

Integrative Paper – Final Project

Name: Joseph Browne

Campus Location: Alliance University

Course Title: Spiritual Formation Capstone

SF703

Spring 2023

Professor: Dr. Wanda Walborn

April 19, 2023

Integrative Paper– Part1

Who I Am?

Spiritual Well-Being Reflections

French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr is known for his famous quote, “ The more things change, the more they stay the same.” For some, this could mean that things around them are changing, but they are resisting the change. For others it could mean that things around them or for them are changing, but they keep on returning to what has been their consistent status quo. When I reflect on my spiritual well-being since I took SF 503, SF 505 and SF 603, the trajectory of life events and experiences, as well as where I am today, all these aspects of my life do not align with Karr’s quotation. The saying by Christ Bertram is one I gravitate to. According to Bertram, “When you’re in a growth mindset, what that means is that you choose to see struggle and challenge as an opportunity to grow and for learning and development.” This idea reflects my current thoughts and purpose.

When I reflect on the year 2020, on one hand it seems like a long time ago, and then on the other hand it amazes me how quickly those years have come and gone. There are different aspects of my journey from which I can pause and take note of the changes and developments which have occurred in my life. Each segment of the areas which I reflect upon and will discuss can be compared to swatches in a tapestry. Each swatch holds its own significance, but when sown together, a beautiful masterpiece is formed. I will discuss different segments of my life in the following sections.

Spiritual Well-being scale (2020 to 2023) from SF 503

My spiritual well-being assessment which was submitted on October 20, 2020 included a score of 59 as to my religious well-being and 51 in terms of existential well-being. These scores were indicative of me having a high level of satisfaction with my life and a clear sense of purpose. This has been increasingly fostered and enhanced by my participating in the disciplines of prayer and solitude. I have found that as long as I am intentional about my time in prayer and also increasingly being diligent about engaging in solitude, God's purpose and my satisfaction with Him intensifies. My key scripture which I have relied upon and seen God use in cultivating me has been Proverbs 3: 6 – "In all your ways, submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Spiritual Gifts from SF 503

My spiritual gifts assessment which was also reported on October 20, 2020, indicated that my three top spiritual gifts were as follows in this order: prophecy, apostleship and knowledge. However, the spiritual gifts assessment that I took this Spring 2023 highlighted the following spiritual gifts: administration, discernment and evangelism. I have recognized that God is expanding the gifts He is equipping me with in order to effectively serve Him. What He has also shown me is that with each increase, there is a heightened need to be vigilant and consecrated in order to be used by Him.

Spiritual Covenant from SF503

The following are the four things which I spiritually covenanted in December 2020 to do: 1) to schedule at least three 24-hour silent retreat times with God each year, (2) increase my praying time with others to at least 3 times a week, (3) fast at least once a week and (4) meet

every other week with my Spiritual Mentor. I have not been consistent in any of these items which I covenanted. I have incorporated other things into my spiritual walk. I need to ask God to forgive me and resume what I covenanted with Him in December 2020.

Grief Journal – from SF 505

As I reread my grief journal which was submitted on May 21, 2021, I was grateful for the opportunity I had to write down my thoughts, feelings, and how I had processed the loss of some great individuals in my life. In connection to what was discussed in class, I was also able to identify and incorporate things and events which I also grieved about as well. I now utilize what I have learned, to help facilitate at times at the Healing Love Grief ministry sessions. I have also had increased opportunities since submitting my grief journal to encourage and help others process losses in their lives such as job opportunities, relationship break-ups, and relocation adjustments.

Spiritual Autobiography – from SF 505

My spiritual autobiography is dated July 09, 2021. The following areas of my life were discussed in my autobiography: social, physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual areas. I reflected on the fact that my spiritual autobiography was written during the first 18 months of the covid pandemic here in New York. I had written about my social apprehension about getting together with others as well as ministering to individuals in close settings. There have been significant personal changes since that time. I have since then returned fully to in-person worship, traveling and interactive settings. I have also been granted several opportunities since that date in 2021 to preach, teach, minister and interact with small and large groups of individuals.

Counseling Experience of SF 505 ended June 16, 2021

As I reflected on my counseling experience which ended on June 16, 2021, I can definitely note various areas of growth since that time. I have benefited from what was shared in those sessions in 2021. I am now able to be a facilitator at times for Healing Love Ministry – Greif sessions which are conducted at my church. I have also grown in confidence in being able to accept different preaching and teaching requested opportunities.

Insight gained from Field Experience – SF 603

The insight from my field experience is that there is a lot to be done with the gospel. There is never a need or reason to be envious of what others are doing because there is more than enough for each of us to do. I endeavor to maintain my focus on being instrumental in God's mission work of positively impacting lives. My field experience provided me with multiple opportunities to minister to those who are both younger and older than myself. God is looking for my Yes and my commitment to that Yes. I also have grown since my field experience time to explore doing new things in God's service. This has involved preaching at different churches and being more involved in the expansion of the Men's ministry at my church.

Insight from Case Studies – SF 603

Case Study#1 - Ministering to Men via a Virtual World during Pandemic Conditions

This was submitted on October 16, 2021

Overview and Case Presentation

Consistent church attendance and regular engagement in some form of Bible study have been denoted as significant components towards pursuing spiritual growth in the lives of men and women. Recent trending, even prior to the present pandemic, has seen a decline in men

attending and participating in church-related activities. One of the recent challenges has been keeping men engaged in Bible study and other activities for spiritual growth and development even in an increasingly virtual world environment. Engaging men in sound Bible teaching and providing forums for meaningful fellowship are two primary tools employed for achieving growth and success of all participants of this ministry to men. The consistent population of attendees included men with varying lengths of time as attendees to these sessions, church services or other events.

Conclusion

It is important that Men's ministries in particular continue to consider and explore what are the learning points they are presently acquiring, what are some of the challenges they are facing, and what are some benefits that are noted in the lives of the men they minister to. They should ask God to broaden their spiritual vision to His plans and designs for ministering to men. Men's ministries must continue to ignite men's hearts while equipping their minds by providing a consistent platform for fostering committed engagement towards their spiritual growth and development even, if need be, via virtual world forums and platforms at this time and continuing into the future.

Case Study#2 - 2021 Young Adult Class and Declining Sunday School Attendance

This was submitted on March 13, 2021

Overview and Case Presentation

Attending Sunday school has been an integral part of many lives whether they attended and participated within denominational or non-denominational churches. Church growth and the ability to connect to their surrounding communities thrived because of effective Sunday school teachings and

efforts. Sunday school programs and curriculum throughout the years have expanded from just tailoring the very young spectrum of our population to encompassing even older age groups including young adults. One of the recent challenges has been the increased lack of engagement in Sunday school by young adults. Recent Sunday school material only slightly addressed the matters of diversity and some relativity to the interest of the Young Adult age group.

. Conclusion

What transpired at this church likely occurred in various church settings as well. There must be a vested interest and determination for discussion topics to be relevant, relatable, and renewing to the intended audiences. The challenge and opportunity are to seek means for not just the Young Adult classes but all levels to be excited and engaged in reading and studying God's Word via Sunday School. Sunday school should not just be part of their historical context, but leadership must prayerfully and transparently seek God's guidance for Sunday school to be part of their current story.

Insight gained from mentoring relationship – SF 603

The insight I gained from my mentoring relationship is that I have individuals around me who are interested in my growth and development. My relationship with my mentor continued even after my internship assignment ended. I have also gained in understanding that I have individuals who I can speak with and they are willing to invest the time for continued mentorship and navigating the various nuances of life. My mentor has continued to encourage me to seek God's guidance for the next steps in my life. I have learned from my mentorship experience that I in turn must be willing to do the same with others. My belief is that to whom much is given, much is required.

ALLIANCE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Intern's Field Education: Basic Habits or Skills Assessment

PDA: HABITS

Name of Intern: Joseph Browne

Date: _____

Mentors, this form assesses the basic habits or skills of ATS Interns.

Note that students will review this evaluation. Please rate each item below on the basis of your personal interactions and observations of

the Intern. Please use the following scale for each item:



1= To No Extent 2 = To A Little Extent 3 = To A Moderate Extent 4 = To A Great Extent 5 = Completely

5	1. Attendance/Punctuality: The student was regular and punctual
5	2. Organization: The student displayed the ability to monitor and control time and materials.
5	3. Written Communication: The student's written products reflected appropriate spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and format with clear and legible writing.
5	4. Oral Communication: The student's oral communication displayed effective voice and speech patterns.
5	5. Listening: The student displayed careful, attentive listening to other people.
5	6. Technology: The student demonstrated appropriate levels of technology for professional communication.

