even though it is impossible to imagine such a thing, it is incredibly encouraging to see that Jesus’ humility is an example of how we are called to live on earth. My

biggest desire is to learn from this example of humility, to be able to give away not only physical things in order to become humbler and more in need, but also give away "the standards" of the world, the things that are unseen but, in many ways, give us power and recognition.

As my husband and I continue to do ministry together, our prayer has been that God will not take us to the next place if we do not have the humility to be part of it. We can be intellectually prepared and even have the connections and opportunities, but if we do not have the humility and a learner's posture, we count it as unworthy to pursue. Our Father is faithful, and He wants His people to be changed, transformed, and renewed. I believe it is a non-negotiable to have a humble heart before the Lord, because it is then that His name is glorified, it is then that we become nothing, and He becomes everything we are, and we need.

- **Spiritual Vision:**

"Faith provides eyes for the heart"[21]

As Paul prayed for the Ephesians (1:16-19) "… that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe…" It is extremely easy to get in the routine of our everyday lives and forget about the reality of the Kingdom of God, who we are, who God is, and who/what is that He is calling us to be/do. In my personal life and ministry, I believe the power of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to change the way I see people and circumstances around me. As

[21] When Heaven Invades Earth, Bill Johnson.

believers, we need the Spirit of God to give us the wisdom and revelation to be able to see with God's vision. As Paul mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good." The Kingdom of God is an upside-down Kingdom, many times opposes our intellect and what is seen by our physical vision, we are in need of His revelation and as we learn to discern and align our spiritual vision with His, we are able to test the Spirit of God and move accordingly.

- **Celebration:**

"Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines. Without a joyful spirit of festivity, the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees."[22] One of my favorite books is "Celebration of Discipline", because it encourages believers to pursue their spiritual journey through inward, outward, and corporate disciplines; and by practicing these spiritual disciplines is that we find freedom, deliverance, and true joy in God. I have been a Christian since I was born, but throughout my teen's years, I struggle with seeing the Church as a place filled with joy. Every time I would go to youth group, Sunday services, or any other activity I thought it was good for me and my relationship with God, but it was not something that I would truly enjoy or "have fun" doing. Even though the Gospel is supposed to present the good news of Jesus and to set the captives free. Sometimes, the Church has presented Christianity as a religion of duties and "to-dos", rather than a true deep relationship with our Creator. "The joy of the Lord is not merely a good feeling. It is acquainted with suffering and sorrow, heartache and pain."[23] When I refer to finding true joy and celebrating God in our every

[22] Celebration of Discipline, 238.
[23] Celebration of Discipline, 248.

day, I am not talking about superficial joy or just “having fun” in a meeting, I am talking about the joy in the Lord that can only be given to us by grace through Jesus.

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” Acts 2:46-36. The way that I see ministry is the way Acts presents the Church, a group of people united in Christ, always ready to help each other, always with a grateful heart in spite of the circumstances, and always present in the moment, first and foremost present with God, and then, present in and within the community.