

Philosophy of Ministry

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In the English translation of the New Testament, "ministry" is translated from the Greek word *διακονέω*, meaning "to serve" or *δουλεύω*, meaning "to serve as a slave." In other words, ministry is seen as an act and lifestyle of service to God and by extension, others. This is radically different from the world's definition of leadership and power, that is one of self-service and egotistical desire, rather than self-sacrifice and abasement. Such is the kingdom of God, that is an upside down kingdom contrary to the ways of this world. It is this very dilemma which presents itself to the sons of Zebedee and their mother when she kneels before Jesus and asks whether her sons may sit at his right and left hand, respectively, in his kingdom (Matt. 20:21). Jesus' response in the next verse is telling: "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" (Matt. 20:22). The sons of Zebedee reply in the affirmative, to which Jesus again responds, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (20:23). The other disciples hear of this whole situation and are enraged. Yet, they are no better than the sons of Zebedee in that they, too, desire positions of leadership, or so-called "power," over against true spiritual authority, which lies in submission to God's authority and subsequent death to self. In so keeping, Jesus calls the twelve disciples together and teaches them the meaning of true spiritual leadership and authority: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (vv. 25-28).

The above passage perfectly encapsulates the heart of spiritual leadership and ministry, that is a heart of service and influence via yielded obedience to God and genuine care for others.

Maxwell's *5 Levels of Leadership* and Clinton's *Making of a Leader* have been instrumental for me in developing an understanding of leadership as a whole and spiritual leadership, specifically. True leadership, particularly in the kingdom of God, is not sought by a set of achievements or self-seeking vindication, but rather utter humility and yieldedness to God, which translates to spiritual authority. It is by partaking in Christ's sufferings and experiencing death to self that we enable ourselves to similarly partake in Christ's resurrection power (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5). Therefore, in order to move up, so to speak, in the kingdom of God, we must first go low and be prepared to roll up our sleeves and get our hands and knees in the dirt, so to speak.

Furthermore, ministry is primarily about tending to people's spiritual formation, so as to draw them closer to God. While ministry involves tending to both the physical and spiritual needs of people, the emphasis is on the latter, for otherwise there is no such demarcation which separates Christian "ministry" from secular "service" as a whole. Oftentimes, the two go hand-in-hand, that is the meeting of physical human needs often provides a platform and avenue for attending to spiritual needs, and vice versa. Yet, again, what sets ministry apart is the emphasis on *spiritual* formation. In John 21, Jesus asks his disciple Peter 3 times, "Do you love me?" (vv. 15-17). The first two times, Peter responds yes, but the third time, exasperated and perhaps wounded or humiliated, the disciple responds, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you" (v. 17). All three times, Jesus responds by commanding Peter to feed and take care of his sheep, that is Jesus' other disciples. By this, Jesus means that those who love him ought to take care of his fellow believers, helping them to grow closer to God and attending to their spiritual needs via sound biblical teaching and discipleship. In this sense, *all* believers are called to ministry of some sort, or another, in our varying spheres of influence, starting with the home, and expanding to the church, workplace, and other potential mission fields. In so keeping, we all

have unique gifts—including both natural ability and spiritual gifts—which we are called to employ in the service of the kingdom of God. Yet, there is a particular call upon those called to ministry full-time or vocationally as those who are called to teach must be especially careful, for they will be held accountable for the souls entrusted to their spiritual care and realm of responsibility (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17).

As ministry primarily involves working with people, there will inevitably be some sort of brokenness in place and healing which needs to take place, restoring them to wholeness and spiritual renewal. As Jesus himself said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Lk. 5:31-32). Therefore, we must ensure that we ourselves are constantly abiding in Jesus’ presence and being renewed, allowing His healing touch to first minister to our own broken part-selves so that we may then administer that same healing touch unto others. This involves a great amount of self-awareness, which may at times be quite painful yet necessary for spiritual growth and leadership. Furthermore, we must continuously remind ourselves that we ourselves are sinners saved by grace (1 John 1:8-10). Thus, we must give ourselves grace and remind ourselves that just as we were healed through Christ’s wounds, so too our own areas of wounding and brokenness can be the very places through which the love of God may shine the brightest and act as sources of healing unto others, that is if we let them (Is. 53:5; 2 Cor. 12:9).