Mentor's Signature: Kathleen S. Turner. PhD

Date: November 20, 2021

Intern's Signature: Joseph Browne

Date: November 30, 2021

PDA: SKILLS

Name of Intern: Joseph Browne

Date: November 30, 2021

Mentors, this form assesses the ministry skills of ATS Interns.

Note that students will review this evaluation. Please rate each item below on the basis of your personal interactions and observations of the Intern.

1= To No Extent 2 = To A Little Extent 3 = To A Moderate Extent 4 = To A Great Extent 5 = Completely

*Please use the scale above to rate the intern's ministry skills employed during his/her field assignment, especially skills listed as goals on the Intern's field education contract. (Please refer to the "General Ministry Categories" listed on the back of this page and select suitable ministry skills.) For example: 4
(6) Counseling*

 5 (18) Teaching

 5 (2)_Christian Formation/ Education

 5 (19) Theology

 5 (6) Counseling

 5 (7) Ecumenical

 5 (8) Evangelism

 5 (9) Leadership Development

 5 (14) Pastoral Care

Mentor's Signature: Kathleen S. Turner, PhD

Date: November 30, 2021

Intern's Signature: Joseph Browne

Date: November 30, 2021

General Ministry Categories: Ministry Skills of the Intern

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Administration | The student exercised oversight of all aspects of congregational or institutional ministries, including programs, organizations, finances, etc. |
| 2. Christian Formation / Education | The student led in the identification, design and implementation of comprehensive programs of Christian formation and education, including leading a small group and equipping others to lead them. |
| 3. Church Growth Development | The student reshaped, redeveloped or restarted existing congregations or planted /new congregations and ministries with church growth resulting. |
| 4. Communications Ministry | The student clearly understood and used the appropriate tools to communicate the story and mission of the Church or institution as fundamental to the success of its work. This includes advertisement and/or use of technology for worship services or other events inside/outside the church building. |
| 5. Consulting / | The student provided guidance to congregations or organizations in change or at critical |

Transition Ministry	points in their life and ministry.
6. Counseling	The student professionally assisted persons facing problems or decisions.
7. Ecumenical	The student exercised leadership in interdenominational programs and ministries.
8. Evangelism	The student trained and led persons to proclaim by word and action the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and invited others into Christian fellowship.
9. Leadership Development	The student strengthened the capacity of church leaders to engage in mission and ministry, discerned potential leaders, and made provisions for ongoing leadership education, formation and training.
10. Liturgy	The student planned and conducted liturgical services of corporate worship.
11. Multi / Cross-Cultural Ministry	The student created and sustained an environment and celebrated diversity through cultural sensitivity training, strategic planning, shared mutual ministry and leadership development.
12. Music Ministry	The student led and supported congregational ministry through music (e.g. led, inspired, performed, composed, trained, coordinated...)
13. Outreach/Social Justice Advocacy beyond the faith community.	The student empowered and equipped persons within the congregation to become aware of and participate in ministry to individual and community needs and concerns
14. Pastoral Care	The student nurtured and equipped people for growth within the community of faith, and provided pastoral response at significant life stages, (e.g., death, dying, sickness, birth, crisis, success) including caring through home and hospital calling.
15. Preaching	The student preached effectively by making the Gospel relevant to people's lives.
16. Spiritual Guidance / Mentoring	The student led and encouraged others in the formation and development of a deeper spiritual life.
17. Stewardship	The student led the congregation and individuals in the identification, development and offering of their gifts and resources.
18. Teaching	The student helped persons of all ages understand and live the Christian faith. This includes teaching and equipping others to teach.
19. Theology	The student demonstrated and imparted a disciplined understanding of biblical and historical revelation and the perception of God's activity in the world.
20. Ministry with Youth	The student inspired and incorporated youth into the full life and ministry of the Church and encouraged and equipped leaders to work with youth.

_____ Episcopal Church Deployment Office. Ministry Skills / Experience Manual – “A Ministry of Transitions of the Episcopal Church”. Revised

PDA: DISPOSITIONS

Name of Intern: Joseph Browne

Date: November 30, 2021

Mentors, this form assesses the professional affective dispositions, behaviors and ministry skills of ATS Interns.

Note that students will review this evaluation. Please rate each item below on the basis of your personal interactions and observations of the Intern. Please use the following scale for each item:

1= To No Extent 2 = To A Little Extent 3 = To A Moderate Extent 4 = To A Great Extent 5 = Completely

5	1. Demeanor: The student demonstrated positive attitudes in interactions with staff and other people.
5	2. Appearance: Appropriate and professional.
5	3. Responsibility: The student undertook and completed assigned tasks.
5	4. Maturity: The student displayed maturity and poise in task completion and person to person interaction.
5	5. Cooperation: The student displayed a positive willingness to work with peers and those in authority.
5	6. Flexibility: The student displayed a willingness and ability to adapt to changes in events, conditions, activities, and tasks.
5	7. Initiative: The student displayed independence in starting and completing activities, products, and tasks.
5	8. Awareness of Individual Differences: The student displayed a recognition of and empathy for human differences in ethnicity, gender, physical ability, and intellectual ability.
5	9. Patience: The student displayed the ability to be patient in activities and/or in person to person interactions.
5	10. Tactfulness: The student displayed the ability to recognize and compensate for the feelings and self-esteem of others.
5	11. Enthusiasm: The student displayed energy and enthusiasm and responded appropriately to humor in person to person interactions.
5	12. Creativity: The student displayed the ability to synthesize theology and practice into new personalized adaptations and applications.
5	13. Professionalism: The student recognized, sought, and used the best research, theology and practice in his/her professional activities and presentations.
5	14. Reflective Practitioner: The student displayed the ability to reflect, evaluating his/her own experience.
5	15. Teachable: The student graciously received constructive feedback/criticism.
5	16. "With-it-ness": The student exhibited a level of awareness regarding the ministry environment.
5	17. Servanthood: The student gladly served others with humility.
5	18. Love: The student demonstrated in actions and words love for other people of all ages.
5	19. Confidence: The student displayed confidence without being arrogant.
5	20. Courage: The student displayed ability to take an appropriate risk.

2. To what extent overall did your Intern's involvement affect positively your church/ministry organization?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

Please provide specific examples of how your Intern's involvement affected positively your organization:

The second half of Joseph's supervised ministry responsibilities centered around 5 areas.

Healing Love Bereavement Ministry

The first involved working under the supervision of Rev. Nicole Edness and the Healing Love Bereavement Ministry. Joseph Browne attended the weekly Healing Love Bereavement Zoom sessions. He was the only male, and he was able to share his own grief experience from his perspective. He always had a pleasant smile and he opened and closed the sessions with comforting and encouraging prayers.

Boys Rites of Passage & Men's Weekly Bible Study

Joseph has been an exemplar example for our young men's Rites of Passage program by being consistent in the forming and shaping of the young men every single week through teaching, modeling, and his faithful consistency.

Joseph has provided excellent teaching for our Men's Conference and numerous times in place of me for our weekly Men's Virtual Bible Study on Thursday evenings.

Designed for Discipleship Virtual Bible Study Series – Class #5, Foundations for Faith

Joseph sustained his responsibility as a participant in the two-person teaching team of our **Designed for Discipleship Virtual Bible Study Series, Class #5, Foundations for Faith**. During the Fall 2021 semester, from September – the beginning of December, Joseph's teaching responsibilities included opening and closing class sessions in prayer, teaching six of the 12 class sessions, engage students in class discussions, and give feedback on their final class assignment.

GAC's Sunday Virtual Altar Minister

Joseph continues to serve as one of twelve ministers who welcomes, inspires, and responds to adults who join in on the weekly church 90-minute virtual broadcast. Twice a month Joseph welcomes adult viewers streaming from outside the five boroughs, responds to prayer requests, and urges all to listen attentively to the weekly sermons and teaching moments.

