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Theology of Ministry
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Chapter 1

Okay, what I’m going to do here is wrap up with a few thoughts in this course and then maybe we’ll have some time to just talk about ministry, theologically. Things maybe we have left out or need clarification. What I’ve tried to say especially in this class is: That when it comes to doing ministry we think critically, carefully and we always think theologically about ministry. Again what I, I want to start off by saying and I want to end saying that the theology ministry are like two people walking. They must walk arm in arm down the same road.

What that means is then that our methodology is constantly under the light, the discerning penetrating lamp of theology. And conversely, that the theology is constantly asking itself, “Okay, so what will this look like flashed out in ministry?” If we can’t answer that question, then what’s the point of that theology. Theology eventually has to find its way out into ministry and ministry must find its way always back to theology. They should never be separated.

Part of what we did is we went back to… intentionally, we went back to some early pastors. Why don’t we go back to them again? As our working examples. Yes?

Male Speaker 2: Most of the theologians are ministers.

[02:04] Yes, they were ministers and they were theologians. So we went back to them because it never entered into their minds to separate the two but eventually, as I’ve mentioned I think in one of the early lectures, the two were separated into academic theology and practical theology. Something that happened somewhere in Europe around the Enlightenment and the draw… the lines were drawn between the academic institution and ministry. What happened in Europe was imported to America and into the curriculum of Divinity Schools and seminaries but I think that’s changing. I think there’s a new breed and I like to think that you are part of that breed. I hope anyway of pastoral theologians, ministerial theologians who refused to draw the lines between theory and practice, who in doing ministry constantly reflect on Word, reflect on theology, reflect on Church History so that whether we’re preaching, or counseling or leading, we’re filtering it all through theology.

Now as I’ve mentioned, we went back to some of these earlier guys because they didn’t draw those lines and we went to several… and I want to go back just for a moment to review one of them and that was Gregory of Nazianzus. Remember him? He was one of those chapters in Pegasus book and I was reading about his life from another theologian. He gave me another slam on his ministry. I’m using him again as, as we kind of wrap up just to say, “Okay, so what does that look like again?” cause what he did was he went back to Gregory and said. “Okay.” Because Gregory thought about ministry theologically, it defined therefore his ministry and described it in these three ways. Because of what Gregory understood Scripture to teach, he went out in ministry. First of all, defining ministry as leadership. That is, ministry is a form of rule that is … were, taking on the leadership of souls which is using again a work example instead of drawing the lines, you bring the two together. He saw the minister as one that is called to bring order into the community. His theology drove his practice and so his practice was: this is my role. I need to bring order into the community. A community that is disordered because of sin. A community that is messed up because of pride and self-centeredness and individualism. Because it is, right?

You get upfront and you, you speak to the congregation and you want it to see themselves as the Body of Christ but a lot of them look at you with a blank face cause they, especially in our culture, are so
steep in individualism that they don’t see themselves as a community; as a Body of Christ. So, Gregory, thinking through his theology, says “Who am I?” What is this task, this role of ministry? Well he said, well first of all, it’s leadership and what it is: It’s bringing order into this disorder. As he put it in another way is, my task is to domesticate this ‘wild beast’ and bring it back to some conformity; to be the image of God; to be the Body of Christ. So that defined his ministry. Defined his ministry because his theology drove him to that.

Here was a second, he saw ministry as largely about therapy. He studied, he looked at theology and he said. “What is ministry? What is a minister?” And then he centered... he circled it around first of all, leader; secondly,... and that was all about bringing order and then second key word that defined his ministry was therapy: To bring healing. He looked at his theology, he looked at the nature of ministry and he realized his fundamental task is to be a ‘physician’ of the soul, doing interior operational work. Largely, dealing with two primary issues: People centrality out of control and alienation from God. And he saw this as a skill that must be carefully, carefully developed more so than an ordinary doctor because a ‘physician’ of the soul is dealing with the care of something that is immortal, eternal versus the body that is not. So he saw in his ministry this high calling of being a therapist, if you will, to bring healing to the soul and he was profoundly moved by the high task of that because of the immortality.

The third piece that defined his ministry and defined him was a mediator: To bring reconciliation. That is, he saw in this task that he was called to; that he stands between the dazzling brilliance of the heavenly realm and the darkness of the earth. And his first ministry in this realm, in this role is to bring Word, proclamation, to speak about God. Now I’m just giving this again as just an example of what we’ve tried to do in this course and to say, “Okay what is this task of ministry? I think through my theology, I come up with an understanding of what my identity is, what my task is.” So this is what Gregory did. He looked at his whole theology and ministry and said, “Well, here’s what my task is. I’m here to bring order. I’m here to bring healing. I’m here to bring reconciliation.” So everything defined him that way. Defined his ministry that way. Just as I think I gave you early on in my own experience of wrestling through this question that came up with, in the pastoral anyway, pastors, prophet, priest, sage, king and that has really given me a theology of ministry that flows out of theology of identity.

I think more and more... hopefully more and more of us are going come to the place of owning a theology in ministry that defines our practice but we still have ways to go because our tendency is to still let the practical dominate ministry. It’s going to be a pull. Ray Anderson from Fuller put it this way. Most theology as well as the tools of critical biblical study are thrown out when the student returns to take up their post on the front lines of ministry. They’re under pressure to be successful leaders of their organizational church. They are easily attracted to pragmatic strategies for church growth, conflict management, pastoral counsel and he’s right. It’ll be easy to be attracted to just what works and become pragmatic in orientation because our culture values that which is pragmatic.

In this class, I hope anyway we got a little bit more understanding of the importance of theology, its place in defining ministry that what we do methodologically, just need always through that filter. We looked a little bit at Carson’s book as just one working example of someone trying to look at a ministry that maybe sometimes doesn’t take the care it needs to, to think theologically whether you agree with Carson or not, at least he gives us a picture of what it means to do theology and evaluate ministry in light... in light of theology which I think he especially does in the last chapter. I got to thinking about this,
just interesting thought throughout all these as I close here. You know, I think about the Emerging Church, the traditional church today and I was reading something by Ray Anderson that made me think about and say and thought about… in a certain sense, there has always been a sort of, a feud between these two kinds of groups. Let me tell you what I mean. This is how he puts it: “There is always tension between ecclesial theology and mission theology. There's always been a tension between ecclesial theology and mission theology.” What do you think he means by that?

Male Speaker 3: [12:15] How we do church when we’re in the church and then the other is that how does a church reach out to those who are not yet have that.


Male Speaker 3: [12:22] There is always that aspect that, hey we’re believers, we’re here. How do we relate with God within that community? The other one is how do we go out and reach out to those who are not yet in that community.

[12:32] Yes. What I think Anderson is saying, I don’t think he would draw that tension quite that way. Let me explain a little bit how he puts it. Let’s see if this makes sense. He says, “There is always been a tension between the ecclesial and mission theology”. Then he says, “Think of it another way. There’s always been a tension between Jerusalem and Pentecost.” I got to think about this a little bit. “There’s always been a tension between Jerusalem and Pentecost.” Between say, Peter and James who Paul has to [13:02] rebuked who more of a traditionalist (Acts 15, Galatians 2:12) and Paul, the more missional, driven more by Pentecost (Acts 2). Here we got to think about it a little bit. Do you see what he’s saying? That there’s always been this sort of one intention. Paul’s out there. It seems like James [13:32] and Peter are more in there and sometimes I think I’ve… the traditional over here, the emergent over here and what’s happening: What is it about that tension? Could it be that every now and then, God raises an emergent movement, let’s say, to kind of help correct the course of the ecclesial or the traditional that starts to become a little bit too in-grown, that starts to let [14:02] institutions and things get it off from mission.

And the reality is, both need each other. It’s not either or. Ecclesial and missional really should always work together in a certain sense. So let me develop a little bit more and then tell me what you think. All ministry is [14:32] practiced in some context of tradition. Another words, all ministry should have anyway, some continuity with the past. I mean somebody said, “We’re starting whole new ministry, unlike anything that’s ever been done.” It has no relationship with anything except starting today. You play god. I don’t think I want to be part of that. So all ministry [15:02] has lines that go back that has some continuity with the past but the danger of tradition is that the tradition can become closed and turn in on itself, like that phrase, cause I think that’s true. Tradition can begin to close. It can begin to turn in on itself.

The emergent churches of today will be the traditional churches of tomorrow, some anyway. And by turning in [15:32] on itself, comes to a place where it says, “We don’t need to change anything.” And in fact look at change with suspicion. Now, on the other side, is this missional theology that if it’s not careful can lose its center by being so reactive to the traditional that it finds itself too far over here, away from the center where it needs to get to. Anderson [16:02] sort of puts it this way: “What’s needed are churches driven by a mission theology, guided by a foundation of systematic and historical theology. Churches ministries driven by a mission theology guided by a foundation of systematic and historical theology such that [16:32] the church will not be held captive to the structures of its own creation because if its
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paying attention to theology, it will continue to revision like old wineskins that never really become old, they just keep giving way to new and creative forms of ministry."

So you see, that’s what happens with institutionalism. It’s you create the necessary structures, but then you become [17:02] held captive to those structures. Instead of always freshly reading theology, always seeing what God is doing, how the Spirit of God is moving, so that ministry continues to revision, and wineskins never in a certain sense have a chance to harden because they almost always are becoming new which is necessary to hold this fermenting [17:32] Jesus inside who will not stay inside of old wineskins.

How does theology and ministry help us? We look at say, this Emergent movement today. We look at traditional church. What does their theology tell us? Who’s right? Well, my theology says they are both right. Their both necessary; they both need each other; need to pay attention to each other [18:02] and find both maybe at the center point here where ecclesial and missional theology work really together in a strong way. Does that make sense?

Male Speaker 4: [18:13] Okay, you’re saying that you know, the traditional church, emergent church then there are also kind of like the ‘seeker’ church that doesn’t really fit either category.

[18:23] Yes, I mean I just put a… I put ‘seeker’ probably as another category like Emergent Church that’s reacting to that inner sense, sometimes it can be movement from God to wake up, you know, “Hey, don’t forget we’re here to reach lost people but don’t forget we’re here to be incarnational, to get out of the walls” But rather than alienate one another to see that these become the necessary correctives but they can only [18:53] go so far. Some of these correctives can sometimes get off course themselves by not paying attention to the theology that the traditional church also stop paying attention to cause if it was paying attention to theology, it would not have lead the structures begin to define itself. So when I look at traditional churches, institutionalize churches, they also lost their theology cause my argument is that theology keeps us [19:23] back centered, always changing, always growing, always balanced.

I love a lot of what I see some of my Emergent brothers doing in ministry and I’m also a bit fearful of some of the theology that they may not be paying attention to, that could take them off course but then I’m also mindful of the theology that the traditional churches missing too, to gets it off-course. [19:53]

What else? Free fall or anything that you want to talk about ministry, theology of ministry. Anything we’ve not really addressed that you feel we should? Yes.

Male Speaker 5: [20:06] I think any ministry just has its pros and cons. You will eventually find within it and the different movements that we see are sort of one group just reacting with the other because they don’t like the things their cons and so they will try to form their own remedy to that which ends up having it’s own cause of agenda, you know. Spotting enough screw pin. It seems to me that a lot of it is reciprocal to [20:36] its own history. That you end up with a lot of people making the same sorts of new break-aways, new break-aways and I’m just wondering if there’s really anyway to try to create a church or movement that will … that can really appeal to across the border that will successful instead of having this sort of new break away.

[21:05] I don’t know how to answer that to well. I mean maybe in a certain sense, you can’t. We all face reality so when we get older, we may not as we want to make a meat generations, meet the needs of the rich or which maybe next generations but I also go back to this that I find at the end of the day, still nonetheless, what everybody, no matter what regeneration or time period wants ultimately whether they realized it or not, a sound theology that flows out of [21:35] solid ministry.
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I mean at the end of the day, what I’ve find people hunger for no matter who they are, is that they just want to know that God has spoke and they’ve heard His Voice and their lives are radically changed and different because of that and I think whatever we do, if we can be that voice, we’ll always have ministry.

Male Speaker 5: [21:56] God make ministry where there is context of border in existing position where with those things come new situation and they are maybe discrepancy and you’ve lost the ministry in the churches and you talk about some of the rule. Is there a rule in forming and growing in churches last few ministry or is it a matter of finding the best fit or…? [crosstalk]

[22:21] Or for yourself before you enter in?

Male Speaker 5: [22:23] Yes, seeing that there is a dual process of understanding you philosophy and understanding that the churches also are informing and growing in churches, so it’s more theologically true.

[22:36] Yes. Right. I think a lot of that… that’s have to be discerned right at the beginning by the kind of questions that you’ve asked that says, How willing are you to grow and change? And not just ask that simple question but have some things behind that you specifically you want to know and if they flinch or if they are unwilling then that probably is a signal from God, maybe that’s not the road to go because you might get very frustrated but if you find the people that say you know, we have gotten a little bit in-grown. We’ve started to [23:06] let these structures eclipse truth and we need someone to help us through the wilderness. We’re not saying that it’s going to be easy but we’re willing to come to Scripture together and we need someone help guide us there. Would you be wiling? That might be God saying, go for it.

I think the mistake today is of us to too quickly dismiss maybe a traditional church over here, a traditional ministry that needs a fresh voice [23:36] and there’s also a great place for going fresh and starting something new. It’s not that one is better than the other. Both are necessary but what I would say from my personal experience is anyone who goes this traditional side over here, better ask some real hard questions at the beginning to make sure that you don’t get into as situation where you find yourself five years later so frustrated and beating your head against the wall and you’re not going anywhere and they are only getting more alienated towards you. [24:06] But a lot of it could be just also you know how the Spirit of God leads. Not everybody in Scripture goes to ministries they wanted to go to. You know, Jonah will probably say something about that. So God may call some of us to Nineveh. That’s where again our theology of ministry will inform in ways like that. And some of us may need to… It maybe necessary for us to go through Nineveh before we get to Shangri-La, [24:36] if there is such a place on earth. So yeah.

Male Speaker 6: [24:43] How early would you say is too early to change something if you’re new to ministry?

[24:49] A lot of that is just going to be gaged people how ready they are. If they are like from there from day one and say, “Help, please. Let’s go. We want to get through the wilderness but on the other hand and if you find the place that’s pretty entrenched and not ready to make much change, it would be really foolish to change too much. But almost either way I think in any ministry, we need to… and this is part of our humility, I think is to come in and say “You know, I have a lot to learn from you” too. I want to learn this first year. I want to just listen. And then probably you will make a lot better choices. The thing… I think we need to guard from… because sometimes I see a little bit in some of my emergent brothers is, and I’m not saying that it’s just them, I mean there’s… it’s true across the board but there can be an arrogance that sometimes says “We’ve come now with the answers that you’ve all been waiting for. We are the corrective voice.” [25:49] And in a certain sense, that says everything up to now
has been bad. Modernity wasn’t necessarily bad, I mean there are a lot of good things about modernity. We just need to be careful that we don’t come across as arrogant while I’m a sinner but I’m glad I got the answer or I’ve got the theology so you know, for ministry. Let me you know… okay you guys, sit-down please. [26:19] We need to come as humble servants no matter what ministry we do cause that’s our theology of ministry. That’s a big part of our theology in ministry. So.