Statement of Faith

I believe in the One Triune God, consisting of three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I believe that before the beginning of time, this Triune God chose to bring creation into being—out of relationship and for relationship—despite fully

knowing that sinful human being would rebel against Him, and that it would cost the sacrifice of His One and Only Son in order to restore mankind back into relationship with the Father, each other, and all creation (Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:20; John 3:16, 17:5, 24; Acts 2:23; Col. 1:19-20). I believe the three persons, that is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all equal in power, nature, and glory—mutually agreed to distinct roles in God’s plan to reconcile mankind and all creation unto Himself (Heb. 1:2-3; Col. 1:15-20; Acts 1:8; John 5:19-27, 14:6-31, 17:1-5; Eph. 1:17-20). I believe God the Son, namely Jesus, took on the form of man, being born of a virgin, and lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father, even unto death, that mankind could not and was crucified, died, and was buried (John 1:14; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 19:18, 30, 42). I believe on the third day, Jesus—who was fully God and fully man—rose again, so that whoever trusts in God and His work on the cross, including His death and resurrection, might similarly be raised to eternal life, being brought from the kingdom of darkness to light (Matt. 28:6; 1 Cor. 15:4; John 3:16; Rom. 4:5, 10:9; 1 Pet. 2:9). I believe Jesus ascended into heaven, lives to intercede on our behalf, and will one day come again unto earth in order to completely restore all things unto Himself (Acts 1:9-12; Heb. 7:25; Col. 1:20; 1 Cor. 15:20-28). I believe upon His ascension, God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers, guiding them towards all truth and bringing to remembrance the words and teachings of Jesus (1 Cor. 3:16; John 14:26, 16:13). I believe the Holy Spirit is a deposit and guarantee of our status as newborn children of God, brought about into the family of God via adoption by His Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Rom. 8:16). I believe the Holy Spirit enables believers to fulfill the requirement of the law by writing a new law on their hearts and replacing their heart of stone with a heart of flesh (Rom. 8:4; Ezek. 36:26-28; Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 8:10). I believe that through baptism and the public profession of one’s faith in Christ, accompanied by an inward conviction of one’s heart,

members are joined to the Body of Christ, that is the Church (1 Pet. 3:21; Eph. 4:4-6; Rom. 6:4, 10:8-10). I believe that the Body of Christ is called to partake in the mission of God, actively seeking the lost and bringing them back into relationship with the Father (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Lk. 15:5-7; 1 Pet. 2:10). I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, divinely inspired and affirmed by the tradition of the church throughout history, “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:15). I believe that the Word of God is alive and active, and the chosen instrument by which God chooses to speak to His people and cultivate a relationship with them, aided by the Holy Spirit (Heb 4:12; John 14:26, 16:13). I believe that when Jesus returns to earth, He will judge the living and the dead, bringing believers back with him into heaven, while those who have rejected and denied Him will be eternally separated from God (1 Cor. 15:12-54; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; Matt. 10:33, 25:31-46).

Core Values

My core values in ministry consist of the following: (1) Prayer, (2) Biblically Sound Theology, (3) Embracing the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit, (4) Holistic Healing, (5) Evangelism and Discipleship, and (6) Justice.