GAC's Discipleship Chapel Ministry Team

The last ministry assignment that Joseph began in September was the reopening of the GAC Cathedral chapel that welcomes those in need of prayer, those seeking a closer relationship with God through salvation, and those who wish to become a member of The Greater Allen AME Cathedral. As the world continues to adjust during this pandemic season, the chapel had to also adjust. Adjustments that included social distancing, and mask wearing, while still being sensitive to the needs of those who enter. Joseph is one of the leading ministers who welcomes those who come inside chapel by leading the salvation prayer and interceding for those seeking prayer.

3. To what extent do you believe your Intern met their goal-objectives in each area of their Field Ed Contract:

Completely	To no extent				
	1	2	3	4	5
Personal characteristics					<u>5</u>
Knowledge	1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>
Spiritual development	1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>
Skills	1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

Please provide three (3) examples of your Intern's success/growth, with respect to their Contract goal-objectives:

Christian Education: Within the area of Christian Education, Joseph grew as a teacher and encourager. He participated in three Christian Education components, the first was the Designed for Discipleship Virtual Bible Study Series, the second was the Men's Virtual Bible Study and Men's Conference as a facilitator, and the third was the Virtual Hour of Power Senior Prayer & Bible Study.

- **Designed for Discipleship Virtual Bible Study Series:** From his introduction to the DFD teaching team in the Spring, Joseph truly continues to learn how to share the Word of God, while asking questions and leading discussions for students to participate in. He continues to develop his "knack" of including props in his teaching, which the students thoroughly enjoy. His relationship with his co-teacher, is a great one, and they can glean from one another. His contributions and growth are both admirable and noticeable.
- **Men's Bible Study:** Joseph has continued to grow in his teaching ability especially while using virtual platforms in a more effective way. He uses appropriate pictures on PowerPoint to further emphasize his points. Joseph used an actual slow-cooker on stage during our Men's Conference to draw those in attendance to greater understanding of spiritual principals. Joseph has grown in his ability to slow down in his delivery so that his excellently crafted points can be understood with great clarity.
- **Hour of Power Senior Virtual Prayer and Bible Study:** HOP is a weekly one-hour session, that afford seniors the opportunity to call in or ZOOM in. We have song, bible reading, prayer and bible/sermon teaching. Joseph contributed bi-weekly with prayer and scripture readings. Joseph would share short bible meditations based on his selected scripture readings and then pray on a bi-weekly basis. Joseph concluded this HOP assignment by giving a sermon entitled, "**Are you Plugged in and Charging or Just Near the Power Source?**" The scriptural reference was taken from Ephesians 3:14-

The seniors appreciated Joseph's sermon and gave him great commendations. They also appreciated his presence, prayer, biblical contributions and listening ear. He contributed greatly to the HOP Senior Prayer & Bible Study.

Discipleship:

- **GAC's Sunday Virtual Altar Minister:** Joseph is one to volunteer when there is a ministerial void to fill, which is extremely encouraging. He continues to learn different ways to welcome, pray, and encourage adults from both near and far who frequent the weekly Facebook broadcast.
- **GAC's Discipleship Chapel Ministry Team:** Joseph continues to learn how to be attentive, caring, and observant, while being sensitive to the prayer needs of others. He does well in this

area, because Joseph listens attentively to the Holy Spirit as he attends to the people of God. Joseph is a true asset to the Discipleship Chapel Team.

- **Healing Love Bereavement Ministry:** Joseph Browne was transparent with the group, which allowed others to open up and discuss their feelings freely. Each week he would open the session with a heartwarming prayer and a personal story of his grief walk. He brought so much comfort, especially to those who were just joining the group. His words of encouragement were an asset to the ministry.

Leadership: Staff Meetings:

Joseph's leadership is being developed in several areas. As a member of the Greater Allen AME Cathedral of New York, he was permitted to sit in on the bi-weekly GAC Staff Meetings and observe how they are conducted. Over the twelve-month period, he listened to the dialogue that included informative questions and responses and on occasion, was asked either to share information or to ask any questions that he may have had. Joseph conducted himself well, using on occasion the opportunity to share or question, while using the time to observe leadership in action. I know he benefitted greatly from this experience.

4. To what extent did your Intern understand & practice the personal, theological and practical components of holistic ministry?

To no extent

1

2

3

Completely

4

5

Please briefly describe which ministry areas you believe to be your Intern's greatest strengths: Joseph's greatest strengths center around his ability to listen. Whether it is in the Designed for Discipleship Class #5 Bible Study, the Hour of Power Senior Prayer/Bible Study, GAC's Sunday Virtual Altar Ministry, or GAC's Discipleship Chapel Team Ministry, Joseph is learning how to listen with an attentive and prayerful ear to the questions, prayer requests, and comments shared. With both the DFD & HOP, Joseph listened to the class comments, the prayer requests, and prayer executions to hear what God would wish for him to do when it was his turn to share.

For the Men's Bible Study, Rev. Tiate believes that Joseph is a great communicator of complex spiritual principles into ways that are easy to understand. He is also very committed to his ministry assignments, timely, thorough, and most importantly, he exhibits the character of Christ at all times.

For the Healing Love Bereavement Ministry, Rev. Edness contends that out of Joseph Browne's sufferings, he was able to help others. He has a way of revealing the invisible hand of God in the midst of sorrow.

Please briefly describe which ministry areas you believe to be your Intern's most serious weaknesses:

Rev. Carson contends that Joseph will have to make sure that he balances work, home, and ministry life well, without burning himself out. Of course, this is hard to do when you add seminary and our denominational examination institute to his plate. I agree with Rev. Tiate, and I believe Joseph is slowly learning to do this.

However, Rev. Edness believes that Joseph is a man of humility and strength and really could not perceive his weak areas as he attended the weekly bereavement sessions.

5. To what extent did you equip your Intern to engage in critical thinking and/or relevant, thoughtful and informed dialogue within the internship context?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

6. To what extent did you equip your Intern to engage in critical thinking and/or relevant, thoughtful and informed dialogue outside of the internship context?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

7. To what extent was your Intern attentive and available each week?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

8. To what extent did you equip your Intern well so they could succeed?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

Briefly describe the content / context of some of your most fruitful conversations with your Intern:

During our bi-weekly sessions, I make sure to have Joseph share both the positive and not so positive moments/challenges he faced during his internship responsibilities. On several occasions he asked how to maneuver challenges he was facing, and through discussion, solutions were developed, discussed, and agreed upon after much contemplation. Rev. Carson shared that some of the most fruitful conversations they had were centered around how he's processed numerous deaths in his family along with his family, education, and ministry expectations. They have also been able to discuss what's working and what's not as it pertains to the Men's Ministry upon which he oversees.

9. To what extent do you consider your Intern is ready / suitable for further ministry?

To no extent *Completely*
 1 2 3 4 5

Briefly describe anything that might help your Intern to be more ready / suitable for further ministry:

Rev. Carson contends that it will be important for Joseph to understand what the denominational expectations will be of him as he enters into pastoral ministry. I want to make sure that he knows the differences and nuances of our local church in comparison to 99% of the other churches in our

denomination. He will need to be thoroughly equipped on church polity and law and what that looks like for various types of congregations.

Rev. Edness believes that Joseph was very comfortable and confident in sharing his testimony about his own grief experience. I would suggest that he would gather grief resources such as books, video teachings, and education seminars to further his knowledge in the field.

10. What could you have done to make this Field Ed experience more fruitful or helpful to the development of your Intern's soul, character, skills, etc.?

I am trying to see how Joseph is adjusting in his various responsibilities and hear God as he progresses forward. As he grows, I too grow. Through our conversations my discerning ear and heart continues to develop, so what may not be shared audibly, can be heard through the Holy Spirit. This trait continues to develop as I grow in God as both a believer and a mentor. Joseph's development via soul, character, and skill was able to benefit, but I wish to grow in this area even the more. "It does not yet appear, what he will become." Rev. Tiate shared that he could have certainly critiqued some of his outside preaching engagements, as well as maintain more frequent check-ins, although Joseph has been faithful in following up with me himself. Finally, Rev. Edness shared to empower, equip and develop, Joseph should solely facilitate bereavement sessions. I am confident that his gifts and talents would be an encouragement and comfort to the bereaved. Joseph's approach in speaking to the bereaved was mature and purposeful. He was not "Mr. Fix It", and he was not the "spiritual handy man." He knew how to journey with the people, and their pain with words of encouragement and understanding. He recognized that grief most often is a process and not an instant deliverance.