Male Speaker 6: [26:31] I see new pastors coming in functionally and act as if nothing had ever gone wrong before them. They basically trashed everything and the staff what is not going good with the last pastor. All the things that they build and invest and you hear them out and it’s gone and disregarded. It’s crushing. I’ve seen that really hurt…

[26:54] Yes, and it’s the arrogance of youth and the reality all of us either out there or were there, I mean it’s almost a passage we all go through. I looked at some of the more deep constructionist types out there, ready to change everything and I kind of go, you know, you’re rather arrogant but then I go Jeez, I remember when I was 22, I was in San Diego State University where we were throwing chairs through the windows of the administration buildings because [27:24] you know, everything was bad, everything that was corporate was bad, you know, during that great Vietnam era when… so it worked enough rebellion in me that now I still have a certain amount of it to this day.

I hope there is a certain rebellious streak in all of us that kind of stays there. There is a certain part of our rebellious streak that we need to just give to God and repent of but there is a certain rebelliousness that in effect comes in, all reasons says, [27:54] “I’m not sure if this is the way we should be doing this”. There is a certain rebellious streak in us I think we need to have that when some people traditionalist or others who are holding onto things they shouldn’t hold onto that you’re just rebellious enough to say, “Okay, I’m going to change this, you know.” Cause it needs to change.

I don’t think Scripture in terms theology in ministry has caused any of us to be conformists. I mean we’re called to change the world, [28:24] turn the world upside down and that takes a certain amount of rebellion but rebellion to… not against God but against the things that are not of God. Anything else that you want to ask about?

Male Speaker 7: [28:40] May I ask one thing?


Male Speaker 7: [28:42] Okay, so we talked a lot about pastoral theology in here and so we go to Scripture and find out what pastors is, what pastors should be…

[28:52] And I try to use more the broader term of minister here, realizing not all of us here are going to be pastors. Yes.

Male Speaker 7: [28:58] Yes, you go to Scriptures and find out what pastor is. I know a list of you know, apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, teachers all the term shepherd you know, on different passages and most things but Ephesians 4 really specifically stands out to me. I kind of see those and I just… really makes me wonder… well, can you just give me your view on today’s church and the function of [29:28] apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher in relationship to the local church today cause God provided each of those people but basically your view on those roles in the church of today.

[29:44] Yes. See and that’s a really good theological question I think today. I’m not sure if I have any real defined answer. I mean I grew up more in the tradition that said “Okay, there were these rules for these seasons and so they are gone now, okay. They are like the foundation stones.” I think going back over to
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Ephesians 2, Ephesians 1 and they serve their purpose and they were foundational to the church and there’s part of me that still believes that that the role of the prophet, the role of the apostle [30:14] had their particular place for this particular period and yet I also find myself more and more realizing that there’s something of this apostolic church we need to be in. There’s something of this prophetic function that we still need to hang onto. In fact we need to sort of draw it back out of the cupboard where it’s disappeared. I’m finding more and more for example that I think a pastor need to more and more to grab hold of being a prophet. [30:44] [crosstalk] Yes, well, I think they were assigned roles in a certain sense historically. I think the nature of that ministry goes on. I’m not saying well, that the day of the prophets is over. I think there’s still the prophetic task. In fact… then I go to Acts 2 where it seems like when the Spirit came at Pentecost, He in effect called the whole community of Christ to be a prophetic community which I think is the point of Joel chapter 2. [31:14] We all are now the prophets.

So, if you try and take Ephesians 4, lined it up with Acts 2, it’s going to sound like I’m weaseling a little bit but I just find… there’s a lot of things that have a certain mystery to them. They are not just clear cut and dry issues. So I see so to speak those function’s still alive somehow in the church [31:44] except… [crosstalk] yeah. A person who is the prophet who has the gift of… [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [31:42] Also a local congregation or…

[31:45] That’s probably where I’m not quite there. I’m not sure I see that exactly. I see the function more than a person as that defined role. [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:56] Do you remember the conversation you had down in … [crosstalk]

[32:02] Oh yeah, with… for us… [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:04] At the end of the day, you sort of really going down that they had role of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher. You talked about that. You remember that?

[32:15] I do but I can’t’ … [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:16] That’s what I was talking about.

[32:17] Yes. It’s been awhile since I’ve read that. Well, I’m not sure if I can really come in on that. Obviously I don’t have as clear thought on that as I should. I think a lot of literature we’re reading today about the church seems to be resurrecting those roles and raising the question: What is their place today? Is there a place of them? And if so, what would they look like? I think the best answer I can give is sort to speak and say that’s exactly what a class like this is about. Thinking [32:47] through questions like that and try to think them through theologically. That one there I don’t think it’s going to be an easy answer. What do you guys think?

Male Speaker 7: [33:00] Definitely we are moving in that direction. The reason that I came to the question was I… well, first of all started looking at what we want pastor to be and I start moving to Ephesians 4 and started to think that through and been thinking basically the assumptions is that the church maybe a pastor and but I haven’t really seen paid elders either and begin to discover. Wow this seems like my understanding has been backwards too [33:30] and okay so, there seems to be more leadership roles in a church than a pastor. There is just one place in Scripture where the word ‘pastor’ is mentioned and yet there’s so much emphasis on that instead of this list of other people and I always thought pastor was supposed to be all five of these people and then I felt like we are all that kind of evangelistic that we kind of work harder that discipline or even frankly, pastoral [34:00] the shepherding has been more of a discipline than working attribute but the role of an apostle and that of a teacher ones that are more of
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who I am. So I started looking at it and began to see other things. There is five different people who are
groups of people working together and teaching, instructing and working in kind of side by side to equip
the church. Picture someone like Troy being trained by all these different people within you know,
the church and equipped for the ministry from all those different perspectives being sent out rather than
each trying to throw about you know somebody else… [crosstalk]

[34:46] Or you might come to a place like this sort of like I did with the Old Testament offices is to say that
a dimension of all of those needs is defined as pastor. My gifting will determine which is predominant.
While I don’t need to be all of those things in one sense to everybody. I may no have the luxury to be one
of those. It’s just by the nature of my calling. There needs to be an evangelistic side to my ministry
though I’m not gifted that way and I don’t seem that it’s a strong suit. Nonetheless, I don’t get a pass from
that. I have a prophetic side to my ministry. I have a shepherding side to my ministry.

Male Speaker 7: That aspect of all of the qualities of Christ was commanded to each of those
areas… [crosstalk]

[35:35] In a sense but then you go back and realize that God didn’t put those in. He does call and I’ll go
back again and use that as a passage that there is a calling on some nonetheless that is different. That their
task in those functions is to equip saints to the ministry. [crosstalk] In that passage but I go to other
passages that would bring in other words like authority. Those who will give account for those we’ve
shepherded, we’ve taught.

Male Speaker 7: I’m just trying to match elders with prophets, apostles, evangelist, pastors and
teachers and how they work together seen in Acts 15 said that the apostles and the elders come together
to make a decision between the two… [crosstalk]

[36:22] Well, you can see because there is so many different voices that approach those all differently. I
don’t know if anyone is going to say that here’s the definite answer. You all must come and say as I’ve
worked out my theology, this is kind of where I’ve land but it’s a really good question. Probably worthy
of a really good paper at some point but it’s not been done. Well, thanks everybody. We’ll see you next
week.
We looked to Christ as an essential model because he fleshed out ministry from the God’s eye, he was God in the flesh, and so we can learn a lot about ministry and who a minister is by looking at him, and we see him as the over arching analogy. His ministry was a continuation of the Father’s, so our ministry is to be the same. And he makes that very clear in John 20:21 as the Father has, what? As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

And in that one statement, I think that’s a profound statement, because, in that one statement he therefore is saying to us that we are an extension of what he did. He’s an extension of what the Father is doing.

When we think about our ministry it’s derived from Jesus’ ministry, the Father’s ministry and there he makes that link. Ministers do what they do because of who Christ is and what Christ does. I’ll say it again, ministers do what they do because of who Christ is and what Christ does. If our ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus’ own intention and practice we lose its central theological premise. And I’ll say that one more time, if ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus’ own intention and practice, we lose its central theological premise. So, Christology is the essential start point in many ways for our ministry, that’s where ministry flows out of. It flows out of God, God the Father, God the Son, and that therefore, informs our missiology, which informs our Ecclesiology and some other classes I describe it that way, which is really important that Christology informs our missiology, which then defines our Ecclesiology.

The point I’m making here is that the reference point, again, is God. The reference point here I’m talking about is Christ. And as we understand who Christ is, then we begin to understand what our mission is. And as we understand what our mission is, then we begin to understand the nature and place and purpose of the Church. Now, this may seem to be really pretty simple and obvious. But, my observation of a lot of ministries out there is that it’s actually reversed. That ministry’s largely driven by Ecclesiology, which then informs the mission, which then almost defines who Jesus is.

What do I mean by that? Let’s say a church that is so focused on traditions and the way it’s always done things. So, why do we do what we do? We do what we do, because we’ve always done it this way, Ecclesiologically driven, which therefore defines the mission, what they’re doing, which then begins to describe who Jesus is. Instead of stopping and saying, wait a minute, let’s first of all ask the question, who Jesus is, what Jesus did, that should tell us something about our mission, which therefore tells us about the institution called church. Christology is the reference point.

Let’s talk about Christology then for a little bit here, in terms of ministry. What does that mean for ministry? Here’s the first thing, and I put it there on your notes. Ministry in is essence must be incarnational. So what this says to you and I as we think about theology of ministry, as we do our ministry out there, we’ve got to get in the flesh out there with people. Just as Jesus was God in the flesh, and he brings his ministry into the world, we have to bring our ministry into the world where people are as well.

Michael Frost refers to the incarnation as the theological prism through which we view our entire missional task. I’m going to try to elaborate on that, but that’s an important statement to make sure
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you’ve written down. [05:00] [inaudible crosstalk] [05:01] The incarnation is the theological prism through which we view our entire missional task.

It really doesn’t inform our ministry and for us who minister to people, it informs their ministry. It’s hard to get across to people and get them to embrace it, but they’ve got to embrace it or the ministry dies. [05:30] And what that means are several things and I’ll go back to Frost here for a moment, who uses three statements here. It means first of all, a work of identification, but being at its essence incarnational, it means that, that first of all, there is this work of identification. Jesus identified with us. He took upon himself all the conditions, the struggles [06:00] of humanity, he identified.

Secondly, he uses the word locality. Jesus came into our location, entered into the depths of our world. He moved into the neighborhood. He experienced its life and its rhythms, John 1:14. A halfway house would not do. Jesus didn’t come half way; he came all the way, [06:30] the whole way. You can see what the implications are for ministry, we cannot go halfway. We’ve got to go all the way.

And the third phrase he uses here is, beyond in the midst, Jesus comes into direct contact. He’s eating with sinners, he’s going to their weddings, he’s at their tomb. He’s not [07:00] largely in an office staring at a computer screen, sending out emails.

So, therefore, we take our cues again, that’s what this lectures about today, we take our cues from God and so therefore by being incarnational, it means, first of all, we too are enter – Are to enter into the depths of the world. And so, we need to identify, which means that we do it without compromising the truth of the Gospel. [07:30] So, we identify, we enter into the locality, which means that if we are really doing ministry, we’re living where they live. We’re hanging out where they hang out.

Male 1: [07:48] Can you explain, beyond in the midst, a little bit more? I know that what you said after that, but did you mean that beyond just where two or three are gathered, there am I amidst, are what you were referring to?

[07:58] Well, again, I’m going back to Frost, who [08:00] I think in that phrase, beyond in the midst, means he wasn’t just in the midst of people, you know, around there. But he got, you know he, he sat down at the party in Mark chapter 2 and hang out with the – Hung out with the tax collectors. He got into their midst, he went further and deeper and probed into lives. He wasn’t just in the same geographical space.

So, locality speaks to geographical [08:30] space, I think the next phrase is saying no, it’s even further than that. To therefore, say to us, we need to be more than just in the same geographical area with people. So, it’s hanging out where they hang out, taking on their limitations and struggles. Which means, here’s a-a just a small application of this, it means as you think about where you’re going to minister, one of the essential questions you need to ask is this where I’m comfortable getting into the interior, [09:00] and if it’s not, my suggestion is maybe that’s not where you need to minister.

If you say, ya know that’s – I think there’s a real cultural disparity here, between who I am, what my background is. It’s not to say it can’t work, but given the chose, probably makes a lot of sense to go where you’re more inclined. Now, that’s not saying it will always work that way, God might say, I’m putting you here and you’re going to have to [09:30] learn a whole other cultural context, and that’s okay, because Jesus modeled that.

What all this means is, it’s not flying sorties, dropping occasional tracks, nor aiming a ministry that’s largely attractional. Phrase Frost uses, and he uses the two contrast, attractional versus incarnational.
Attractional is, hey come, we got a great thing going here, we’re going to have free balloons,[10:00] you know, (laughter) free rides, it’s saying no, we’ve got to get into the midst of people.

I was talking to somebody the other day, that was describing his church in the Southeast, huge, huge southern Baptist church. Where they’ve got restaurants, they’ve got golf tournaments, they’ve got, I mean, everything under the sun, you name it, they’ve got it, come. So, the whole ministry’s is largely attractional. Come to us, we’ve got whatever your need is, meet us here,[10:30] which, not to say that that’s all necessarily bad. It is bad, I think, if that’s what you rely on to do ministry. As opposed to saying we can have some of these things, but our ministry is largely incarnational. Because, you see, that gets everybody off the hook. Oh, you know, invite your friends, instead of saying, no, I mean, that’s okay to, but what I want you to do is to get down deep into the lives of people. Who may not [11:00] set foot in a church door, no matter how many attractional things they have.

So, is there a place for attractional? Sure. There can be a great Christmas Eve service and it will tend by the nature of itself to attract a lot of people, if there is a place for it, great. But as I’ve observed and my personal experience, that doesn’t change many people’s lives. If somebody said to me, in all the years that I’ve pastured, how many people can you point to as a result of Easter or Christmas, are disciples[11:30] of Jesus? That I’ve had ministry with, I’d go, boy I-I don’t know. It’s not to say we won’t do those things, but you can’t base your ministry on that and this is what God, as a model of ministry tells us.

Jesus could of fallen into the subtle trap of Mark 1, that I was referring to before the break. Establishing a healing ministry, he could have had a big attractional ministry, right? Could of just put a big sign up [12:00] there, healing, Monday through Friday, eight to five, come you all be healed, we’ll have a great time. But, Jesus kept going out into the midst of the world, as we need to. He was one of us and we must become one of them.