Prayer

My first Core Value is Prayer. This is in alignment with Jesus’ own ministry philosophy and methodology in which he does nothing apart from the Father, but only that which he “sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does” (John 5:19). Martin Luther once famously said, “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in

prayer.” In this regard, I am heavily influenced by my campus ministry experience during my college days, that is InterVarsity. Having attended the second least religions school in the nation, that is Vassar, we had daily prayer meetings and even at times, prayer meetings multiple times a day, including night and day. Through these various prayer meetings, I was taught the importance of relying upon the Holy Spirit in everything we do and seeing Him witness miracles in people’s hearts and lives that we would not have seen otherwise. It is my core belief that every ministry ought to begin and end with prayer, as well as be saturated with prayer and utter reliance upon God every step of the way in-between. However, the purpose of prayer is not only guidance and petition, but also intimacy and communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I firmly believe that Jesus could have accomplished all that He did on earth by His own power, and yet He laid His divine right and privileges aside, taking on the form of a man, so as to demonstrate and enable us to live a life of complete reliance upon the Father and Holy Spirit. The point, therefore, is not merely ministry, per se, but communion with the Godhead and actively practicing His presence wherever we go.

Biblically Sound Theology

Secondly, biblically sound theology is another core value and essential for ministry. As stated earlier, I believe that the Bible is God’s chosen instrument for speaking to the Church. While I believe that God’s voice is not limited *only* to the Bible, I believe that it acts as a fundamental guide and lens through which we may ascertain God’s voice even *through* other means, such as prophecy. That said, we must ourselves become familiar with what the Word says and also learn how to interpret and apply it according to its proper context, so as to become faithful ministers and stewards of the Word. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he was able

to refute every lie and temptation of the enemy by replacing it with God's truth and His ultimate identity as God's Son. Similarly, the Word of God acts as a fundamental tool and weapon by which we must equip ourselves, so as to be prepared for spiritual warfare and constant alignment with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:17; 2 Cor. 10:5).

Embracing the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Another core value is embracing the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit include: the gift of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12). While I do not believe that these gifts are necessary for faith, per se, I do believe that for those who ask and seek, the Holy Spirit is willing and able to grant all of the above gifts. As my personal timeline illustrates, my twin sister's and my own birth was that of a medical miracle, so it is near difficult, if not impossible, for me to deny the goodness of God and the reality that God still works miracles today. In addition to and even more importantly than the gifts, however, I believe that we must embrace the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As Paul's letter to the Corinthians so powerfully demonstrates, we may yet possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as tongues, prophecy, and faith, but if we do not have love, we gain nothing and are no more than a "resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Therefore, we must take care to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). In particular, I aim to embody the fruit of love and joy in every ministry endeavor in which I partake, necessitating that I be so filled with the Holy Spirit that His presence overflows into everything I do.

Holistic Healing

Another core value I have is holistic healing—meaning that of body, mind, soul, and spirit. While I firmly believe in the gifts of miracles and healing, as in the case of my own personal testimony of my mother’s infertility, I also believe that God can use various alternative avenues of healing, such as counseling, medication, deliverance, and . Hence, I hope to publicly encourage congregants to seek out psychotherapy and counseling, as needed, and not be afraid to seek medication for certain mental conditions as well, particularly those influenced by biological and chemical imbalances. In so keeping, I also hope to connect the ministry context in which I serve to some sort of parachurch ministry or pro bono counseling services, so as to provide affordable means of mental health and therapy for those who are in need. I also recognize that some physical and spiritual illnesses can be spiritual in nature. Hence, I advocate for incorporating some form of Soul Care and/or inner healing curriculum into our ministry so as to prepare congregants for deliverance, for those who desire to do so. As Dr. Reimer illustrates in his own book, however, deliverance ought to be the last step of Soul Care, once the individual has processed their own wounds and identified potential blocks or demonic strongholds, such as deeply embedded lies of the enemy, unforgiveness, and family sin patterns, amongst others. By advocating for a holistic approach to healing, I pray the words of Isaiah 61 may ring true: “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”