2) What I believe

Philosophy of Ministry

Introduction

When I think of my philosophy of ministry, I begin by considering the term ministry. I reflect on the fact that throughout the Bible from Old to New Testament scriptures, one can read of different individuals who were called to minister to others as guided and directed by God. In the Old Testament, we can read of Elisha leaving his parents, "²¹Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (King James Version Bible, 2019, I Kings 19:21). Elisha did this in his support of Elijah and as a servant of God to God's people. When our attention centers on the New Testament, we can view Timothy ministering to Paul the Apostle. Timothy's efforts

served as extended hands and presence to Paul. These are examples of individual ministering opportunities, but can serve as microcosmic examples of taking the time to minister to others.

Jesus Christ and all that he did serves as the ideal template for, as well as a central pivotal component of my philosophy of ministry. Jesus embodied holistic outreach to those he encountered while he was on earth. As expressed by the Great Commission, Jesus prepared His disciples and all of us as His followers on how to prepare for and execute our efforts in terms of ministering to others. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching to obey everything I have commanded you” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Matt 28: 19-20).

In connection to the Great Commission, my philosophy of ministry cannot be limited to a particular ethnic, social, political or religious group of individuals. Integral to my philosophy of ministry is that I must see all people as deserving being ministered to with the gospel message that brings salvation. As stated, ¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Romans 10: 14)?

I must be willing to spread the good news of salvation and the transformational power of God which can be impactful in the lives of others. This transformational power is necessary as part of my philosophy of ministry so that I will not be ashamed to proclaim the truth of God’s Word. I must also be His ambassador and agent for promoting and encouraging change in the lives of others. As stated, ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Romans 1:16).

I must endeavor to be bold in declaring the truth of God's Word and seeking for the changes in lives of others and realization of purpose and worth as "9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (New International Version Bible, 2011, I Peter 2:9). Some are likely unaware of the depth of darkness they have been living in or the sin patterns which have been prevalent in their lives, so it is necessary for my philosophy of ministry to incorporate ministering to individuals in different spiritual depths and levels. My efforts must seek to reach them where they are and to be willing to take the time to lead them to where God has for them.

To accomplish this will require seeking the power of the Holy Spirit as spoken of "38 And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (New International Version Bible, 2011, Acts 2: 38). Understanding this and tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit is especially needed as we engage in ministry today. This is due in part because "14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (New International Version Bible, 2011, I Corinthians 2: 14). As I endeavor to be assured of Holy Spirit empowerment as I minister to others, I must also be definitively assured of my faith in God.

Statement of Faith

As a foundation supports the structure of a building and helps to ensure stability, so is the same way I view my statement of faith to denote what I believe. I wholeheartedly believe that there is only one God, Who is holy and eternal. I believe that He is the Creator of all things whether I can or cannot see them with my physical eyes. My God is infinite in His ability to execute justice and wisdom, but at the same time demonstrate His love, concern and grace to all

of humankind. His glory, wisdom and graciousness transcend time, generations and locations. Our one God consists of the three in the God-head of God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit Our Comforter (Genesis 1: 26).

I believe that Jesus Christ became man and dwelt with humankind (John 1:14). Jesus died for our sins but rose victoriously again, so we live for a resurrected Redeemer (I Cor. 15:12-19, Luke 24: 6). The Holy Spirit after Jesus departed from the earth, became Our Comforter and Guide into all truth (John 16: 7 & 13). The truth that the Holy Spirit guides us into leads us to a greater understanding of the plan of salvation (Eph. 1: 3 -4). The plan of salvation is necessary and remains in effect to address the sin nature we are born with (Rom. 7: 1-25, 8: 1-39 and Col. 3:9).

I also believe that each of us were created with a free will to accept or not accept God's gift of His salvation plan which is extended to us (Prov. 16:9, Deut. 30: 19&20, Rev. 3:20). I appreciate the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21) which brings about a transformation in our disposition and mindset for me to work for God (Col. 3: 23 & 24). As I consider all He does in and for my life, I pause and celebrate via the ordinances of Baptism (I Cor. 12: 13, I Peter 3:21, Acts 2:41) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26: 26- 29, Luke 22: 19 & 20). This is all done as we look forward to Christ's second return (I Thess 4: 17, Mark 13: 32 & I Cor. 15: 52).

What I and others engage in here on earth is only a foreshadow of what is to come. ⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. ¹⁰ They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands" (New International Version Bible, 2011, Rev. 7: 9 – 10). This is the eschatological expectation of what is to come, but I desire and determine for it to be a vibrant component of my current philosophy of ministry.

Core Ministry Values

Consequently, a key component of my philosophy of ministry must include seeking for God's wisdom and guidance to live a life that is pleasing to God. As stated, "¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (New International Version Bible, 2011, Romans 12: 1). Some may ask what are my core ministry values? I will proceed to discuss some of my core values.

Worship

One of my core ministry values is worship. We honor and express our appreciation to God when we engage in worship. Whether our focus is personal or corporate worship, there are numerous scriptures which highlight the importance and necessity of worship. It is written Psalm 95:6-7 (KJV) "⁶O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the LORD our maker. ⁷ For he is our God; And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." (New International Version Bible, 2011, Psalm 95: 6- 7). When I consider this in the context of corporate worship, I can view it as an opportunity for everyone to participate in worship, whether young or old, women or men, able-bodied or with challenges. This is not limited to just a particular cultural or ethnic dimension but also includes everyone from diverse national backgrounds. "⁹ All the nations you have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. ¹⁰ For You are great and do wondrous things, you alone are God" (New International Version Bible, 2011, Psalm 86: 9 -10). This denotes the fact that God is worthy to be worshipped no matter part of the world I am or we are.

There is also a personal component of worship which cannot be negated. Psalm 34:1 state, “I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” As I strive to worship God as I engage in ministry, I want to encourage others to do their personal best to glorify God as well. Everyone can present their sacrifice of praise and honor to God as their acts of ministry for Him. Hebrews 13:15 says, “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”

Prayer and lament

There is also a focus on lamenting and prayer. Taking the time to lament as part of prayer times, provides enriched opportunities to go before God with different prayer requests. This speaks of time when I can come boldly before God with my brokenness about the brokenness in my family, local community, national settings and global context. This provides a uniquely dynamic environment for vulnerability and for transformation to occur. David expressed a time when he pours out what he is experiencing before God. He prayed, “Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry for help come to You. Do not hide Your face from me when I am in distress.” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Psalm 102: 1-2). I must be willing to pour out before God and encourage others to do so as well.

I can also reference Nehemiah as an example of being physically far but still having a heart-connection with what is going on in the Jerusalem of my life. Nehemiah 1: 3 & 4 “The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” My personal and collective lamenting with others in prayer must incorporate those challenging things which are happening around us.

Bible Reading, Bible Study and Meditation

To be effective as an ambassador for God requires me to be diligent in my pursuit of being familiar with the Bible and God's guidelines and instructions for ministering to others. ⁴¹ I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you. ¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways" (New International Version Bible, 2011, Psalm 119: 11, 15). There must be a heart-felt connection to and commitment to spending time in studying His Word. However, it is also imperative that I consistently provide means for that to be fostered, cultivated, and sustained in the lives of others. Yes, it is important to preach the Word in season and out of season, but there must also be promoted personal and corporate opportunities for Bible Study. This is not just reviewing and reflecting upon my favorite passage of scripture, but earnestly engaging in exploring the hidden truths and life-skill nuggets, which are packed into the Bible. My prayer and focus are to be in alignment with "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (New International Version Bible, 2011, II Timothy 2:15).

Love in Action or Love in Deed

I must live connected to the fact, ³⁷ Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself" (New International Version Bible, 2011, Matt. 22: 37-39). These scriptures reinforce the importance for love to exist and be demonstrated in our interaction with those of the household of faith and with non-believers. "If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing" (New International Version Bible, 2011, I Cor. 13: 3). This

highlights the significance that our motive and agenda for engagement in ministry is to germinate from a right spirit, attitude, and mindset in order to please God and to be effective.