So, Jesus enters into our language forms, he calls them to be fishers of men, he speak their language, we must speak their language,[12:30] a reminder that we must not use code language. We must not as missionaries, commit cultural imperialism, but we become them.

I tell you one of the things, and I try to teach overseas at least once a year, so this year, this summer, I was in India, last year I was in Beirut, it’s one of my goals. I got to get away from America every few months to get my sanity. But, here’s one of the thing that really [13:00] discourages me, a lot of times when I go to churches overseas, it’s like – They look just like church over here. Everything almost, the songs, the announcements even, and this last time I got so frustrated, I just kind of unloaded on the pastor.

Sometimes we just forget, we don’t understand incarnational, it means we get into the culture, into their language, into their forms. You know, when I was in Nigeria, one[13:30] of the great moments for me, in one Nigerian church was dancing. I mean, I’m not a dancer, but I tell you I danced when I was there. You just couldn’t help and it was so refreshing, and so much fun. But, imagine a missionary coming there and going, okay I want to make it clear, right from the start, no dancing in this church. Okay, dancing is, I don’t know where it is in scripture, but you know, we’re not going to do it. You know, and I’m sure they did completely misunderstand incarnational. [14:00] Was there a question?

Man 2: [14:05] In the church, we seem to push ourselves so far away from the culture in effort to kind of sanctify ourselves, kind of like Israel versus the Canaanites and we don’t want to be like those people and it’s pushed use away from the smaller incarnational missions in ministry and I wonder, where is the place for that, if any in the ministry we are going to be doing, I mean, how do you know when to draw a line
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[14:30] between, you know well, I need to be involved in these people lives, where it says, well I need to maintain a… [crosstalk] [14:37]

[crosstalk] [14:37] I wonder if, speaking of the church, if our people were truly incarnational. If we would be less inclined to feel like we need to make the church look a lot like the people when they come. Am I making sense? Let’s see if I can put it another way. And it goes back to attractional ministry, we try to make the church so much like what will accommodate to people that, in fact, it looks a lot like secular life, except it’s got a little God overlay on it. And I wonder if we do that again, because we’re not being incarnational as we should. If we’re truly incarnational and if we’ve built those bridges, built those relationships, such that people really hunger for God, and we lead them to God, and we begin to forge a relationship such that they begin to grow and now they want to come to church. Now they’re ready to come in and enter something that is holy and worshipful.

That’s a little bit like Sally Morganthaler, in her book, “Worship Evangelism”, that says what people really need to see and experience is true worship. Because they can’t then relate that to anything else in their lives, it’s truly radically different. And I wonder sometimes if churches and their seeker orientedness, so accommodate to culture, that people don’t see anything really different than what they – I’ve already experienced, so after a while they leave. Because, yeah, I tried it, it wasn’t anything really different. So, I don’t know if that’s answering the question, if again, if people are truly incarnational in their approach, I don’t think the church has to worry in its gathering to accommodate. It can’t afford to be distinct, as it should be, but not distinct in terms of trying to be irrelevant, in the sense that it speaks a different language, etcetera.

Man 3: [16:30] Christians are so afraid being carnal, that they’re afraid to go out and be incarnational with people, they’re afraid to go out the tax collectors, so to speak.

[16:42] That underscores why the church has to keep as a gatheredness, and a sense of mission of strong discipleship. Because if that doesn’t happen there, and then you’re really promoting incarnational ministry, they will go out and if they’re not strong, they will probably accommodate to and then not be incarnational at all. Good question though.

Ministry, secondly, must be inclusive. Jesus, again as a model for use in ministry, under – You know, demonstrated that, he identified with the poor, the oppressed, the outsiders, but he didn’t ignore the insiders either. But, he identified with the hurting, [17:30] he never identified with one class, but he did focus on the hurting, Mark 2, Mark 5, Mark 7. He did eat with the Pharisees, right? I mean, he did go to their dinners, but he also ate with others, that really offended the Pharisees. What he shows us, is no one is too small and no one is too lost and no one is too outside. Which therefore, says to us as ministers, that we need to approach ministries in the same way, that’s our theology of ministry, no one is too small, no one is too lost, no one to outside.

If we say that then we’re, we’re not modeling Christ, because for him there was no one too small or too outside or too lost. Our message needs to be exclusive in a certain sense; [18:30] we’re declaring Jesus as the only way. The only path to God and yet, our ministry needs to be inclusive.

Thirdly, ministry must be Kingdom focused. I say that because this was the essence of Jesus’ ministry, as far as his message, the substance of his message, the center of his preaching was Kingdom, as it must be ours, Mark 1:38. [19:00]

So, Jesus goes out and he speaks Kingdom language, it’s things like this, the greatest or the least, the smallest is the most significant. What seems most absent is most present. He talks about his Kingdom in

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this kind of language that is giving hope. He did not allow his ministry to be co-opted by other things. Kingdom focused, as our ministry must be Kingdom focused.

Ministry was also subversive, and he gives us that model as our ministry must be subversive. That is, Christ infiltrates the culture, and he deep constructed the religion of this day, and yet he was subversive in his approach. He uses subversive tools, as Eugene Peterson describes them, they are the subversive tools of word and prayer and parables, and these are our tools for ministry. They’re subversive tools, aren’t they?

There is great power in prayer, but on the surface it appears rather harmless, innocent, how many times secular people ask me in a secular context to pray, as if it’s some nice little polite, make us all feel good. I like Eugene Peterson, who one day someone said, hey pastor can you give a little prayer so we can start things off. And Peterson said, at that moment I wanted to stand up and say, there are no little prayers, anyone who prays before the God of the universe takes his life in his hands, he may not come back out alive. I just loved to say that one day, wouldn’t you? I mean wouldn’t you? Any little prayer, just to shock people sometimes, don’t you understand what prayer can do? Prayer can bring a nation to its knees.

Male 3: Can you [inaudible] that?

[inaudible]

Male 3: Working the angles, I think his chapter, Praying by the book. [airplane flies overhead] Jesus comes and he prays, who knows what he prayed, you know there when they woke up, in Mark Chapter 1 and he’s out there in the wilderness praying, but I bet you he was praying prayers that would profoundly changing things that they had no clue it was changing. As a model to us, but how many of us believe that prayer changes anything? It is really one of our most subversive tools and I think we’ve been co-opted by the culture today and we don’t give a whole lot of credence to prayer, because we don’t believe in the power of prayer.

But this was his subversive tool and this other subversive tool was word, which again is something that has great power. Do you believe that? Jeremiah describe the word that way, that has the power to like a rock, shatter the hardness of a heart, that like fire, when held inside will literally explode a person. How many times we look at the word that way? Hey gives us a little word, before we start, you know? Wouldn’t you just like to say it there? Is no little word, you may not come out alive after I read this text. Right, I mean wouldn’t you just like to say that some – Wouldn’t you just like to have the people you minister feel that way about the word of God? These are subversive tools and parables.

Why did Jesus speak in parables? Is it just because he was into narrative preaching? Like story, I mean, this is what people likes, this is what relevant, this is what communicates. No, he spoke in parables because they were subversive language in action. Right? Again, I go back to Eugene Peterson, that says parables were nothing less than ticking time bombs, harmless, nice little; gee that’s a nice little story Jesus, thank you. I don’t have a clue what he’s talking about, but it’s a nice little story, and then they’d walk home and they – All of a sudden, tick, tick, and then it explodes in their hearts and they realize my gosh he was talking about me, which really I think in effective preaching, sometimes, that’s the way it should work too. [laughter] [23:00]
When I know I’ve failed in preaching on Sunday, is when someone comes up to me afterwards and says that was a nice sermon. That’s like the worst thing to say, almost, no, they’re worser things. [giggles] But then I think sometimes, well maybe that’s okay, maybe that’s okay. Let them think it’s nice, let them think it’s nice and then let them drive home, and then maybe if the spirit of God is really working their hearts, which he is if they let him. Maybe suddenly they’ll go, wait a minute, [24:30] that wasn’t so nice. You know, I think I hate him. [laughter] [24:34] Right, isn’t that the way it suppose to be?

We don’t do this to be liked, I mean ministry is not a popularity, if that’s what you think it’s about, you know, boy, you better go to another school, because – Or another career because ministry is not, that’s not what it’s about. Jesus said, we are to be [25:00] like him and Jesus wasn’t necessarily popular. Because he was using the subversive language, words that appeared harmless, the stuff of cloth patches, right? That’s one of my favorite ones, I so, I’m so impressed with that, I never ever really understood it, and I’m not sure I really do, but it’s just right out in the blue, right in the middle of nowhere. Jesus, I just love that, you know. He goes, [25:30] you don’t sew new cloth next to old cloth, because when it gets wet it’s going to rip and tear. I just love that, right out of nowhere. Can you think of anything more mundane? Hey, I got a little sewing tip today; you all know this don’t you? [laughter] [25:48] You know you don’t sew this way.

I think of it like this way, you know you walk in with Jesus, you know and your still trying to figure him out, you’re not sure, people are starting to hate him, you know, he’s getting Pharoses [26:00] ticked off. They don’t know where this guy is going, you’re not sure exactly either, but you’re walking along and all of a sudden he stops and goes, have you ever tried a little oregano when you, maybe sautéed some yellow squash? Okay, I can try that sometime, but you know, this is what he does, right. And then you realize, no, he’s saying something more profound, and he moves and says, well you don’t pour new wine into old wine skins, I mean, because they will burst. Oh, [26:30] okay that’s nice, and then, and then what happens? Suddenly they realize, wait a minute, he-he’s the wine and my gosh, he was insinuating we’re the old wine skins, and he’s say that he can’t fit into our rigid structures because if we truly invite him in, he’ll break us and split us apart.

That’s why the Pharoses hated him, because when he made that statement, in that little parable [27:00] that seems so innocent, he nailed them right there. You know, and he said that right after he had healed the man who’d they’d let down, and they were saying, how dare him offer forgiveness. He goes and he eats with the tax collectors, and they’re going, well how dare he’s there, you know, and they can’t figure him at all – Out at all. And he just gives that little passing, little innocent thought, right, and he moves on and if they put two and two together, [27:30] which I’m sure some of them did, they realize, well this is why we’re having such a hard time, because we’ve become so rigid. We have it all figured it out they way he’s suppose to be, how it’s suppose to work, and he’s come and he’s completely exploded, and that’s the tool of a subversive.

As ministers, in our theology of ministry, and if we’re to be like Jesus, who’s our model for ministry, it means that our essential tools for this work are tools [28:00] that are subversive. You know, it’s not our impressive words, it’s our parents, it’s not, you know, who we know, that’s not going to get us anywhere. What’s going to really get us somewhere is if we take the subversive tools serious. Tools of words, so it would be steep in knowing God’s word, devoted to prayer, then using subversive language, because we have the same task of infiltrating the culture.
That’s why Jesus said [28:30] be what? Be the salt of the earth, what does that mean? Be almost imperceptible. But then, it’s what preserves, it’s what saves; it’s what gives the flavor. Be like the seed working underneath the soil. Nobody can see it, but something really huge is growing.

So, [29:00] here’s some requirements of subversives: first of all, and I just get this from what I’ve just studied in Colossians 4, prayer, Paul wraps up in this great, great book and he’s talking to this truly emergence church, with just emerging in culture, and he comes to Colossians 4:2 and he says, these things. Number one, and you can tell he’s-he’s training them to be subversive, first thing he says is devote yourself to what? [29:30] Devote yourself to prayer, Colossians 4:2. And he says, praying at the same time for us is well, that God may? Open the door. How are these doors going to open? The subversive work of prayer.

Prayer, that prays down the walls, secondly, second requirement of sub-sub – Of a subversive is to be oriented towards lost people. [30:00] So Paul says, walking in wisdom, verse 5, catch this preposition, walking in wisdom toward outsiders. Not away from, like a lot of people are inclined to do, but towards them, so, an orientation towards, infiltration, incarnation; living, eating, working, getting into their lives, so an orientation towards. [30:30]

Thirdly, Godly lives, so Paul says conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders, towards outsiders. And thirdly, that means live lives that reflect Jesus, because that’s what attracts lost people. So, the subversive work of holiness, that’s what people need from us. That’s what attracts the world.

Fourth requirement of a subversive [31:00] is to cease the moment. Because Paul says, conduct yourself, the wisdom toward outsiders, bind out the time, ceasing the moment, grabbing up when it comes. You’ve prayed, the doors opened, grab hold of it, it’s the moment, you don’t know how long it’ll last. So, cease the moment and then verse 6, he says, to speak with words seasoned with grace, answering the questions.

So, the [31:30] fifth requirement of a subversive is to have speached the season, I just love that word there, the season, that’s just textured with grace, that’s salted with grace, that you might be able to and notice what he says, to answer the questions, which means, a subversive anticipates the questions, is prepared for them and then can answer them. I mean, just there, just take one text of scripture Colossians 4:2-6, [32:00] Paul gives, I think, the strategy, the game plan for a subversive. You want to turn the world upside down, you want to impact the world, this is how you do it.

So, Jesus is a subversive word to be a subversive. Fifth ministry must be salvific, because Christ was; Christ came to restore us to union and communion with the Father, each act of ministry, with a ministry of [32:30] reconciliation. And that’s what our work must largely be about, a ministry of reconciliation. How can I touch this life in a way that begins to bring about some reconciliation?

So, I’m in the locker room with a guy the other day, after playing tennis, and this guy starts to open his life, we started to exchange some pleasantries and a statement leads to him open his life and tell me about a failed marriage and immoral behavior and [33:00] stuck in his job for the rest of his life. And there was a person who needed to hear about reconciliation, because his life has been largely about separation. That’s what our ministry’s called to be about. I mean who-who doesn’t want that, right? Who doesn’t want reconciliation? Who loves separation? I don’t know anybody who does.

The ministry must be salvific, and then ministry must [33:30] exemplify God. Jesus again comes to flesh God, flesh out the Father. And Jesus comes to reveal humanity in its fullness, through his love, his relationships, his aim to bring glory to the Father. So, we’re called to the same authentic humanity.
Pervace [phonetic] [33:57], I’m not sure I totally understand what he is [34:00] saying here, I think I do a little bit, but he puts it this way, Jesus’ humanity is not merely to be imitated, Jesus’ humanity is not to be merely imitated, because of his atoning work we’re in this union with him, where we’ve died, we’ve been buried, we’ve risen to new life, we’re hidden in eternity, so in this we live a whole different kind of humanity. [34:30] It’s kind of a wild thought.

See, we think that ministry is part of this thing with God to be like Jesus, and it is to be like Jesus, but it’s more than to be like Jesus. Something happened when we came to Christ, we entered into this union and I don’t understand it and you probably don’t either, I don’t know if any of us understand it. But, we entered into this union in which, I go back to Colossians again, in which he says, when he died, who else died? We died. [35:00] When he was buried, who was buried? We were somehow buried. When he rose, we rose.