Evangelism and Discipleship

Yet another core value is evangelism and discipleship. Prior to his ascension into heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples to “go and 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 obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Just as Jesus commanded Peter to feed and take care of his sheep after his resurrection in the Gospel of John, so to Jesus' last recorded words in the Gospel of Matthew are to make disciples of all nations. One's last words often signify what is most important to one. In this case, Jesus' utmost priority following His death and resurrection is to seek and save the Father's lost children, as well as discipling those who already believe and drawing them closer to Him. Indeed, this was the very reason Jesus went to the cross, that is "for the joy set before him," which was us (Heb. 12:2). How then could we not do the same and actively seek out those around us whom the Father is longing after and drawing towards Himself? Additionally, we must actively disciple those whom already believe in Jesus and have professed their faith in him, not only baptizing them, but also teaching them how to have a personal relationship with Jesus and walk in step with the Holy Spirit day by day.

Justice

Last but not least, my final core value is that of justice. Now, justice here has 3 components: personal, relational, and systemic. I believe that justice starts first and foremost with reconciliation unto right relationship with God, that is faith in Christ. Thus, the core value of justice inherently involves the above principle of evangelism and discipleship, but also missions. We are called to go out and make disciples of *all nations*, which means all people groups who have not yet heard of the good news or Jesus or believed in it yet. Secondly, justice also involves a relational component. That is, when we are brought into right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we are also called to be brought into right relationship with one another. As stated above, Jesus' two greatest commandments were to love God with all our heart,

mind, and soul and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). This can manifest in a variety of ways, from reconciliation within our families, friends, schools and workplaces, churches, and surrounding neighborhood and communities. Lastly, I believe we are called to fight for systemic justice, such as racial reconciliation, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, immigration reform, and disability awareness and justice. This is in accordance with 2 Cor. 5:18 which states, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Non-Negotiables

My non-negotiables include sabbath rest and mentorship and accountability.

My first non-negotiable, that is sabbath rest, is rooted in God’s command to His people to honor the sabbath and keep it holy (Ex. 20:8-10). This was to be a sign of God’s covenant with His people, which would set the people of Israel apart from that of all the other nations. While we do not adhere to the Mosaic covenant per se, today, I believe this command still applies in taking an intentional sabbath so as to keep our rhythms of ministry both sustainable and enjoyable. God intentionally created human beings limited and without taking the time to rest between the work God has called us to, we will inevitably run into burnout. As someone who struggles with perfectionism and overcommitment, I realize that the temptation to skip the sabbath is particularly strong, and thus I commit myself to honoring the sabbath and thereby allowing everything I do to flow from a place of overflow, rather than human effort and emptiness. Moreover, sabbath is not merely the absence of work, but also the presence of restorative and life-giving activity. In this sense, I intend to spend more intentional time in that which gives me life, as well as honoring the other areas of my life God has gifted to me besides

work and ministry, that is family, friends, and personal hobbies. Some of these hobbies include reading and writing, drawing, listening to music, doing puzzles, enjoying good food and spending quality time with friends.

Secondly, a non-negotiable for ministry is the presence of mentorship and accountability. Too often, we hear news both in the media and our own personal circles of ministers who have failed ministry due to some sort of moral failure and lack of accountability. I pray that I may be a minister of integrity before God and other people, but I also realize that I am a fallible human being susceptible to sin on this side of heaven. Therefore, I commit myself to being regularly mentored and kept accountable by an older spiritual mentor figure as well as confiding in spiritual peers and actively practicing the spiritual discipline of confession. I believe continuing counseling sessions may also be tremendously helpful in this regard as it may provide a safe space for me to share and process emotions and events alongside my other forms of spiritual accountability. While it is scary and even intimidating for me to put into writing even now, I commit myself to having at least 3 individuals in my life with whom I hold no secrets and regularly practice confession moving forward, one being a spiritual mentor figure of sorts and two being peers, likely a future spouse and a best friend. So as to keep myself accountable, I vow to practice the Whole Life Confession with 1 spiritual mentor and 1 peer in time for graduation in Spring 2023. Thereafter, I commit myself to practicing regular confession on a monthly, if not biweekly basis with said individuals.