“³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (New International Version Bible, 2011, John 13: 35). Love cannot be simply denoted as a noun when it comes to being Christ-like in our daily lives. Christ is the perfect epitome of sacrificial love in action: even to the point of being willing to die for us. We might not have to physically lay down our lives for the cause of Christ, but we should all be willing to make sacrifices and be living sacrifices in our service to God and one another. “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (New International Version Bible, 2011, I John 4:11).

Holistic Care Approach

In connection to our love for one another, as we strive to minister to others, we are to be willing in developing a holistic care approach. This is another key component of my philosophy of ministry. God’s Missio Dei encompasses more than a theoretical approach, but also takes into consideration a practical angle for ministering and connecting with those around us. We are to engage in promoting and proclaiming the redemptive reality of the Good News to those in our communities to address their spiritual needs. Additionally, there are a variety of societal needs which we are called not to disregard. Rather, I must incorporate them into how, when, and why I minister to all people I interact with. As stated, “¹⁷Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Isaiah 1: 17). This should also be evident as I seek to fulfill “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (New International Version Bible, 2011, James 1: 27).

God wants for all to be saved and for right relationship with Him to be cultivated. This includes the holistic care for needs of the marginalized and oppressed as denoted in “³⁷Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?”(New International Version Bible, 2011, Matt. 25: 37 -38). I believe that we have a right and responsibility to be God’s extended hands, eyes, and feet in this present world to serve the marginalized, oppressed, and neglected.

Non-Negotiables

Presence and Power of the Triune Godhead

Above are provided some of the core values which I would incorporate into my philosophy of ministry. One of my non-negotiables is that my ministry focus is to operate in and pursue the presence and power of the triune Godhead. Some denominations and religious groups tend to focus on Jesus Christ only and disregard the functioning of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. When I examine the Word of God, I see the Triune Godhead (Trinity) working and operating together. In Genesis 1:26 the Triune Godhead made man. In Matthew 3: 13, 16 – 17, I can read of Jesus being baptized, the Spirit of God descending as a dove and God the Father speaking. Matthew 28:19 instructs us to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is further supported when 2 Corinthians 13: 14 speaks of the grace of Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be to be ours. All the way from Genesis to Revelation, I am reminded and encouraged about the presence and power of the Triune Godhead being evident in lives.

Seeking God’s Guidance

My second non-negotiable is seeking God's guidance in terms of decisions to be made. It may become easier for some people over time to be self-reliant in their decisions and interactions with others. I have repeatedly proven and can personally attest to others, that are exponential benefits in seek God's guidance as part of their daily decision-making process. I can testify to Proverbs 3:5-6 in regards to trusting in God and simply following my own understanding. God wants me to earnestly determine to spend time in prayer before Him so that I can hear His voice and follow His leading and direction for my life. I do not want to operate solely based upon my intellect, past practice, or personal ability. I encourage others to practice, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (New International Version Bible, 2011, Phil. 4:6).

Community

My third non-negotiable relates to promoting the concept of community. Each one of us needs the encouragement and support of one another. We must "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (New International Version Bible, 2011, I Thess. 5:11). Promoting community in my philosophy of ministry emphasizes the multiplicity of benefits as the communal environment and relationships are fostered. This is even demonstrated as I engage in times of in-person or virtual platforms for a community of saints to come together in support of "²⁵Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (New International Version Bible, 2011, Heb. 10:25). There will be times when I and others will not always agree in perspectives on particular subject topics. However, the bigger picture is that of being present and being willing to share in bearing the burdens of one another.

Diversity

My fourth non-negotiable is that of fostering an environment where diversity is encouraged and promoted. It is important to demonstrate that the God I serve is not exclusive as to the people groups and cultures in which He is willing to extend His love, grace, blessings and presence to. It can be easy to become limited in who I interact with based upon present proximity of where I live, work and often associate with in my free time. What was instructed or commissioned by Jesus via Matthew 28: 19 to be cross-cultural in our efforts was also further “encouraged when it was stated “⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Acts 1: 8).

Conclusion

My prayer is that my philosophy of ministry at present and for the future will continue to glorify God. My God, forever be at the core of it all. My God, may Your mission of ministering to and impacting lives direct what occurs. May You be pleased and honored in all that we do.

3) Why I am ready for ministry (leadership).

Level of Leadership from Maxwell assessment

Introduction

When one thinks about the concept of leadership, there are various significant pointers which can come to mind. Maxwell, however, takes the time to not only clarify the definition and

applicability of the term leadership, but also how it should be characterized and utilized in what is discussed and presented to others. “Because everything rises and falls on leadership. If you want to make a positive impact on the world, learning to lead better will help you do it” (Maxwell, 2011, 1). As presented by Maxwell, the following are the 5 levels of leadership one can reference as they seek to ascertain which one best describes their current level of leadership: level 1: position, level 2: permission, level 3: production, level 4: people development, and level 5: the pinnacle. After reviewing what was presented by Maxwell in regards to the different levels and as a result of taking the assessment, the one which I presently align to and epitomizes is that of level 3 leadership.

What does this show me as a leader of others?

As discussed by Maxwell, there are certain characteristics which are denoted and exemplified in connection to level 3 leadership distinction. One of those is that of maintaining my credibility with those I lead. My current credibility status is not the result of a one-time event but it has however been cultivated and fostered over time. Good. This has involved me demonstrating to others that I am trustworthy, reliable, and honest as it pertains to conversation and interaction with them. Another noted aspect in support of the level 3 criteria is that of me being an exemplary model of setting the standard for others to follow. This has been evident both by the comments shared by others and their willingness to follow my lead on matters.

It was interesting for me to read and also personally identify with many of the other aspects which were listed in connection to level 3 leadership. One of those was solving a multitude of problems at the same time. As I have continued to work with others, multi-tasking and responding to different crises or conflicting situations or problems has been a normal pattern of my daily life. I have found that while we are navigating through the issues, I had to ensure that

clarity as it pertains to our understanding of the vision and the momentum to get there remained intact. Another important aspect of me exercising level 3 leadership for production is that of promoting team-work and team-building efforts. I view this as being foundational not just to achieving progress but also to encourage comradery and networking of those involved as well.

What is my leadership style?

My leadership style is that of an encourager of others but also a diligent facilitator in terms of things being accomplished. My leadership style also includes striving to demonstrate the importance of the vision being shared by all. I also incorporate into my leadership style the need to express my gratitude for the individual contributions of others towards success being achieved. I realize at times that this has and will continue to require my committed involvement towards fostering an environment which promotes teamwork and team building. My leadership style also incorporates striving to collectively maintaining our commitment to holistic wellness of all. My focus is for this to an engaging, enriching but also productive process for all of us to experience.

What are the checks and lessons God is teaching me?

“Production qualifies and separates true leaders from people who merely occupy leadership positions. Good leaders always make things happen. They get results. Not only are they productive individually, but they also are able to help the team produce” (Maxwell, 2013, 133). It was interesting to review what was shared that becoming a Level 1 leader can be considerably easier than progressing to the other levels. For one to progress from that point forward requires commitment and persistent efforts. At church and in my secular employment, I have fulfilled level 1 positions leadership in different capacities.

While I am in the process of maintaining where I am as well as progressing to the next level has involved God utilizing different items as part of my teaching and learning enrichment. They have served to not only be instrumental as lessons learned opportunities but also providing the “checks and balances” in my life. Some of the areas in which He has checked me is not to forget the noted areas or topic points which correlate to Level 1 and 2 leadership criteria or characteristics. An example of this is to not forget what is denoted in the previous levels of maintaining a right attitude in my interaction with others. God’s check on my life has also encompasses me being mindful of continuing to practice care and candor as to how I relate to others. Also included in the checks and lessons which God has me currently focusing on as a level 3 leader is taking the time for self-awareness. To help with my awareness, God also utilizes my wife, mentors, colleagues in ministry, friends, other family members and those I work with to assist in checking me and identifying my blind spots as well.

What are some of my blind spots which have been identified by others?

There is often an image which one can have of themselves based upon their own perception, beliefs or personal convictions or assessments. There however exists the possibility of either validation of their conclusions or another perspective from others being shared back to them. What also can exist some items which be best classified as blind-spots to an individual. As I seek to grow and develop in my leadership abilities, it is good and actually necessary to request and consider the feedback of others as to potential blind spots which could possibly be impactful to my effectiveness and progress as a leader. I reached out to three who I work with in ministry, three of my friends and ultimately my wife as well for insight and constructive considerations regarding the blind spots in my life.