In fact, look at Colossians 3:1, he says, if you’ve been raised with Christ then keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Now, catch what he says here, set your mind on things above, not on the [35:30] things that are on earth for, what reason, verse three, for what? You have what? You have died. And then notice what he says, you have died and your life is hidden. What does that mean? You’ve died and your life is hidden. Do you know what that means? I don’t either. But, somehow, it means that I’ve already died and I’ve been buried and I’ve risen and I’m already with him, and yet, I’m [36:00] here. Another words, I’m in such a profound union with Christ, that where he is, I already am, because I’m in union.

So, what does that mean, where am I going with this again? Think about it this way, as ministers, we minister to people and we are not simply trying to imitate Jesus, we in fact are in this union with him, which has profoundly changed our own humanity. I don’t know [36:30] what that means, but it’s all part of this ministry starts with God and I’m in – Not only, he’s not only a model for me, I’m in union with him and it means therefore I’m to live the fullness of humanity.

Last thing I think I put here about Jesus is that ministry must be authoritative. Jesus came with a ministry that exhibited ultimate authority. He cast down [37:00] every idolatress claim to that authority. He cast down every idolatress claim. There’s no power in the world, no regime, no religion, no political authority, no economic order, no worldly dominion that stands above Jesus. Everything and everyone will bow to him. And here’s the thing, [37:30] when you and I came to Christ, we were transferred to that domain and when we signed up to be ministers, we were given what? [inaudible answer in audience] [37:42] We were given that authority.

That’s what Jesus said to the disciples, Mark 3:15, I’ve called you to be with me, I’ve called you to preach the kingdom of God and then what’s the third thing he [38:00] said? Here are the three things about discipleship Jesus said, guys, I’ve called you to be with me that means I want you to stay connected with me. I’ve called you to a task, I’ve called you to preach the kingdom of God, so preach it and I’ve called you thirdly and given you authority over the darkness. Now, was that just for them? Was that just sort of a dispensational thing right then and there for them, but [38:30] doesn’t apply to us? What do you think? You think we have the same authority?

Male 4:[38:40] He says in John, he says [inaudible] [38:44]

[38:44] Yes, wasn’t it in Matthew 28? All authority has been given to me and in a sense he’s passing that on. So, what does that mean? That means again, in-in our theology of ministry that we [39:00] don’t minimize that. I don’t know, frankly, all that that means, but that means we have profound authority, if
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we’re walking with God and we’re doing his ministry, that means we do it in his authority. That means that none of us should ever feel intimidated in this thing called ministry. Yes, at times fearful, but fearful hopefully of God and not of man.

See, I just wonder sometimes, here’s just a little illustration of this, I find it really interesting, [39:30] going back to Mark, that when Jesus gave them the authority over darkness, then they crossed the sea; they’re heading across the sea to the Demoniac. Which is, another again, another great picture of Jesus in incarnationally going-going into the world, going all the way into the depths. And I think he’s modeling that for them, saying here’s where you go, you go to the most desperate of all people.

But, they’re crossing the sea and a storm comes up, you remember that? And what’s Jesus doing? [40:00] He’s sleeping, and meanwhile they’re drowning and they finally wake him up and what does Jesus do? [inaudible talking] [40:11] He rebukes that storm, but who else does he rebuke? [inaudible talking] [40:17] Yes, well what is that about? Did he rebuke him because they should of woken him up earlier? Like, why did you guys wait so late, now I got some water in this stupid boat and I’m getting wet. Is that… [40:30] Why do you think he rebuked them? In fact, he says, oh ye of little faith, something like that. What did he expect them to do? [inaudible talking] [40:41] But that’s not really satisfying I-I would think, so okay Jesus, what are you saying we should just of kind of sat there while this thing is just plummeting, you know, plummeting us to death, and we’re taking on water, and go all right, okay, we’re men of faith, [41:00] we’re going to be strong through this, let’s just not worry.

See I wonder if because it says that it says when Jesus woke he spoke against the storm and uses the same word for casting out demons. You with me, do you know where I’m going?

Man 5: [41:18] So, you’re going back to Mark 3:15 where he said, and you have the authority to cast out demon [inaudible] [41:24]. But he called the 12 and he gave them authority.

[41:27] He used the same word for exercising demons [41:30] to still the storm and I just wonder if, it’s just an interesting thought, but I wonder if Jesus rebukes their lack of faith because he was waiting for one of them to stand up and say to the storm, knock it off. I don’t know, what other reason he would of rebuked them for.

It’s interesting; it just comes out of the context where he gave them authority. Simply saying to you that if we’re to imitate Jesus, if our ministry is [42:00] to be a picture of the Father, if it’s to be a picture of the Son, that part of our ministry – Our theology tells us that we should have an authoritative tone to our ministry. Now does that mean we can still storms, I-I don’t know, I haven’t stilled one lately, I’m not sure if I have that much faith. But, it does mean that I’m guessing there has been times that I could of exercised authority, I bet I didn’t, because I didn’t realize I had it in Christ [42:30] and I let sometimes people intimidate me when I should of stood up and said, you know that’s not of God and that won’t be allowed.

Okay, the last thing here, with one minute left, not to short change the Spirit, but-but the Spirit also comes into play in this Trinitarian model for ministry and the Spirit is the power. Jesus is the model, the Father’s the originator [43:00] of ministry, Jesus models for us what ministry should be, the Spirit is the driving power, that’s clear Pentecost. Because the Spirit came to empower, this is what his coming of Pentecost was all about. His indwelling power of the Spirit of Christ, who empowers us now to be his witnesses, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:11, Acts 4:7-8, [43:30] Ephesians 3:16, now to him, it’s a great way to end class right? Now to him was able to do what? [inaudible talking] [43:41] Exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or think, and that’s when a lot of time we stop, to him who is able to do exceeding more than we ask or even
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can imagine, and then what does he say? [inaudible talking] [43:57] According to, according to [44:00] the power working in us. What is that power? [inaudible talking] [44:07] It’s the Holy Spirit. So, there is Paul saying to the church, you know, you can do far more than you’ve ever imagined or think, but it won’t be in your power, but you do have the power that’s there.

I hope you better understand ministry now, that’s part of our theology. If we-If we know who God is, I think we’ll get a handle [44:30] on what ministry is all about. I’ll see you next week.
Ministry is not grounded in current trends or social sciences or self-actualization. We don’t go to churches or conferences or study trends to figure out ministry. What we’re learning here is that God is the starting point. God invented ministry. Ministry is God actualized, if you will.

It is an act of God. It originates in Him and is shaped by His revelation, and so we don’t introduce our ministry any more than Jesus introduced His ministry. We come as He came to do the Father’s ministry. We got that clear? That’s a very important piece of what we’re starting with.

Ray Anderson, who’s written a book on theology of ministry from Fuller, puts it this way: "God’s ministry becomes the dogma from which all insight and strategy of ministry issues and to which the church must return in every generation to test its own concept of ministry." Now, let me read that again cuz I want you to make sure you hear what he’s saying.

"God’s ministry becomes the dogma—interesting word—becomes the dogma from which all insight and strategy of ministry issues and to which the church must return in every generation to test its own concept of ministry." So, as you get out there and do ministry, what I want to make sure you’re hearing here is that—where do I start when I figure that out if I’m planning a church, if I’m going into an established that’s dead in the water?

Wherever God leads me, if I’m going to be in this counseling ministry, if I’m gonna lead this organization, I have to go back fundamentally to God’s ministry to take my cues. Purvis puts it this way: "The ministry of God is the proper foundation for the practice of ministry." It’s just, I know this is basic stuff, but I’m amazed how many people are doing ministry, and they’re bypassing it. They’re not even asking that question.

"The ministry of God is the proper foundation for the practice of ministry." So, from origin, we then move to talk about identify and ask the question, so who is a minister anyway, and made a case that our essential identity is found in Christ, and He is the one who brought to expression the roots, which I suggested last time go back to the Old Testament. He brought those to full expression.

So, He brings to expression what? The role of the prophet, priest, king and sage. All of those are kind of roots, you might say, that define the ministry of Christ—the person of Christ—and He brings all of them to ultimate expression in His ministry, and the key verse here, again, is John 20:21. As he, in departing from this earth, says—turns and says to the disciples, and I believe in a certain sense turns and says to you and me in ministry, he says, "As the Father has sent me, I’m sending you."

So, in other words, our identity, therefore, is found in Christ. Christ’s identity is found particularly when you go back to the Old Testament. One of the questions that comes up in this whole identity issue is what is the relationship of our identity in ministry to others? We’re still on identity, and I want to finish this up, and I want to raise this question—What I’m asking here in specific is does our identity necessitate a special call?

Okay, we understand what ministry is. We understand our identity. Is that a special call? Are we all called to this, or is it a special call given to some? Howard Chrysostom [phonetic] by the way, answered that question. Well, it’s a special call that’s given to some. I think all of us would say this, and everyone would agree with this statement.
All of us are called, in a broad sense, to Christ, and all of us, in a broad sense, are called to ministry. James White, in his book "Serious Times," has a chapter in which he talks about this, and he makes the point that all of us, in Christ, have two callings. We, first of all, receive our calling to Christ, and secondly, we all receive this calling to ministry.

All of us, in Christ, are called to be vital channels of God’s spirit. All of us are called to take our giftedness and advance His kingdom. All of us are called to be obedient to the general commands of scripture. There are some in particular, I should say, who, understanding this, therefore, would question the validity of a special call that would maybe argue something like this—that we’re all called to be believer priests.

We’re all called to do ministry, and our calling cannot be compared to earlier callings and scripture, for, when we look back in scripture, we see those who were particularly called had maybe a calling that came via supernatural, audible revelations, which are not the norm today, that, when we look back historically, scripturally, we see people who had this decisive calling, but God doesn't work that way, and actually, when you go back, God was raising Israel. God was raising the church, and so He called particular people to do particular ministries, and if one still holds to that today, it tends to lead to this hierarchy—this priestly ministry over here for certain ones and we create this gap between clergy and laity.

That’s one view about ministry. Another view is a more narrow approach that would make the case that some, in Christ, are given a particular call to lead particular ministry that, yes, we all have a general call to Jesus, and we all have a general call to ministry, but God calls some in particular to particular ministry, and this is based on several things. Well, it's based, first of all, if you go back just back to the Old Testament model itself.

While God had a general call to Israel to be a light to the nations, to be a nations of priests—Exodus 19, Verse 6—while, in a sense, there was this general call out of this community, nonetheless, God called certain ones. So, God calls Moses, and there’s the burning bush, and there is Samuel, and Samuel keeps hearing this voice, and he keeps calling and Eli gets—keeps getting woke up and then realizes, no, you’re receiving a call from God, or there’s David, who receives this calling from God from Samuel, or there’s Isaiah that receives this vision in Isaiah 6, where he says, “Send me,” or there's Jeremiah, who, even while he was in the womb, God says, "I called you, and here's the ministry I've called you to. Here’s Jerusalem, and I’ve called you to prepare Israel to leave."

Now, people who would look at this Old Testament model, would also turn to the New Testament and see a similar thing at work—that the disciples are called. Jesus comes, and there they are. Jesus says, "Hey, I’m gonna make you fishers of men. So, drop your nets and follow me," and they do, and then Mark, Chapter 3, Versus 15 through 17—he calls certain ones up to the mountainside, and he gives them a commission of ministry, and they become the foundation of the church—Ephesians 2, Verse 20—and we can look at this as it’s modeled by Paul, who was called—Acts Chapter 9—and Paul refers, from time to time, back to his call—Acts 26:19, Galatians 115, First Timothy 112, Second Timothy 19.

Here, Paul says—and, actually, if I go back to First Timothy 1:12, "I thank Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer," and so Paul, in both Chapters, to Timothy, refers back to his particular call from God, and you see, in Acts Chapter 6, some who were called in particular to a ministry of word and prayer, or you might turn to Ephesians 4:11, where it says, "And God has given gifted leaders." So, we see
these Old Testament models, these New Testament models, and then we go to the early church, [10:00] and some, anyway, in the early church, went so far as to see the bishop as a successor to the apostle.

There was this ordination that began to take place to ensure an apostolic succession that maybe found its inspiration in, for example, number 27, Verse 23, where Moses selects his successor in Joshua and has him [10:30] set apart by a priestly act, and such names as Chrysostom as we saw or Gregory, who believed God ordained some, which sets then a minister apart to a high and holy calling—a calling that some defined in such huge terms that, as we mentioned, it sometimes scared people off, and people would run from their ordination, and we saw that last week with Gregory. [11:00] A couple times, when I’ve led an ordination service, I love to go back to the one story.

I think of a guy named Amonious [11:06] [phonetic] who I think I may have mentioned, who was so fearful or ordination of the call because of what it entailed and what it required that he took a pair of scissors and cut off his ear because he took literally that passage going back to the Old Testament priest that there should be no defect. I mean, people would go to extreme, [11:30] but in all of these, we see a call that tends to be decisive. Maybe sometimes, it comes over a period of time and comes with this conviction that God’s ministers do not select their vocation.

It’s selected by God. God calls them, and when I go back to read some older pastoral theologians, I read a guy like Jowett—J. H. Jowett—in his Yale lectures, who declared to the students [12:00] that one must have the assurance that the selection has been imperatively constrained by the eternal God. Unless you have it, you can’t be in ministry. He went on to say, "One’s personal experience of that call will not be normative, for the experience of God’s call is as varied as there are people."

In other words, in a room right here, if we all talk about our call to ministry, it—probably all of us have a different story. "God’s constraint may be as soft and [12:30] gentle as a glance"—that’s how he describes it —"or it may seize us with a strong and invisible grip where necessity is laid upon us, where we realize we can do nothing else. Nonetheless," as he puts it, "the call of the Eternal must ring through the rooms of his soul as clearly as the sound of the morning-bell rings through the valleys of Switzerland, calling the pheasants to early prayer and praise. The candidate must move like a person in secret bonds."

[13:00] Was that your experience? Maybe for some it is, and there’s the tension I find. Different people, when I, you know, probe a little bit about your calling to ministry, I will hear everything from, well, I don’t notice [13:18] [phonetic] if I have any more special call than anyone else in [13:21] [phonetic] Christ. We’re all called to ministry. Two—I believe that, like a third call, I was called to Christ. [13:30] I was called to ministry, but then God put his hand on me in a very confirming way and has called me to particular ministry.

I suspect in this room—I’m just guessing—that we are probably somewhere in all of that, from way over here to way over here to somewhere in the middle kind of saying, "I’m not sure. I’m not sure if I should be looking for something—anything different than what I already am—or maybe [14:00] I’m here in seminary preparing and God’s gonna somewhere lay a call on my life. Now, there’s some who would say a call is necessary, and the reason is is because, in those dark nights of the soul, it’s your call that will get you through the night.

Without this sense of calling from God when you go through that dark night of the soul, you’ll start to believe those voices that say, "Well, who are you to be doing ministry? I mean, who are you to be [14:30] anything that special," and you may say, "Well, maybe I’m not called to this thing," and I’ve read enough, particularly in pastoral ministry who would say, unless you have a strong sense of call in your life, don’t
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go into ministry because it’s the call that will get you through, and I think we’d build our argument perhaps on the apostle Paul, who—it was probably in the dark nights of his soul—it was going back to the road on the way to Damascus [15:00] that got him through. o, who’s right? Who’s right, class?

Audience Member: [15:06] [15:07] [inaudible]


[15:35] God will call us according to the way we will answer. Now, how many understand what that means?

Audience Member: [15:41] Because there is such a [15:42] [inaudible]

[15:46] Was Moses scared?

Audience Member: [15:49] I [15:49] [inaudible]

[15:51] Okay, so, how we react wouldn’t necessarily define what God’s call would be.

Audience Member: [15:55] Yes, [15:55] [inaudible]

[16:00] You see, I’m just raising the question because, as we develop a theology of ministry, and we’re talking about identity right now, it’s a fair question to ask. Should those who are ministers in ministry—it’s hard to say even that, isn’t it, because we’re all in ministry, but are there those that are set apart for ministry who, by set apart for ministry, should, therefore, have a sense of call in their life. That’s the question. Yup...

Audience Member: [16:30] One of the things I think about is [16:32] [inaudible] all [16:34] [inaudible] Christ and be confirmed by apostles and [16:38] [inaudible] church perform [16:38] [phonetic] this [16:40] [inaudible] set aside for special ministry [16:43] [inaudible] elders. They have a special rule [crosstalk] special ministry, and so, I see this idea of certain people being set apart for certain [16:53] [inaudible] but it also seems to occur a lot of times [16:56] [inaudible] and it seems like today sometimes [17:00] [inaudible] realistic [17:01] [phonetic] that [17:02] [inaudible] don’t have much of that element [17:04] [inaudible] individual people have [17:09] [inaudible] but I—I wonder if it’s missing a component [17:12] [inaudible] the body of [17:14] [inaudible] calling you [17:16] [inaudible] teaching [17:18] [inaudible]

[17:19] And we do have that aspect where there is a strong position that somewhere in that whole task, there should be a confirmation of the community of the call. [17:30] A community may not get [17:31] [phonetic] the call, but the community should somewhere verify that call and if there’s not a sense of a community verifying the call, then one again could question the call. Paul...

Paul: [17:43] [inaudible] hearing you say [17:45] [inaudible] this—this always rides [17:49] [phonetic] on what that [17:50] [inaudible]

[17:51] Right. Well, I know. You’re rai—you’re raising a very good question because we say okay. Well, we go back to scripture, and [18:00] scripture is the evidence of God calling people all the way through from Genesis all the way to Revelation, but the model in almost all of those is maybe an audible voice. Should
that be, therefore, the Litmus Test today, or we might say, well, no, God works in different ways, and it's more a sense of calling, but, again, what does that mean?

Indigestion can lead to a sense of something. It's hard to define. [18:30] I know, in talking to a number of people, they will tell me about their call, and when I probe—well, God's called me. I'll say, well, did he speak—I mean, were you like [18:37] [inaudible] you know, down by the rock and you heard—I mean—God just—and a lot of times, I think there'll be no—I would not be honest if I were to go that far, but there is something of God saying something to my spirit that has been confirmed by my passions and by my [19:00] congregation let's say.

Audience Member: [19:00] [inaudible]

[19:02] When I hear it generally put that way, it's the closest I think that—to make sense if you take this position. Yes—

Audience Member: [19:12] [inaudible] never really [19:15] [inaudible] that God was speaking and we don't have these records [19:18] [inaudible] and really [19:20] [inaudible] around on whether or not God was really calling him or not.

[19:23] Or called into a counseling ministry or called in—yeah—

Audience Member: [19:26] [inaudible] people avoid [19:30] getting involved when they should be because they'll say, "I wasn't called."

[19:37] The question is is the community the initiator or the conf—or the confirmation of the call? There are a lot who would say, well, the community acts as the confirmation but not the initiator.

Audience Member: [19:50] Some people, depending on [19:53] [inaudible] really need a special [19:57] [inaudible] figured [20:00] [phonetic] it's almost as though they have such a—a [20:03] [inaudible] they do just [20:06] [phonetic] wanted [20:05] [phonetic] run from ministry [20:07] [inaudible] special [20:11] [inaudible]

[20:13] Yes, there are some voices that would say it's vital and it's necessary for anyone because everyone will go through those dark nights. Everyone will be challenged from time to time, and everyone will be questioned, and it's that call that gets you through. [20:30] Let me read a couple more statements. This comes from Griffith Thomas to his students at Oxford. "The call and the consciousness of God are essential to a person at the outset of ministry. Unless one has it, one had better not start out. Unless one has an intense desire, a convergence of circumstances, a giftedness, a training and an affirmation of others, one should not pursue ministry."

Audience Member: [20:57] If that's [20:58] [inaudible] that he just said—[21:00] a strong desire, a giftedness, a training, an affirmation—

[21:05] Right, those all would go into [crosstalk] what a call is.

Audience Member: [21:07] [crosstalk] a whole [crosstalk] [21:09] [inaudible] that's much different, even from the onset of [21:13] [inaudible] which would seem to be, if you're not hearing voices from God, then get out.


Audience Member: [21:20] Well, I'm just saying I can resonate with his description [21:23] [inaudible] some of our [21:23] [inaudible]
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[21:24] But I think most of that part is what comes after the call n—nonetheless.

Audience Member: [21:30] Oh, okay. I thought that was the definition of a calling.

[21:34] That second part is what comes after the call that then act more as a confirmation. Let me read you Thomas Oden. He says, "The sacred ministry is not to be affirmed in such a way that the ministry of [21:47] [phonetic] the laity is neglected or denied but affirmed and enhanced.

On the other hand, the general ministry of the whole church is not to be asserted in such a way that [22:00] the ordained ministry is disenfranchised or diminished." Okay, now, I'll read again. Now, listen to the balance he's trying to make here. "The sacred ministry is not to be affirmed in such a way that the ministry of [22:14] the laity is neglected or denied.

So, let's say you take the position that if one sh—is going to go into ministry, in special ministry there should be a calling, but it should be done in such a way that [22:30] the general laity is not made to feel like, well, if they don't have a call, they shouldn't do anything. "On the other hand, the general ministry of the whole church is not to be asserted in such a way that the ordained ministry is disenfranchised or diminished," or here's Will Willimon who puts it this way: "Damage is done to the unique quality of the ministry vocation when it is co"—he uses the word conflated or combined with the vocation of all [23:00] Christians to follow Jesus.

Okay, did you catch that? "Damage is done to the unique quality of the ministry vocation when it is combined—with the vocation of all Christians to follow Jesus." I'm not gonna give you any clear answer because I'm not sure there is a clear answer. I've kinda lived in the tension of two things—that there's this call to all of us to do ministry, [23:30] and I think as I've gotten along the way in ministry, I've come more and more to be convinced that I believe there also is some sense—some calling—of ministry that we all need to have to do ministry that may be different from a general calling.

Where do I see it in the text? Probably where I see it more is like, for example, just preaching through Colossians, and I see in Colossians 3:16, where he says, "Let the word of Christ"—[24:00] how does he put is here? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Yes, keep going.

Audience Member: [24:07] "In all wisdom; teaching and [crosstalk] admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

[24:08] Admonishing—yeah and in that verse, I see the whole body, in a certain sense, has a responsibility to come with a word with teaching admonition. It's not just one person. There is a community. We're all called, in a [24:30] certain sense, to be preachers.

Are you with me? We're all called to this ministry of word is what Paul says in Colossians 3:16 in a chapter in which he's writing to the body of Christ to be the body of Christ, but then, I'll most to chapter four. He says [24:49] [inaudible] "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you've received in the Lord that you may fulfill it."

Now, I don't want to read too much into that cuz I don't know who Archippus is, but it's like Paul is [25:00] singling out someone who's received a calling to do particular ministry, and he says, "Hey, tell this guy to get to the finish line. Fulfill the ministry that God has given it." He seems to make a distinction there while the—at the same time speaks to the community, and where I think maybe I've landed is a statement Oden makes in his book on pastoral theology when he s—he puts it this way. Now—now listen to what he says.
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[25:30] "There remains a line as thin as a hair but as hard as a diamond between ordained ministry and a faithful lay person." "There remains a line as thin as a hair." What does he mean by thin as a hair? What's he saying? He almost can't see the distinction. "But [26:00] as hard as a diamond." What's he mean? It's there.

It's there and you can't erase it. You can't dissolve it. It's there just hard as a diamond between ordained ministry and a faithful lay person. Now, I don't know if you like that statement. That kind of resonates with me because it seems to say that ministry is something distinct and yet, not so distinct [26:30] that there is this clergy laity gap that tends to emerge when it goes off too far. Oden is just trying to preserve and protect us from in our calling to ministry of creating a gap between clergy and laity, but at the same time, he is also underscoring that there is a distinction that you're here training for [27:00] ministry, and there's something that maybe is uniquely happening that God has set you apart to do ministry.

That may not be formed in your minds right now, just like it wasn't in mine when I went to seminary. As I've shared, I had a sense of a calling, I believe, when a man invited me to consider going into ministry and I couldn't shake it, even though I was on a complete different career track, but when I came to seminary, I had this sense of [27:30] calling, and this is what I told people when people would say, "Well, why didn't you go to the Air Force Academy?" Because I believe I've been called by God to do ministry, but I didn't know what that was, and as I've shared with you, when I came to seminary, the last thing I wanted to be was a pastor.

I was with my dad this weekend, and we were driving to the coast and just having a long talk, and I was asking him about my grandfather who was a pastor, and I said, "You know, Dad, I love my grandfather, but I absolutely had no desire [28:00] to be like him," to which my Dad said, "Well, I didn't either," and my dad rebelled. My grandfather was a stern, old Baptist pastor, and my dad, when he was 16, ran away from home and wanted nothing to do with God or my grandfather for years, and then they, thankfully, kinda came back together at the end, but there was nothing in his life I—made me aspire to pastoral ministry, and yet, [28:30] I've done it for 23 years now, and I believe I am called to this task, but I can't explain it, except this sense from God that was gradual, and I guess that's the point I want to make.

Some of you may say, "Well, I don't have this decisive moment." Well, I think a lot of people don't have a decisive moment. It is a large moment, if that oxymoron makes any sense, to which you come and to [29:00] which I would say—and I'll close with this and we'll take a break—that you gotta have, if you're going to survive in ministry because you, like me, will all go through deep, deep moments of doubts in which you will say, "What in the world am I doing," and some of those will be just your own depression. Some of them will be very overt satanic attacks, and believe me, they will come, and the satanic attacks [29:30] will not so much move in the area of doubt.

It will be more of an accusatory kind of statement that will say, "You don't deserve to be in ministry. You don't belong in ministry. You have no place in ministry. You have nothing to say." In fact, for those in a preaching ministry, I will suggest that count on at least maybe once a month, you'll be right in the middle of preaching and have a strong, powerful sense from the darkness that [30:00] you have absolutely nothing to say, and you should sit down right now.

Those are the kind of things that play on you, go through you. So, thinking theologically about ministry, is there a place for call? Well, I certainly see examples in scripture, and I don't know as if that has measurably shifted, except maybe the auditory nature of it, if that makes any sense at all. [30:30] On that note of confusion, let's take a ten-minute break.
The ministry—it can be—it doesn’t have to be a church. It can be a lot of different ministries out there, but I want you to think about one that has, at times, just captured your imagination, and—and you’d like to say, "I’d like to know what’s the—what’s the philosophy behind that? What’s driving that?"

If they don’t have one, then look for something else. [31:00] Don’t try to create it, but sometime, if you want—I may have mentioned this—go on Google and just type “philosophy of ministry,” and you’ll get all kinds of philosophies that’ll come up. At least it’ll give you kind of a rough idea of what I’m looking for, like—what’s his name—Southern California—that’s got churches—cavalry [31:22] [phonetic] chapel—there’s like ten—yeah, Chuck’s Myth [31:26] [phonetic] He’s got like a ten-page philosophy of ministry—[31:30] something like that that’s kind of interesting, who’s doing kind of unique ministry.

Willow Creek—I mean, those are obvious ones. Pick a ministry that fascinates you. I’m gonna try to encourage you to not double up so that if somebody picks one, I’m gonna encourage you to go a different direction, so we can hear different ones. Heather—

Heather: [31:51] [inaudible] turns out to be something that fascinates us, rather than something [31:54] [inaudible]

[31:57] The nature of the assignment is to [32:00] critique it, and I’m hoping that this course will enable you to do that—taking what we’re learning and saying, “Okay, so how would I evaluate that ministry in light of what I’m learning about my own theology of ministry?” Let’s shift gears and talk about the nature of ministry. In a theology of ministry, we’re wrestling with various questions.

What’s the relationship of theology to ministry, which we’ve talking about? What’s [32:30] the origin—the essential model? Who am I as minister? Is there a calling I should expect? These are the kind of theology questions, and here is another one: What is the essence—the nature of ministry itself?

As we come to grips with these questions, they will shape our ministry practice—should anyway. So, I want to talk about the nature of ministry, and I’m gonna answer this with two parts. [33:00] Now, we’re in ministry. We’re talking about ministry, and you say, "I've given my life to ministry," and someone says, "Well, what is ministry?" and you might say, "Well, an obvious place to start is with the nature of the term itself—ministry—which comes from Greek term we find—Diaconis.

We look at ministry, and we say ministry, therefore, is—first of all, is service. That’s the very nature of the term, and [33:30] it’s seen in the model of Christ because his ministry, you could say, was defined in its essence as service. He came to serve. He came to serve who? "He came, not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many"—Mark 10:45—right—but he came to serve who?

Audience Member: [33:56] Primary motivation was to serve God.

[33:59] Yes, he came [34:00] to serve the Father. So, that’s the essence of the service, and he passes that mandate onto us as future ministers—John 13—where he begins to teach the disciples about service. So, ministry in its essence is service modeled by Jesus, and that service is serving who again? Serving the Father, [34:30] right? So, when someone asks you, "So, what—what is this thing called ministry? Well, it's—it's service.

Well, who are you serving? I’m serving the Father. It is a service that is defined by the very nature of the term Diaconis—Diaconia I should say—a word that was used in—in New Testament culture to describe the menial and the mundane. It’s important to understand that.
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So, what God does is he lifts this terms called ministry and says, "This is what I'm calling you to."
and he takes a Greek term that was originally used to describe those who waited on tables, and we're not
talking about people working at the Chard [phonetic] House—headwaiters making some pretty
good bucks. In this culture, people who waited on tables were—were the slaves, and so this is the nature
of the term, but over time, was employed as the central term to describe the chief activity of the
church.