As it pertains to blind spots in my soul, there were a few that were highlighted in the feedback which I received from my wife, 3 ministry leaders and 3 close friends. The following are the top 7 which they mentioned: 1) Refrain from at times allowing domineering characteristics of others to bother me. In order for you to move to level 4 and develop others, you will have to confront people when they are out of line. 2) Realize that my voice matters even when I feel that it won't make that much of a difference. 3) Press into my spiritual disciplines daily to help in my interactions with others. 4) Don't underestimate myself when it comes to ministry challenges and situations. 5) Don't waver in trusting the Holy Spirit's guidance within me. 6) Be confident and don't box myself into particular categories of ministries. 7) Be careful that my caring attitude to others does not become an opportunity for distraction in regards to my own personal development. Sometimes, "No" is an appropriate response.

I reflected on what they identified as blind spots in my soul. I thought about the fact that although I can be outspoken in some settings, I can also be timid, reserved and not assertive at other times. I must increasingly pray to God to help me in this area of my life. I want to believe in and exhibit 2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV) – “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”

As it pertains to blind spots in my leadership, the following are the seven key points which were mentioned: 1) Remember that self-care and family time are just as important as ministry assignments and obligations. 2) Make sure that my facial expressions and body posture are exuding confidence as I minister or function as a leader. Dig into the soul issues to find out why you are lacking confidence. 3) Be careful of at times committing myself to more tasks than I am able to truly handle with excellence. 4) Be unapologetic in speaking and seeking for the truth when uncomfortable situations arise. 5) Take the time to slow down when I speak to ensure

that nothing gets lost in translation/communication. 6) Accept help and ask for help when needed. Don't try to always do things on my own. 7) Take the time to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Words are not always necessary. As a leader there are times when your presence will be more impactful than your words.

I also spent time reflecting on the blind spots in my leadership, which they identified. I realized that at times I can be tunnel-vision in my approach, reaction and interaction. This has especially occurred when I view whatever it may be as a time-sensitive matter. Based upon their feedback, I will have to more intentional about taking time to pause, slow down, and to be still.

What are my strengths and weaknesses identified in the process?

“A lot of things have to be right to climb to a higher level, but sometimes it takes only one thing going wrong to cause someone to fall” (Maxwell, 2013, 14). One of my strengths and as noted by Maxwell for level 3 leaders is that “ Level 3 leaders take their people to where they want them to go, they don't send them there” (Maxwell, 2013, 136). I remain committed to ensuring that those I lead or interact are assured of my support and partnering with them as we progress. Another of my strengths is that of being consistently credible in what I say, do, and in my reaction and responses. A subsequent strength is my willingness to be involved and not aloof when scenarios or situations arises for difficult decisions arises.

Another one of my strengths which I will mention is seeking God's guidance as I explore and understand how my personal contributions assists in promoting and advancing the vision of what we are a part of or advancing. I must also take the time to take note of some of my weaknesses which exist. One of my weaknesses is that I often inadvertently carry the burden of what we are collectively seeking to accomplish until that occurs. Another weakness is that at

times I am neglectful in regards to relationships and what is occurring in the lives of individuals. My focus to achieving success sometimes results in me not always engaging in expressing concern or interest in the lives of others.

Where do I see myself in the ministry maturing process?

As stated by Maxwell, “Your leadership ability today is whatever it is. You can’t change the past. However, you can change the future. You have a choice concerning your leadership ability from this day forward” (Maxwell, 2013, 17). There are certain skills and leadership abilities which I have acquired or adapted to as via God’s direction in my life. As I consider my ministry maturing process and progress, I prayerfully seek for God’s guidance as to the next steps towards increasingly being utilized in my interaction and relationship with others. I however do not see myself plateauing at this level. Where I see myself in the ministry maturing process is that of progressing towards level 4 leadership.

Advancing to a level 4 leader will require enhanced involvement on my part in the training and development of others. I presently seek to ensure the familiarity of others with what we are engaging in. This will entail also exploring additional resources and opportunities for their advancement. I must also be willing to provide timely and honest feedback to others. They need more from you than outside resources. Giving such feedback can potentially require me to increasingly exit from my comfort zone of not having to transparently share my views of others. My maturing in this ministry process might also entail me striving to provide others with responsibilities and opportunities to stretch them. My scripture of reference which I must conscientiously personalize, observe, and follow is Proverbs 3: 6 (KJV) – “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

4) Three specific areas I know I can deliver in a ministry context

David says in Psalm 116 verses 12 – 14: “¹²What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me? ¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.¹⁴I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.” In addition to this passage from Psalm, Romans 12: 1- 2 says, **12** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Lastly, Luke 12:48b (NIV) states, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” These three scriptures focus on giving back to God or being willing to serve God with gratitude in order for His Kingdom work to be established and progress.

If I was asked as to three specific areas I know that I can deliver in a ministry context, my response would be preaching, teaching, and intercessory prayer. The first one is preaching. Over the last three years, I have been granted various opportunities to proclaim God’s Word. There have been times that the preaching opportunities have been in person, and then there have been preaching opportunities which have been virtual. Within the last three years, I have been blessed to preach in person in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands as well as in New York on a few occasions.

I preached virtually within the same time frame for churches in St. Thomas, Orlando, Phoenix, Westbury as well as for churches in Brooklyn and Queens, NY. I view it as an honored privilege for me to be called upon to deliver God’s Word. I equally consider it an awesome responsibility to preach. Romans 10: 14 – 15 states, “¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And

how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”” My prayer is for God to continue to anoint my life so that I can consistently be His proclaiming agent to His people.

The second specific area is with regards to teaching. 2 Timothy 2:15(NIV) states, “¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” I have found that this particular scripture can be utilized or referenced as it relates both to preaching and teaching the Word of God. I enjoy delving into God’s Word and extracting different “life and imparting nuggets.” I have been able to increasingly engage in and facilitate teaching sessions. This occurred for Men’s Bible study on various occasions. I was also requested to be a co-facilitator for a series of the Design for Discipleship courses. This is part of a 3-year commitment by new members for continued spiritual growth and foundational development for Biblical knowledge. My teaching skills were also expanded as I co-facilitated Healing Love Bereavement ministry sessions as we discussed handling grief and learning to move forward after loss occurred.

The third specific ministry area for me is with regards to intercessory prayer. The intercessory prayer sessions for the church escalated at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to Monday to Friday evenings and on Saturday morning as well. This has then provided multiple occasions for me to be an intercessory prayer participant. What has also occurred is that me being requested to participate in intercessory prayer sessions has expanded beyond my local church. I have engaged in prayer line sessions for various ministries in different localities, even outside of New York.

The connecting points of the three ministry aspects is seeking for and relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance, direction and anointing to be most effective in ministering to others. I have grown in these three ministry aspects over the last 3 years. God has equipped and expanded my ministry skill sets even through these aspects by increased opportunities to interact and instruct others. They have heightened my understanding of when one says yes to God what are some areas He might place you in for your development but as well as for His kingdom to be expanded. Prayerfully, I will be able to incorporate what I have learned via my preaching, teaching and intercessory prayer opportunities into future occasions of engaging with others.

5) Changing the role of sexuality in society and the church

There are various subject topics which have been difficult or challenging for some individuals to either preach or teach about in church settings. This could possibly be the result of the comfort level of either the presenter, the receiving audience or a combination of the two. Open discussions about matters related to sex often fits into this category where apprehension can result. Sometimes it is necessary to evaluate and determine if the ultimate benefits of having these discussions outweighs the cost of others not being informed. This connects to either one of the following proverbs, "It is easier to stop something from happening in the first place than to repair the damage after it has happened" or "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." As I strive to be instrumental in the service of God and to be able to preach or teach on sex-related topics, I will prayerfully ask God's guidance as to how to effectively communicate to others what God would want to be shared. There are a plethora of topics which can be discussed, but the following are the ones which I will present.

Sermon or Teaching# 1: "Singleness is not a license to promiscuity."

This will be my starting point. As stated by Hirsch, “Jesus as a single person calls us to challenge our culture’s capitulation to Freudian understandings of sexuality. And His own single sexuality forces us to call into question the negative and suspicious lens with which we have come to view celibacy and singleness in our time” (p. 57). Hirsch also declaratively states, “Let’s face it, singles in the church today get the raw end of the deal” (p. 58).