I realize that we're probably going, "Well, this isn't anything profound," and it isn't, except for—that every
now and then, in some of our painful moments of ministry, we're gonna have to be reminded of this. I am
what? I am a minister, which means I am—I am a servant because sometimes, it will the menial and the
mundane that we will do, and you will find yourself, as at times I've found myself, helping a
divorced person move in the middle of a really bad situation thinking, "What am I doing," but realizing
this is part of this task.

Paul tells Timothy, "Fulfill your Diaconia," as he said to Archippus, Second Timothy 4, Verse 5. It's
what we're called to equip the saints to do. God gives gifted people to equip saints to do what he calls the
Airgone [phonetic] of Diaconia—the work—the energy—the work of ministry. God gives gifted
people—you, me—this work of equipping saints for what purpose? [inaudible] servants.

Well, that's what the church is all about. We're training—we're equipping people to this great work called
ministry or service. So, as I think I've got there in a quote from Oden, he says, "Diaconia is an essential
layer of every theory, every grade or proper definition of ministry. No ministry can properly abandon the
role of Diaconia."

Now, what does that imply? It implies a couple things that I've got listed there. The first one is
submission. Diaconis, a minister, is one who by choice and position has come under the authority of a
master. That's the nature of this thing. In other words, our goal is not to achieve our personal goals and
ambitions.

When we go into ministry, we have signed up to be under the submission of a master, taking
whatever piece God gives us and submitting to God and to that work as an artist submits to his or her
materials and does what he or she does with the materials that have been given to him or her, and that's
what ministry is about. We submit to this task, and sometimes that's hard.

Sometimes we say, "God, what am I here for? Why did you put me here?" "Because I'm the master and
you are the servant, and I'm teaching you service." So, as I tell people sometimes, my ten years in my first
church, I screamed and cried often, went on long walks every vacation, would go for long walks in the
wood—woods and go, "Why? Why, God?" "Because I'm teaching you something about Diaconia—
ministry." It's about service, and still, I mean, that's not some—a lesson anyone learns in this life.

We are in ministry to be useful for God in such a way that his glory is enhanced, right? We're in ministry
simply to be useful for God in such a way that his glory is enhanced—increased. I like how Eugene Peterson puts it. "The task is not to get God to do something we think needs to be done but to become aware of what God is doing and get in line with it." "The task is not to get God to do something we think needs to be done but to become aware of what God is doing and get in step with it and take delight in it."

So, Paul, Colossians 1:25 through 28—"Of this church, I was made a"—what—"a servant—a Diaconis—a
minister according to the stewardship of God he bestowed on me for your benefit that I might fully carry
out the ministry of the word, and so we proclaim him in admonishing every person, teaching
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every person with all wisdom that we may present every person complete in Christ.” Paul says, "Here's my task. This is my calling. This is what I do. It comes from God. I'm simply the servant carrying out, fulfilling the Father's will.”

So, ministry is about submission. Secondly, ministry's about humility. Ministry is not about rank, as Jesus often had to tell the disciples. So, Jesus, by the way, every time you keep speaking about the cross and, you know, things are not gonna look good, just kinda curious, like, where we at here right now. Okay, like, who's gonna be in charge of who? I mean, I—I'd just like to know that. This thing is all culminating. It means the world's coming to an end, and you're gonna set up your kingdom. I'd just like to know, like, am I gonna be the minister of defense or secretary of state? Just would really—if you don't mind, just like to kinda have a heads up so I can start preparing.

[41:00] Jesus would get this question often cuz they didn't get it—that ministry is not about rank or position. A minister's goal is not to enlarge his or her spheres of influence. Do you think we need to hear this today? A minister's goal is not to enlarge his or her spheres of influence but to magnify Christ's influence.

The very nature—the very essence of ministry going back to the very essence of the term itself repudiates any notion of self-exultation or self-centeredness. Paul would go back to the metaphors at times to underscore this. I'm just a, you know—I'm just a broken clay pot. I'm just—that's all I am.

In all of this, what we're underscoring is that ministry is not about dominance. It's not about control. It's not about power wielding, coercion. It's not about using position to appear busy or important cuz we like that, don't we? I mean, sometimes people come up to me and go, "I—I know you're really busy." Actually, I'm thinking a lot of times that's right. I am busy. I got a real fools [42:52] [phonetic] calendar, you know, and that's not what a minister is.

[43:00] "It's not about appearing busy or important. It's about service, and the key words start with humility. Ministry is paradoxically a leadership role, yet serves by patiently facilitating the nurture and growth of the soul." So, I've given you a quote there by Torrance you can read in which he—his conclusion is, "The church needs a massive recovery of authentic Diaconia if it's to hold forth the image of Christ before mankind and is to minister the mercy of God to the needs of men and the root of their evil and in the real sting of their misery."

Okay, so we understand, first of all, what ministry is in its essence. It's what? It's service. It's the essential nature so that if you start to move away from service or servanthood in your ministry, then just realize you're moving away from ministry. You're starting to do something else. It's not ministry. It's—whatever it is, it's something else. The adversary will temp us to self-importance, to all kinds of things. Here's the second thing. Ministry is participation. First of all, let me go back. Any question on service?

Audience Member: [44:26] You said that it's not about [44:28] [inaudible]

[44:30] Mm hm, yeah, I think it's attention, but as long as you're keeping clear in your own mind and clear, hopefully, in those that you're leading, who this is about, what this is about—this is about Christ. It's about his ministry. It's not about me and my reputation. It think that's where, you know, it gets confused.

Let's talk about thin participation. [45:00] When we talk about participation, we're talking about participation with Christ. The essence of ministry is that we're doing something in this union with Christ.
Now, listen carefully to what I’m gonna say here. We are in union with Christ, right? When we come to Christ, we enter into this union—this mystical union.

Paul uses the phrase “in Christ”—I forget—like, [45:30] 184 times or something like that because he was profoundly moved by this union we all share and in Christ—a union that is joined through the work of the Holy Spirit. Here’s what you need to understand—we all need to understand. In this union, we are, therefore, in ministry, not nearly imitating Christ.

Make sure you write this down. We are not merely imitating Christ, [46:00] and we are not merely being obedient to our calling. The essence of ministry is that we are participating with him. It is a union joined through the work of the spirit in which we are not merely imitating Jesus. When we do ministry, we’re not just saying, “Well, I’m trying to follow and do what Jesus did,” nor is it, [46:30] ”I’m just trying to be faithful to what God’s called me to do.

It’s something far deeper than that. The very essence of ministry is I’m participating with Christ because I’m in this—this union that goes way beyond my ability to understand that when I enter into ministry, so to speak, I’m entering into a union into Christ’s ministry. This is not my ministry. I’m in union with him, participating with him.

A few [47:00] passages of scripture that underscore this Act 17:28—“For in Him we live, and we move, and we exist,” or another passage is Galatians 2:20—’I’ve been crucified with Christ. It’s no longer I who live, but Christ lives with me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith and the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up from me,’’ or Colossians 3:3—“For you [47:30] have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God,” which I’ve shared before this verse. It goes way beyond anything I can understand.

Somehow, in this union with Christ, when I enter into a relationship with Christ, I enter into a union in which, as he died, I died. As he was buried, I was buried. As he rose from the grave, I rose from the grave. As he is in heaven, I’m already in heaven. [48:00] That’s union. There’s sort of an already and not yet. It’s already happened, and yet, it’s not yet happened. There’s a tension, and so, therefore, what Christ is doing, I’m doing.

I’m in union with him. When I came into ministry, I, so to speak, signed up with him in this union to do ministry, and so, therefore, it would have some implications, like making sure that I’m [48:30] in step with what he’s doing. You see what I’m trying to get at? Ministry is not our ministry, and it’s not just something we’re trying to emulate or be obedient to. It’s actually his ministry that I’m in union with, and I’m doing it with him.

In a certain sense, for example, Christ is pastoring Village Baptist Church. I just happen to be in union with him, and so I’m there with him doing it. I don’t understand that, [49:00] except I have to understand that in a certain sense because if I really understand that, then what does that—what’s the implication? I mean, go ahead. There’s no right or wrong answer, but what’s the implication if that’s true? Ministry is participation in this union. What would that suggest?

Audience Member: [49:20] [inaudible]

[49:24] Yes, right. What else?

Audience Member: [49:28] [inaudible] regardless [49:31] [inaudible]

[49:33] Yes but get in step with what he’s doing, yeah.
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Audience Member: [49:36] [inaudible] that he must be in union with Christ [49:39] [phonetic]

[49:40] Yes, one of the certain im—implications is waking up each day in ministry and saying, "I gotta figure out what He's doing," right? What is He doing? I might—I gotta make sure I'm in step with that—I'm in this union with Him. So, ministry, in its very essence, [50:00] is a participation so that in this union, his father is our father. His ministry is our ministry. So, for example, what does scripture tell us about Christ's present ministry? What is doing right now?

Audience Member: [50:15] [inaudible]

[50:16] He's doing this work of intersession Hebrews—what—7 tells us, which suggests that, if we're in union with him, then we too are intercessors. If we're not praying over our ministry in [50:30] profound ways, we're probably—not probably—we're out of step. We're not engaged in what He's doing. He is speaking.

Is He still speaking today? I think He's speaking all the time. The very nature of God is revelatory. I mean, part of the essence of—of Him is that He is word. Jesus comes as simply living word. Scripture is written word. It's all [51:00] word, right? If we're in union with Him, our ministry is largely revelatory. It's the very nature of ministry so that something of a thus say it the Lord should be flowing out of us.

His ministry is prophetic, therefore, our ministry is prophetic. His ministry priestly, therefore, our ministry is priestly and sagely and kingly, and without this union, if there is not this union, [51:30] then ministry is cast adrift to become something else. It becomes something else of our own invention.

So, when somebody comes along and says, "Say, hey, so what kind of—what ministry you guys doing these days," well, actually, that's not a very good question, is it? The question is what? What is God up to, and I get these from Purvis from h—from another book he's written that's helped me to think this through. [52:00] Let me just start with the first one, and then, I think this is all we're gonna have time for with our five minutes left or so.

Ministry is a participation is what? It's a participation in word. Christ ministry was, in essence, a ministry of word, and so, in our union, our ministry, in essence, is a—is a ministry of word. There should be something of thus say it the Lord [52:30] that kind of flows out of us. If we call this thing ministry, if we believe we're in ministry, which means we're in this union participating with his ministry, something of God's word should be flowing out of us.

People should not be so enamored with us, our teachings but just that they are hearing God through us, and we do this why? Because his word ultimately interprets and heals [53:00] the human condition. I mean, we want to be this. It's not like, oh, okay, this is a burden. No, if left to us, our own words, we're not gonna do much.

We want our ministry to be his word because His word is what interprets what gets down to the kernel, to real issue, to the motives, to the heart, and then, it's His word that is, alone, able to heal the heart. You all believe that, don't you? I just wondered how many of my colleagues really today [53:30] believe that because it's so rare to find real ministry from the pulpit.

It's really word center, or maybe sometimes, even in a counseling office or in a lot of things, it is the word that travels into territory where psychology and every other discipline cannot go, into the mystery of the human condition, and our essential task as ministers is to move the [54:00] conversation into the ground of the word of God. For example, I've got a—a woman who comes to me recently and she says, "Now, I just want you to know that I've really given my life to Christ, and I really want to follow him, but I want
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to get out of my marriage," and because she feels nothing anymore for him and sh—and he feels nothing anymore for her and it’s just a dead end, it’s going nowhere.

I know a lot can be said and it—and—and—and there’s a lot of things that need to [54:30] be explored, but ultimately, in all of that, my ministry involves ministering word. Okay, so, ultimately, what does God say about this? No matter how difficult it may be to hear, it can’t be grounded on one’s feelings, for that would be to cast people back upon themselves when they need to cast themselves on Jesus, who comes as the living word of God. [55:00] Ministry, in its essence, is participation with Christ in this ministry of word whereby He is speaking and we become the physical voice.

We are the instrument of word. Now, don’t misunderstand me. It’s not like, well, so, really essential counseling is just, you know—is just quote a lot of versus of scripture. [55:30] That’s all you need. It’s certainly a lot more involved than that, but ultimately, there has to be word in this exchange.

Just as in the pulpit, there ultimately has to be word, not our word but God’s free and gracious address coming forth an authority and power and grace. One writer put it this way—"It is a word entirely of its own order, and it's never in our [56:00] power to speak it. It is a word which, in its own power and majesty, stands against all other words. It is the antithesis of human capacity. There is not a word lying latently with a person to be drawn out."

I mean, that’s the conviction you come to. It’s not, you know—people just need to hear really deep inside of me what my most profound thought is. What they really need is they need to hear God, [56:30] and I just need to make sure that I’m the instrument to—to let it speak.

Okay, so, let me sum up. Ministry is, in its essence—it is, first of all, what? It is service. Secondly, in its very essence, it is what? It is participation. Participation—it’s speaking about what?

Audience Member: [56:55] [inaudible]

[56:56] About union—union with Christ—[57:00] a participation that begins with participation in word—I hope we’re all realizing this is theo—this is the theology of ministry that’s gotta guide our ministry. We’ll figure out methodology, but if we don’t start here, we’re gonna get it all messed up. Okay, have a great week.
When you teach a course for the first time, you’re doing a lot of formative thinking as you’re going along. In this course I’m doing that and I was thinking about this, this whole missional subject now today that, that really is an important philosophical question for you when you are going to go out there and do ministry, that… what’s going to drive you in terms of your philosophy of mission? Hopefully that’s based on a firm Scriptural [00:47] foundation, a good theological foundation.

I think in this area in particular, it’s going to be good that you do some really good, fresh thinking. Just as we read from Buce [phonetics] this a moment ago, this pendulum tends to swing between evangelism over here, edification over here, one generation tends to eclipse the one. What I want to do is just to go over some basic theology. Some of it is probably [01:17] things you already know and understand but it’s just good to underscore this and then let’s talk about it a little bit.

When I think of missional, I think of okay, what’s your theology here in terms of mission? I can’t get pass the word itself. Missional implies that first of all, whatever we do in ministry out there is intentional as opposed to something that is static to say that missional is to imply something, right? [01:47] Implies movement. In fact missional is I think a fairly popular term right now out there. We’re a missional church versus what? Institutional church which when you hear that on the surface, it implies we’re doing something you’re not. We’re a movement and you’re something else. It underscores that at the heart of ministry is something about purpose, [02:17] intention. It is saying that we’re to be deliberate. The fact that we are called to mission, as ministers we’ve been given a mission implies this that we are not here to mark time but to be deliberate in everything that we do. It goes back to the fact that we have been called, we have been given a co-mission.

A theologian that used to teach up at Region [phonetics], he died some years ago, Cloud Spockneil [phonetics] [02:47] has got this little book. He wrote just a couple of little small books. They’re just little weighty gems that I keep in my library and I go back to them from time to time. Here’s a wonderful chapter in one of them and I can’t remember the title. It’s got “Gospel” in the title. It’s a whole chapter devoted to commission, the gift of commission and I liked reading that chapter every now [sneezing] and again cause I liked to remind my people often that I preached to that [03:17] we all in Christ have been given the gift of salvation but we also, in that act, been given the gift of commission. Gift of commission means that we’ve all been called to a purpose; we’ve all been given in one sense a calling. We have a first calling when we come to Christ and a second calling when Christ calls us to do something with our lives.

So as I was preaching this weekend for example, Nehemiah. It is clear [03:47] that here is the governmental figure who’s a… who’s out there you know, in secular work. He’s not a part of the clergy but he receives a commission of sorts from God and it starts very subtle like it does in all of us here but it builds, it bruise, it forms inside and then it takes shape. It starts with discontent that moves to more and more certainty that God is calling them to something big, [04:17] something important. It’s that whole thing of mission.

So first of all, when we talk about the mission of ministry, we are reminded that ministry by its very nature is moving. It is not static. I just know that I am not prolonging it but it’s because I want it to etch inside of you because if you’re going into the ministry, it means you’re part of a movement and I’m saying that because a lot of ministries are not movement. They are static; they’re just drifting; they’re just [04:47] lying there.
In your philosophy of ministry, the first thing you want to say is, “I am part of a movement. I have been called to a mission” and God spells out what that mission is. So therefore it doesn’t mean, I just hang around and drift around. Yes?

Male speaker 2: [05:07] You said that there are two callings. Do you see that there being overlapping those or you’re saying that they’re distinct?

[05:17] They’re distinct in the sense that God called me to Himself when I was 16 and whether I realized it or not, I was also called to be a minister in the broad sense. At that time, I was thinking largely about myself and didn’t think about that but I began to get that more and more. If there’s a third calling so to speak where we talked a lot, a little bit in courses that maybe that calling actually gave my whole self and my whole life to ministry, [05:47] one can only think of it as different callings; each distinct in a way. They don’t necessarily all happen and converge at once. It might be testimonies to that effect, not my testimony and I suspect it’s not most of ours.

Male Speaker 2: [06:02] Do you think it would be healthier if we had less gap between calling one and calling two?

[06:10] You’re right. The church would be a lot healthier if people would see that being called to one is to be called to the other. I just found in my ministry, it’s something that you had to keep reminding people of. They don’t get it all at once and they often forget it. And sometimes, they don’t get it because they think well, God can’t use me. Instead of realizing No, actually God need you and because he intends to use you. [06:40] And I didn’t mind sometimes being rather blunt with the people I minister to and sometimes I just come out almost like that. Don’t tell me you don’t have a call and don’t tell me that you don’t have a ministry because if God called you to Himself, He didn’t call you just to drift and mark time till you get into heaven.

In fact if you don’t have a calling on your life, then I assume it’s because God maybe is taking you home. If you’re still here, you got a calling. I like to tell that [07:10] to our 8.30 crowd who are 70 cause a lot of them, I just see it in their faces. I see in their faces of older people that go, “Well, that’s nice, honey but I’m retired now. I, I, you know” No. You’re called and if you do not know what that is, you better figure it out really fast cause you may not have much time.

And on the other side, to a younger crowd, I think sometimes they just think, “Well, I [07:40] don’t know if God will use me. If God can use me.” That’s why Botne [phonetics] calls it the gift of commission. It is a gift and it’s a great gift. It’s a wonderful gift. That’s what gives life purpose, meaning, right? It’s when people grab hold of that suddenly then a lot of things make sense. Now they began to discover why they were made, what they were made for. Why God put these particular passions in their lives? And there’s nothing that thrills me more than to help people get there and that’s our [08:10] ministers task. That’s part of what God’s called you to do which means first of all, you got to figure that out for yourself or you’re just going to be the blind leading the blind. But it all goes back to this word “mission” implies movement; implies intention.

What’s that intention’s all about? Well, you see it’s clear in Scriptures that we’ve been given a mission also of perpetuation. We’re to be intentional about continuing what has already [08:40] begun. And I’ve said that but I’m saying in a little bit different language but I want to make sure you keep getting this that it is not for us to figure out what the mission is. The mission’s been declared. Our main responsibility is to perpetuate it. We are not called to create a mission or to discover a new mission. We’re clear to get in step with the new mission that’s already there. We are called to continue it. The key verse here is John 20:21
“As the Father has sent me, so I’m sending you.” That’s the definitive word in this course. John 20:21 “As the Father has sent me, so I’m sending you.”

So Jesus comes, sent as One who comes to be Incarnational. The mission of Jesus is to flash out God. So John Chapter 1, “The Word became flesh”; Philippians 2 “Jesus emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant” If ministry is perpetuation, then part of our mission is to what? Be incarnational. Be in a certain sense God in the flesh, not making us equal of course, with Jesus but we in a sense, as ministers, are called to flash out Jesus and that also will involve a certain emptying of ourselves. Philippians chapter 2. So we see this and we see Jesus… and again we realized that it’s not just we’re called to do what He’s commanded us to do. Ministry isn’t just about obedience and it’s not about imitation. It’s about something even more. It’s about union. Thank you, yeah, great.

It’s about union we have with Him. In this union then we are perpetuating what Jesus came in the world to do. So Jesus comes and he didn’t stay in the safe community of Heaven but He comes and He comes into a world vulnerable to its temptations and pain. Which therefore say that the key part of my mission as a minister is to be willing to enter into what God puts me in and to lay… leave sometime the safe confines of my heaven wherever that might be, and enter into people’s worlds. Enter into their thoughts and their work, and their alienation and their pain. I mean, incarnational ministry which is the nature of our mission is big and small things all the time. Somebody who’s there and there’s part of you that goes, “I just don’t want to go there cause I know they are just going to suck me into what they are dealing with.” But you realized, no, the nature of ministry in incarnational. I need to enter in to that world. As John Starts [phonetics] puts it “Entering into the doubts of the doubting. The questions of the questioners. The loneliest of those who’ve lost their way.” With a certain amount of wisdom. You can go too far in what I’m talking about and never get out.

I had this woman who called me Friday and I just knew that it’s one of those calls. It went something like this, “Hello, this is… I’m looking for John Collenberg.” “No, I’m, I’m, I’m not that.” “Well, okay, you’ll work.”

[Laughing]

“So, I’m just wondering what your view of women is in ministry.” And I’m right in the thick of my sermon, right? And so I said a couple of things and “Well, but, okay but what about” And all of a sudden I realized you know, that’s the kind of incarnation I don’t want to get into. I just don’t want to enter into those needs at that moment which really was just a need for argument. So sometimes, [13:03] you realized what are the things that… in this incarnation mission, I’m willing to empty myself, I’m willing to enter into someone’s world and you have to navigate, there’s sometimes you would just sense God saying, “Enter into this world.” And sometimes, you realized no, that’s not a world I want to enter into.

Perpetuation includes perpetuating this incarnational ministry that Jesus began and we continue, so now we are in a sense representatives of Him in this world we go into as ministers. And it includes this mission of… also secondly advance God’s Kingdom. We continue this advancing of God’s Kingdom ministry. Jesus comes to bring the Kingdom and the disciple say, “Teach us how to pray” and [14:03] Jesus says, “Pray this way. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come” but it’s already here. What was He saying in that prayer? “Thy Kingdom come”. Do we pray everyday, Lord please bring it? If Jesus came and brought the Kingdom, what is it we’re praying for? What are we asking God to do?

Male Speaker 3: [14:33] Pray in heaven who seems to be here but it’s not yet here...
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[14:39] Yes, there is a sense of the end and yet the not yet. We are somehow in this perilous middle and I think that is true in the Kingdom. In a sense, this is how, I pray that prayer “Lord, may Your Kingdom advance”. It’s the seed under the ground taking form, germinating, starting small as you said but let it take shape. Let me in my life [15:09] advance Your Kingdom. Use me to do that in whatever form, whatever small step, whatever big step You want to take. That’s the prayer of a good minister, isn’t it?

And that’s what our mission is. We come to incarnate God; we come to expand His Kingdom. This is all under perpetuating what’s already begun. And we tried to be careful not to get off track as Jesus had to take His disciples, [15:39] when they almost got off tracked back to Mark chapter 1. You remember? The healing ministry? Everybody was looking for Jesus. Remember that story we talked about it? They come out looking for Jesus and said, “Everybody is waiting”. What did Jesus say? Let’s what?


[15:56] Go somewhere else for I’ve come for this purpose to heal. Me and Benny Hinn, right there. Doing this together and laying the groundwork. Is that what He said? Come, let’s go to other villages so we can preach what? The Kingdom of God. So this is our task as well. We come to preach the Kingdom, we come to invite people into His Kingdom, we come to lay out what His [16:26] Kingdom looks like, and Jesus did that. He said here’s what My Kingdom looks like. So he bought everybody up in the Sermon on the Mount. Here’s what it looks like. This is a picture of the Kingdom. It’s not just the picture of the future. It’s a picture of also what I want you to aim for in the present.

So this is our ministry, our mission. Our mission largely centered around the Kingdom and so Mark 1:1 says not to get off center [16:56] but to preach it. We’re to be the presence of the Kingdom. We are if we are pasturing the churches. I take it in one sense, we’re challenging our people to more and more look like the Kingdom of God; to be a foretaste of what’s to come and we pray for the Kingdom to advance and we teach people to pray that same way. Like I liked how Stan Granson [phonetics] says in his book on prayer [17:26] says here’s what we should pray. I stole his definition of prayer and I used it often in my life and when I preach: that prayer in its essence is laying hold of God’s ableness and God’s willingness to advance His Kingdom. Essence of prayer is laying hold on God’s ableness because He’s able and God’s willingness because He’s willing to advance His Kingdom or he puts it in another way, to bring something of God’s future [17:56] kingdom into the present. To bring something of God’s future Kingdom into the present.

Sometimes we’re praying for healing. In a sense that’s what we’re doing. “Lord, something of the future when we’ll all be healed. Would you bring that into the present.” When we’re praying for insight to understand God’s Word, when one day in heaven we will understand all things is to sometimes say, “Lord, [18:26] bring something of that into the present today.” You pray like that? That’s a great way to pray, isn’t it? “Lord, one day the Body of Christ will all be there in heaven and all of our glory is the Bride. Would you bring something of that into the present in my church.” Now there’s a prayer that certainly sounds a whole lot better than [18:56] “Jesus just be with us today, amen.”

That’s what ministry is about. It’s about, about advancing the Kingdom, teaching the people to pray that way, encouraging the community mirror God’s Kingdom and I think, maybe I’ll say one other thing about perpetuation. Perpetuation is also about continuing this apostolic sense of ministry. The centeredness [phonetics] [19:26] we had Jesus who was sent and He says, “Now you go, I’m sending you. My Father has sent Me, I’m sending you.” And He stamped on us: Apostolic. That is our nature.
So what is our mission? Our mission first of all, needs to understand that we are sent ministers. It’s not my idea. I didn’t choose this. I’ve been sent. So, what have [19:56] been sent to do? Here’s the second or the third thing on your notes here. We have this mission of redemption. This is what we’ve been sent to do which goes all the back to Genesis 3:15 with the advent of sin. It set in motion a work of rescue, salvation. So Abraham, Moses, the prophets all are called in their own ways to be [20:26] agents of reconciliation and you and I are called in the same way. So, Jesus comes to see the lost, Luke 19:10. That was His fundamental mission statement. Remember what he said, “I have come for this purpose”. To seek and save lost people. You look in this text and let’s just look at Scripture for a moment here.

Look at Luke 19 [20:56] and it comes... in what kind of context. What’s just happened? Where’s Jesus on his way to? He’s gone on His way to Jerusalem and He passes through a little city on the way. A little town. Goes through Jericho and there’s a man there in Jericho, not just any man but he’s kind of an oily, squirmly, [21:26] little man that could easily dismissed or passed over and so Jesus goes and spends His time with him and when He spends time with him and it’s obvious that this man has been transformed. Verse 8, “Lord, half of my possessions, I’ll give to the poor.” Zaccheus in that sense, is more godly than the people who have been in church for 40 years. He just got saved. So there is a powerful change in his life and Jesus said, “Today salvation has [21:56] come to this house because he, too is a son of Abraham for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” So this was why He came. This is His reason. This is His mission.

So Zaccheus is not a detour or delay. He’s the reason and the Zaccheus in our lives are the reason. They are not detours or delays. God brings them in our lives and our mission is one of redemption. And so Jesus crossed all kinds of barriers [22:26] to do this mission. Like mark 5, the demoniac. That was crossing some more barriers. He went to the Gentile side. He went to the bad side of town so to speak. Luke 15 and the classic illustration is John 4. Woman at the well. He goes to... out of the way places because this is His mission and He gives us therefore His ministry: Ministry of Redemption. [22:56] And we’re called to participate in the same way redemptive work.

So Acts 1:8 we’re well familiar with. We’re called to be His witnesses. Mark Terier [phonetics] which implies in the term “Someone who takes the stand. Someone willing to put his life on the line.” It’s not a cheap term at all with the emphasis on ‘being’. He didn’t say “I call you to do witnessing.” He said, I called you to what? Be [23:26] My witnesses. It’s about being. Mission is largely about being and preaching the gospel is a lot of time about being. You all have heard that famous statement. It’s been attributed to different people, the last at least, the last I’ve heard is Francis of Assisi “Preach the gospel at all times if necessary use words.” In a sense, this is what Jesus is saying in Acts 1:8.

Some other passages... [23:56] again to underscore this mission, Second Corinthians 5:18, we’ve been given this ministry of reconciliation. First Peter 2:9. He’s called us, made us a holy people that we might proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us. Paul to Timothy, second Timothy 4:5, Do the work of what? Of an evangelist. It’s interesting in the same statement, [24:26] he says “Fulfill your ministry”. This suggest that our mission is not complete if that’s not part of who we are, what we’re doing. It is a redemption that is both one of proclamation and works. Jesus is engaged at the caring social level as he is at the eternal level as we need to be. So passages that also we should underscore [24:56] here are Luke 16:19-31. Lazarus and the story that again reminds us that our ministries are also about the hurdlings [phonetics] and caring for them. Isaiah 58:10 where God has to deal with Israel for going through all the religious motions but they don’t care about injustice. James 1:27. Go to a lot of passages. They all fall [25:26] under this mission of redemption. So what it’ll require? It will required that we are willing to get
outside of our walls. Acts 1:8 is forcing us out of our walls. It makes it clear that our mission is not about privatization. It’s not about entrenchment. Be sure to write these down. Ministry is not about privatization, not about entrenchment, not about getting safely into our boats. [25:56] It’s not about creating a Christian subculture; it’s not about creating monuments; it’s about creating a movement and all of the metaphors underscore this when Jesus calls us to be salt, light, images of dispersal.