Let me discuss the following points:

Being single is a conscious choice for some individuals

1 Corinthians 7:8- But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

Singleness can be a gift:

1 Corinthians 7:7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

Singleness can also be a result of various circumstances:

Hirsch stated, “Yet the vast majority who walk the celibacy path do so not by choice or gift, but by circumstance. This means celibacy can be a difficult thing to bear, an issue of sacrificial discipleship. It flows out of a relationship and commitment to follow Jesus, no matter what” (p. 59).

There can be contentment in being single:

Phil. 4: 11 & 12 – I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

One can find or exist in a state of contentment with being single. This can be produced as a result of believing in God and trusting in the truth and promises of His Word.

Singleness and being promiscuous do not have to be synonymous words:

According to Hirsch, “To be celibate doesn’t mean a person must repress his or her sexuality or become a hermit” (p.128). It is possible to love intensely outside of a marriage relationship” (57). However, it does not mean that being promiscuous and “playing the field” or “sowing wild seeds” are allowed even if one is single.

- **Ephesians 5:3** – But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becoming saints.
- **1 Corinthians 7:9** - But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Singleness even in 2023 still requires holy living

1 Corinthians 7:34 - and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

Romans 12:1 – Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 – For this is the will of God, even sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication.

Conclusion: “The apostle Paul spoke of the benefits, and Jesus himself lived as a celibate man. We must also remember that celibacy is not exclusive to homosexually oriented disciples but also to the heterosexually oriented single person who will not marry” (p. 129) There is Godly reassurance in the Bible that they will never be alone or lonely, whether they are single or married, as long as they have faith in the Lord. (**Matthew 19:11**)

Source: <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Being-Single>

Hirsch – Redeeming Sex

Sermon or Teaching#2: “What does love have to do with it? Or “Did you sign up for the Lust 101 course?””:

It is amazing and interesting how the word “love” in our American context can be utilized in various settings to relay our feelings about a place, person or thing. One could say I love visiting the beach. Another person could say, I love my mother, my son, or my brother. It is also okay to say that one loves their car, house or their job. Love in our understanding can be a noun when it is described as something we give or receive. Love can also be a verb which is something we do, feel or experience. Lust can also be a noun such as an intense sexual desire or appetite. Lust is also a verb with such word connotations and activities denoted as mating, playing around, womanizing, stepping out or cheating.

When we look at the Greek understanding or applicability of the word love, we come to four different settings and application of the word “love.” - <https://www.dictionary.com/e/greek-words-for-love/>

1. *Eros* is physical love or sexual desire. *Eros* is the sensual love between people who are sexually attracted to each other. In the Bible, *eros* was synonymous with “marital love” because husbands and wives were supposed to be the only people having sex.
2. *Philia* is affectionate love. *Philia* is the type of love that involves friendship. *Philia* is the kind of love that strong friends feel toward each other.
3. *Agape* is often defined as unconditional, sacrificial love. *Agape* is the kind of love that is felt by a person willing to do anything for another, including sacrificing themselves, without expecting anything in return.
4. *Storge* is familial love. *Storge* is the natural love that family members have for one another. Of all of the types of love, *storge* might be the easiest to understand. It is the type of love that parents feel toward their children and vice versa. *Storge* also describes the love that siblings feel towards each other, and the love felt by even more distant kin relationships, such as a grandparent for a grandchild or an uncle toward a niece.

Biblical passages which speak about love:

- **John 15:12:** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.
- **Luke 6:31:** Do to others as you would have them do to you. Corinthians 16:14: Do everything in love. Proverbs 17:17: A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-8) - Love is patient, love is kind.** It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Biblical passages which speak about lust:

- Gal 5:16 - This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh
- Ephes 5:3 - But fornication and all uncleanness or unbridled lust, let it not be even named among you, as it becomes saints;
- James 1:14 - But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed

Some noted differences between love and lust

Article written in Jan 27, 2021 for Insider Reviews by Lia Tabackman which states the

following - <https://www.insider.com/guides/health/mental-health/lust-vs-love>

- The main difference between lust and love is that lust is purely sexual attraction while love is both passionate and compassionate.

- Signs of lust include spending most of your time with a partner being physically intimate, having little interest in their life outside the bedroom, and having different values.
- Signs of love include being emotionally vulnerable, looking forward to meeting their friends and family, and feeling secure in the relationship.

According to Alexandra Stockwell, MD, a Relationship and Intimacy Expert at Alexandra Stockwell Coaching and Consulting, "The most commonly understood distinction between lust and love is that lust is purely physical and sexual, whereas love includes care for someone well behind their function as a source of yearning and sexual gratification."

According to Stockwell, signs you may be in love include:

- You think of interesting things to tell one another.
- You look forward to meeting friends and family.
- You share vulnerable, tender things like challenges you are facing.
- You know that if you live in different cities for a few months it will be okay.

According to Stockwell, you might be experiencing lust if:

- When you think of the person, your thoughts immediately go to what your bodies do for one another.
- When you think of the person you start smiling, feeling flushed, have sensations of excitement, and being turned on.
- As soon as you see one another you want to kiss.
- You don't necessarily have much in common, but when you are touching it really doesn't matter.

Love is demonstrated in the Bible

- John 3: 16 – For God so loved the world
- Ruth — Ruth loved her mother-in-law, Naomi, and had compassion for her
- Boaz — In Ruth's Bible story, Boaz also proved to be a compassionate Bible character
- I Samuel 18: 3 - “Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.”

Lust in action by women in the Bible

- Gomer – Hosea’s wife a prostitute – Hosea 3: 1-3,
- Ezek 23:8 - She didn’t give up her promiscuity that began in Egypt, when men slept with her in her youth, caressed her virgin nipples, and poured out their lust on her.
- Ezek 23:11 - “Now her sister Oholibah saw this, but she was even more depraved in her lust than Oholah, and made her promiscuous acts worse than those of her sister
- Ezek 23:20 - For she lusted after her lovers [there], whose flesh is like the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

Lust in action by Men in the Bible

- **Rom 1:27** - And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet
- **2 Samuel 11: 1 – 5**: David saw, then called for, and slept with Bathsheba
- **2 Samuel 13:15–22**. “Then Amnon Hated Her Exceedingly”
- The love Amnon felt for Tamar was not the love of a brother for a sister. It was a consuming lust, which drove reason from his brain. Amnon did not really love Tamar. Once he had gratified his lust, he despised her.
- **Judges 16: 1 – 3**: Sampson sleeps with a Harlot in Gaza
- Genesis 19: 5 – Lot, the two angels and the men of the city
They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”

Source: <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/words/Lust>

Eternal benefits of love:

- **John 13:35** - ³⁵By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- **Hebrews 10:24–25**- And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- **Ephesians 4:1–3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eternal consequences of lust

- James 1:15 - Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.
- 1 Pet 2:11- Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul;
- Ephes 5:5 - For this ye are well informed of, knowing that no fornicator, or unclean person, or person of unbridled lust, who is an idolater, has inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God.

Teaching or Sermon #3: “Broken by a father’s love, restored by Father God.”

Romans 8: 15 states “ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” We also read in Matthew 6:6, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to

thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

These scriptures point our attention to God as Our Father. When we utilize such words as Abba Father, we are speaking of a personal relationship and connection to our Heavenly Father. It is all well and good to have a Heavenly Father we can pray to and trust that He is willing to love, take care of and protect us, but what does the Bible state about our earthly fathers and our relationship with them?

We can also read scriptures such as Matthew 19:19, “Honor thy father and thy mother and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This scripture connects to Exodus 20:12 where it states, “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” There is honor and respect we are to extend to our earthly fathers. There is also an expectation for a certain conduct and behavior to be demonstrated by fathers or father figures in the lives of both their sons and daughters. One might ask why?

Debra Hirsch stated in her book, *Redeeming Sex* that “Dads are particularly important in the life of their daughters because it’s her first significant relationship with the opposite sex. And for better or worst it can have a powerful impact on the way she relates to men later on” (Hirsch, 2015, 105). Some might say that this is a tremendous burden and responsibility to have to bear and live up to. Hirsch also stated that “dads will not only affirm the sense of masculinity in their sons but call forth the femininity in daughters” (Hirsch, 2015, 105). This speaks to the importance and impact of the role of the father in the lives of both sons and daughters. However, what happens when that trust is broken by incest? What can result when that parent-child or similar close family relationships are violated? The following is my outline on addressing this matter:

1. First and foremost God is our Heavenly Father

2. Earthly fathers are to be God's physical example on the earth
3. Sexual immorality between father and child or close family relations is displeasing to God - Genesis 19:30-36 Example is Lot and his daughters.
4. Incest can produce some life altering results: Leviticus 18:11-17,
5. Incest is not only against God's law; it also violates the law of the land.

Romans 13:1-2: Every person should obey the government in power.

6. Brokenness by a father's love, requires restoration by God

I will share Joyce Meyer's story: Christian author and speaker Joyce Meyer has opened up about the day her father admitted that he sexually abused her for years when she was young, and asked for forgiveness and accepted Jesus Christ.

"If we love the way God loves, that means that we're going to love when there's nothing in it for us. When it's just giving out. I know it will win people to Christ, including some of the hardest people you can imagine." "My dad sexually abused me for many years. My mother knew what was happening, she just was a very fearful woman who didn't know [how] to deal with him, and so just let it happen," she told the audience, recounting her story of abuse that she frequently shares. "My father did rape me, numerous times, at least 200 times." The author noted that the shame was very hard to deal with, especially as her father also sexually abused their neighbor's daughter. "Sexual abuse is so shaming that nobody talks about it. Nobody knows how to talk about it," she said at the time. Meyer said that she is sharing her story with the world to inspire those struggling to find hope, telling them that recovery is always possible.

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/joyce-meyer-opens-up-about-day-her-father-admitted-sexually-abusing-her-accepted-christ.html>

7. God's love is pure. God's love is holy. God's love is honorable.

Isaiah 54:10 NIV 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Romans 5:8 NIV 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Salvation and true restoration from brokenness is only possible through God.

Hirsch states that "The salvation we experience in Jesus involves the reality of a God-filled, meaningful life, and along with that the promise of full human restoration and healing" (Hirsch, 2015, 121).

She further states, " I also know that to be safe we have to know what it means to turn to him in repentance, with all of our broken parts, to reorient our lives toward God and His kingdom. Repentance involves accepting our broken condition and looking to the Savior Jesus to fill our gaps" (Hirsch, 2015, 122).

In conclusion, Luke 4: 18 states that Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted and He is still willing to do that for those who have been broken by father's love but need being restored by the love of Father God.

Part 2

3-Year Development Plan: ministry specific to my ministry context

Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV) states, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” When I read the same verse in NIV, it reads as such, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” The cumulative sentiment of the two above-mentioned versions of this scripture highlights the importance of God’s promise for the present as well as into the future.

As I consider God’s promise to me of an expected end which is packaged with hope for the future, the following are two scriptures which I must also consider as I pursue increased involvement in ministering to others. The first scripture is Philippians 2:4 which reads as “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” A correlating or supporting scripture is taken from Proverbs 20:12, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.” The same physical attributes which God provides to see and hear things around us, can also be the instruments for viewing and hearing messages of hope shared to us. God is concerned about not leaving us in despair, but to reassure us of His ability to provide us with a brighter future.

The Context for Young Men Growth and Development

The context for one of my areas is that of expanded time spent ministering to young men in the capacity of a life coach. I have been contacted by various young men both from inside as well as outside of the church for opportunities to sit down with them and for us to engage in discussions about different aspects of maturing into this thing called “manhood.” The most of

them are Black men who have either had absent fathers or fathers who minimally engaged or spent time in conversations with them as they grew older.

Instruction

1st Year - Within the first year, this will be in the form of having them take different assessments and then for us to have opportunities to discuss what they discover. The 1st year will also involve different books on spiritual growth and personal development to be offered as suggested reading every three months (4 books for the year) with required journaling of what they are gleaning from what they have read. We will also discuss the book of Proverbs as the Biblical passage. One of the books which will be read is *The Gift of Being Yourself – The Sacred Call to Self Discovery* by David Brenner.

2nd Year – They will be requested to participate in small group discussion sessions which I will conduct for 4 – 6 week durations three times during the year. The 2nd year will also involve different books to be offered as suggested reading every other month (6 books for the year). In addition to journaling salient points which they note, they will be requested to facilitate a portion of our book sharing sessions which will be conducted. One of the books which will be read is *Manhood Restored – How the Gospel Makes Men Whole* by Eric Mason.

3rd Year – They will be requested to participate in larger group discussion sessions which will be conducted for 8 weeks duration, which will only occur two times during the year. In the 3rd year, the volume of books to be read will be increased to a new book every month. What will be added as part of the instructional component are podcasts, videos on personal growth and then we will engage in group discussion sessions on these varying instructional tools which were

utilized. One of the books which will be read is *Kingdom Men Rising – A Call to Growth* and *Greater Influence* by Tony Evans.

Modeling

1st Year - I will utilize Biblical examples throughout the year in our discussions, as well as bring in guest speakers (possibly 2 times in the year) to facilitate open discussion sessions.

2nd Year – We will further identify examples from the Bible, as well as from the books which were read. I will suggest attending a local seminar by the group members.

3rd Year - We will identify examples from the books, podcast, and videos which were read or viewed as well as from the group discussion sessions. I will coordinate a weekend retreat for us to go to a location and have an opportunity for open dialogue and interaction.

Mentoring

1st Year – I will schedule monthly one on one sessions for us to meet. The frequency of meeting will be reduced in the 2nd and 3rd Years. This is due to them prayerfully being more secure over time.

2nd Year - I will schedule quarterly sessions for us to meet.

3rd Year – I will schedule meetings every six months as follow-up sessions.

The Context for Married Couple enrichment

A second area of ministry focus is that of married couples' enrichment sessions. We can see from Genesis, the emphasis God placed on the husband-wife relationship. The family structure or unit is an important result of the dynamic which occurs as a result of their relationship as well. Yes, there are changes which are occurring in our society with regards to the husband-wife relationship, but the success of their union is worth ensuring various means are provided for continuity or strengthening of their vows and commitment to be fostered .

Instruction

1st Year - Within the first year, the couples will take independent personal assessments to assist in exploring points or factors about themselves, and then for us to have opportunities to discuss what they discover. The 1st year will also involve different books on marriage and personal development to be offered as suggested reading every three months (4 books for the year) and journal logs being maintained. They will be asked at the end of the year to take an Emotional Needs Questionnaire (ENQ) to help in determining their emotional well-being.

2nd Year – They will be requested to participate in couples' discussion sessions with no more than 3 or 4 couples in each group discussion. There will be a different book and discussion guide which will be utilized for the sessions which will be conducted for 2 – 3 week durations three times during the year. A second year of journaling will also be requested for all participants. They will be requested to take a marriage checkup questionnaire.

3rd Year – Videos, podcasts and other visual aspects will be added to the resources which they will explore in the 3rd year. We will also request that a mutual journal be written, with both writing in it. This journal will be utilized to capture their collective experiences, sharing and

other daily events which occurred in their lives. They will be requested to participate in larger group discussion sessions which will be conducted two times during the year.

Modeling

1st Year - I will utilize Biblical passages on the subject topic of marriage and commitment throughout the year in our discussions. We will also focus on different couples from the Bible at different times throughout the year to collectively identify their strengths and weaknesses to gain learning points.. We will also invite marriage counselors periodically throughout the year to attend and provide their insights. I will coordinate a weekend retreat for us to go to a location and have an opportunity for open dialogue and interaction.

2nd Year – We will coordinate different events throughout the year for interaction and sharing between the different couples to occur . Will invite guest speakers (possibly 2 times in the year) to facilitate open discussion sessions. Their attendance at two marriage enrichment retreats which were offered by associated ministries with be recommended for them to attend.

3rd Year - We will identify examples from the books, podcasts, and videos which were read or viewed as well as from the different discussion sessions. I will encourage them to select and attend a couples retreat without our group being there. They will then be requested to come back and share what transpired and why others might or might not select that place for future couples retreat location.

Mentoring

1st Year – I will schedule quarterly sessions with each couple and with my wife and I for us to meet and engage in open discussions. The discussion sessions will be conducted more in the 1st year and reduces over the next two years

2nd Year - I will schedule sessions two times in the year for my wife and I to meet with each couple

3rd Year – I will schedule meetings once in that year as a follow-up session. As may have been noted,

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