So we have this work of… this mission of redemption which largely is subversive and communal. It is being in 26:26 but not of the world. Scott, you had something there?

Scott:[26:30] Yes in that same passage where Jesus said salt and light, you use it as a metaphor with what you are talking about. How does that metaphor fit into the mission of the church?

[26:41] Yes. That’s a good question. You know, maybe it’s a balancer. That there’s to be a subtle side but maybe if I can use the term of attractional side, we got to be subversive and subtle. Eugene Peterson makes the point that the tools of subversive is words and prayer. Those are subversive tools, they are not immediately seen but they are there. They work powerful. People don’t realize we’re praying for them [27:11] maybe but we’re praying and they don’t know why they are getting miserable, you know. That’s subversive tools.

But on the other side, there should be something about our lives, our ministries that maybe get the world’s attention. That people look at the light on a hill amidst the darkness and say there is hope somewhere. So that we are not so hidden that people go like “Jeez, I never knew”. We can be found. I haven’t thought about it until you’ve asked the question but [27:41] I wonder if its sort of a both end that Jesus is balancing and maybe we’ll bring it up at the end of the discussion. There is an interesting statement in that, you take a guy like Frost who in his book “Shaping of things to come,” really takes the institutional church to task for being largely attractional.

And sometimes again, in this whole pendulum thing, you can throw the baby out with the bath water when there actually can be a place for attractional. There’s sometimes [28:11] is a place for the church to be there for people to know you’re there and they can find you and they can find God. But then they also has to be this incarnational which is the more subversive, subtle. It’s both end, not ‘either or’. And I fear what we tend to do today is to make it ‘either or’. ‘Either or’ to the point where we’re almost dismissing the place, the function of the role of the local church.

[28:41] Let’s shift then to then the other mission, the other side of this and that’s the mission of edification. So we build the theology of mission that underscores that as the Father has sent Jesus, He sent us. As Jesus came to seek and save the lost, He’s given us the same mission to seek and save lost people. It’s also clear in our theology of mission that God has given us the mandate to build up one another, to build up [29:11] the church, to disciple. So Jesus again is our modal. We always start with Jesus. What do we see in Jesus is mission. He came to seek and save lost people. He also came to go deep and build and pour Himself into His disciples.

So it’s not one or the other but its’ both end and He exhorts His disciples to what at the end? To go and go and make [29:41] disciples. Matthew 28 and if we need anymore convincing, then that’s why God gave us Paul because you see… huge part of Paul’s mission was to bring people to maturity. So we turn again to a great passage like Colossians 1:28 where Paul says, And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom that we [30:11] may present every man, what? Complete in Christ. This is the goal. So Paul takes his ministry of feeding, caring, equipping to that end and you see this again in different passages to the Thessalonikians. He said his goal was to complete what was lacking in their
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faith. First Thessalonians 3:10. [30:41] So Paul’s ministry to them is to complete what’s lacking where there are gaps. This is my mission. This is your mission with people you minister to, is to figure out those gaps and help bring them to completion.

To the Romans, Paul exhorted them to live out the implications of Romans 1 through 11. So he spends Romans 12 through 15 saying now, this is how you live it. He understood, this is his mission. He’s writing these letters. [31:11] He wants the church to be mature and he’s telling us as ministers that this is also our mission. To the Ephesians, perhaps one of the most best letters of all in this regard where he invested several years of intense discipleship with the school there, he writes these great words in Ephesians chapter 4 that God has given gifted people. He’s given leaders reflecting an apostolic card [31:41] and a prophetic voice and an evangelistic spirit and a nurturing ministry of teaching, to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. God brings all of those voices in for the purpose of equipping saints. Ephesian 4:12. So he’s telling us that fundamental mission of us who do ministry in people’s lives. We’re doing this work of Katartizō. You always have to have one Greek word in [32:11] each lecture so you get your money’s worth. So what is Katartizō about? God has given gifted people you, me, He has called us to this task of equipping saints. Equipping Katartizō which is a word that goes back to mending nets, setting broken bones. This is how the Greek word was used in the secular world of its day and in a sense, he gives a beautiful picture of you and me.

Our mission in ministry is to see people come to [32:41] Christ and then to begin to do work of Katartizō, putting them back together and that involves giving attention to their lives; It involves envisioning. This is a big part of it, isn’t it? It involves at times envisioning what the Spirit has designed this person to become. You do that sometimes? You see someone that you just have a burden for? [33:11] You look into their lives and you see, man I can see what you can be for God. They can’t see it yet but God gives you a sense of that and therein God begin to just put a burden in your life to just pour into this person. That’s all part of this Katartizō, helping people discover who they are, what their gifts are. He gives gifted people for the equipping of the saints, for the [33:41] work of service which I take it means, helping them come to grips with the measure of Grace that God has given him. That’s how he describes it in other passages.

We all have a measure of grace. It’s another way of saying that God’s grace takes different shape in everybody. We all have something of grace, this measure of grace in our lives and it takes distinct unique form. [34:11] I have my shape, you have your shape and the ministers mission is to come along and try to help give shape to that shape. So we all had different gifts according to the grace given us. That’s how the Word puts it, right?

We all have different gifts according to the grace given us because maybe you already know this. The very nature of Kharesmata goes back to the fundamental root of Kharesmata which is what? [34:41] Khares which is the word for grace. The very essence of spiritual gift is the measure of grace. I like to think of it this way. Our task as ministers is to help people come to grips with that measure of grace in their lives because that measure of grace, that giftedness that Kharesmata simply an instrument for the Khares.

So, that when [35:11] you share your Kharesmata with someone, let’s say whether it be mercy, helps whatever it is, that is when grace, then Khares flows through you. That measure of grace was not given to any of us to be bottled up and held within. It’s to be released through the Kharesmata. What do ministers do? They come along and help people figure that out cause most people don’t know [35:41] what that is and then they encourage them to release it. So that what you have one day in a prefect world, which we
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don’t live in but nonetheless, every now and then, we like to put something like this before our people
and say you know what? Here’s what I love to see one day. I love to see church that looks like this, we’re
all walkin’ [writing on the board] here we are and what’s happening is that God’s Grace is flowing [36:11]
everywhere and His Grace is flowing through your… your gift. So that I, let’s say, if I’m a teacher or
whatever and maybe I’m speaking over here, I’m no different than anybody else in this task. We all come
together. God pours His Grace out though me, through my Kharesmata. If this is to work, I need [36:41]
grace too. We all need grace, don’t we? We’re all desperate for grace. How many people on a given
weekend, let’s say in church sits there with this measure of grace in them and it never gets released. And
therefore it’s no wonder many churches are graceless communities. Ever think sometimes why is the
church so graceless? I wonder if a lot of that is because we got a lot of [37:11] people sitting on their grace?
Whose fault is that? To a certain extent, it’s ours. Its ministers. Ephesians 4, He gave gifted people to
equip the saints to do the work of ministry.

What does it mean to equip? It doesn’t mean we’re giving them something, you know like a car that is
fully equipped. We tend to use that word think that oh, it’s got all that [37:41] add up luxurious
equipment they put in there. Well, we don’t put anything in people. To equip mean we mend, we help get
them back together and a big part of back together is they discover why God made them. They
discovered that second calling, that commission if you will. And once they grab hold of that, I have been
made for a purpose. I do see this gift that is in me and they come and they release that grace through
them [38:11] and it becomes a kind of, dialogical experience. What happens to them then? Do they stay
flat? No, then they blossom and they grow.

And that’s why Paul says here, He says “For the equipping of the saints, for the work of service to the
what? Building up of the Body which happens when Grace is dispensed until we’re come into the unity
of the faith and into the knowledge of the Son of God [38:41] to a mature man. This is our mission. It is a
mission of bringing people ultimately to Christ likeness. To the measure of the stature which belongs to
the fullness of Christ. That’s the endpoint, verse 13. If you want to know your mission, your missional
endpoint is to bring people to that place. Mark that down because you read guys like George Barnett
today that say what’s wrong with the church, I can’t measure transformation. People don’t change, they

Well, what’s behind that? People are not changing, they are not transforming and so they are not moving
to the stature of the fullness of Christ and it might go all the way back to this because gifted people are
not equipping them to do the work of ministry which leads to moving to the measure of the stature of the
fullness of Christ so it’s being destinational in this passage Ephesians 4: 11 through 13. He’s being
destination. [39:41] He’s got an endpoint in mind because he’s missional.

For us, creating a theology of mission is ultimately about a destination. This is where we’re going. There’s
a book coming out. I just got a kind of pre-copy of it by a guy name Thompson that’s writing… the title is
“Pastoral ministry according to Paul”. So what’s he’s done is that he’s studied all the letters and he’s tried
to assess Paul’s ministry. He’s trying to [40:11] figure out a theology of ministry. What is Paul’s theology
of ministry? This is what he says. This is Paul’s’ definition. Ministry is participation, sound familiar?
Ministry is participation in God’s work, worth writing down here. Ministry is participation in God’s work
transforming the community of faith [40:41] until it is blameless at the coming of Christ. “Ministry is
participation in God’s work of transforming the community of faith until it is blameless at the coming of
Christ.”
So when does our work end? Maybe today, maybe 40 years. In our theology of mission, what is our mission? Our mission is what we say. First of all, it is what? It is to be intentional. Secondly, ministry by its very nature mission. The mission is on of perpetuation in the broad sense. Thirdly, our ministry is about redemption. With fundamental to our mission is we are reaching lost people. It’s not just something we preach. We got to really fundamentally believe that, feel that inside. Have a list of people we daily pray for that need Jesus and I hope that you all have people like that and that you have a part of your life marked out where you enter into that world, hopefully on a regular basis with on say people and you enter that world with this purpose, intention to reach them for the gospel.

If we don’t have that going in our life, no one’s going to listen to us preach that and we won’t preach it with much power. So redemption and then edification and what’s edification? It’s not just about giving people lots of information. It’s about saying, Look, I’m not interested if you could memorize all the books of the bible, what I want to know is are you becoming more and more like Jesus? Because Paul says in Ephesians 4:13 this is the destination that we’re all aiming for. So where are we at today? It’s purpose to talk about this two-fold mission. Sometimes one eclipses the other. Where are we at today? Nice balance? We will evaluate ministry right now and the mission. Where do we see it?

Male Speaker 4: When you’re talking about the goal of the full measure of Christ, I think we have set our bar a little bit lower than the disciple is until we reach that level mark…

[43:16] There’s a tendency I think at times I’ve seen this over the years in ministry for us to kind of move over here and then we move back over here. I remember when I was in a seminar, kind of a big statement was something like this, “You know the church gathers to scatter”. In other words, the purpose of the church, the mission, if you will in ministry is to pour yourself, preach the Word, teach the Word. People go out and from the church and scatter and reach touch lives. But what we’ve discovered is that a lot of churches ended up being just kind of holding tanks where people got edificated out. If that makes any sense because we so wrap people around the church that they no longer had relationships beyond church so that missional part got sort of missed.

We could be in a sort of pendulum that’s gone back a little bit more over here of saying you know, the important thing is to be incarnational, to get out of the institutional church to get out there in the community, touch lives, reach people for Jesus and we could take that almost so far that we no longer see the role or the place or the church over here. The main thing is that we’re reaching people over for Jesus and we may end up in that missional approach with a lot of thin layered people who may not survive out there very well in the real world when they try to define and defend their world view or live in a mature way because they are not grounded.

It’s easy for the pendulum to go both ways. What I’m suggesting here is that what we have to do is that we have to be careful to stay somewhere in the middle of all of that, yeah.

Heather: In the book of Acts you see really a perfect modal of the church, of living a certain lifestyle amidst of the culture. We all know that you need to be a sort of institution to form and if we could balance it…

[45:21] Yes, I think, Heather, that’s a good way to put it. I guess I would throw out to you that in all of this dialogue that’s going on today, my encouragement to you is to realize that there’s not only room but there has to be room at the table for both end. It’s not ‘either or’. Everything ultimately is institutional if you think about it. Even the most spontaneous and prophetic movement are institutional in a certain sense. Everything has to take some kind of form or you can’t even recognize it. Missional and
in institutional are not antithetical terms that they are not ‘either or’ as they are often used in language today.

I wouldn’t want to be missional at the expense of being institutional. It’s the structure that is going to get us somewhere. At the same time I don’t want to be institutional at the expense of missional. [46:21] Some of you are going to graduate and you’re going to say, you know what, I, I don’t wanna do this institutional church thing, I’m starting something new, I’m going to be part of an emergent thing and that’s good. There is nothing wrong with that. Some of you are going to feel perhaps a calling and God will say, “I want you to go to this institution.” Your mind will go kicking and screaming like I did.

My first church was an 80-year old institutional churches I’ve shared with you [46:51] and there’s part of me that wouldn’t wished that on anybody because there were so much of layers of institution that the mission had long been lost. It was sort of like that passage where in Acts 19 where they dragged Paul to the theatre in Ephesus and the town is in an uproar but then they didn’t know why they are there.

One of my first sermons I preached that day to this church, my first church. It’s amazing I lasted 10 years because somewhere early on, I got the boldness and I preached this passage out [47:21] of Acts and I said, ‘And that sounds a lot like this place. You’re here but you don’t know why you’re here.” But it was true. It was true. They had gotten so comfortable in their institution, they forgot their mission. And what I see today is a lot of guys that are saying, “We’re missional. We’re not institutional.” Well, that is a ridiculous statement because if you’ve got some form [47:51] at all, a time you meet; if you’re kind of the leader of this thing, you’re an institution whether you like it or not.

The key is how do you make the institutional work to your advantage. Now this is what I like to say to your advantage. I want to say, you know, guys, if you’re really smart, if you’re really, really smart, so It ell my elders sometime, if you’re really smart, we will use our institution to the advantage of highly missional. We got a building; we got structure; we got [48:21] staff; we got all these things. I don’t have to start from ground zero. Isn’t that great? And it is but we also got these potential layers of form that can constrict us. It’s a matter of what’s going to be the drive: the institution or the mission? It’s sort of like Jesus you know, when He said “you can’t put new wine in old wineskins.” He wasn’t saying so... therefore let’s get rid of old [48:51] wineskins. Well, does that make any sense? You got to have something to put the wine into. The important thing is make sure that the wineskins are wet, are able to adapt to the fermenting Jesus who never stays the same. He’s always moving and so the key is in the institution you’re in is you just got to keep saying, we’ve got to change the wineskin so they are starting to get a little musty smell, they’re getting a little [49:21] bit hard, starting to crack a little bit and you know what, Jesus can’t stay in this here. We’re not going to be able to accommodate Him.

That all goes back to your theology of mission. You get your mission right and you preach this mission constantly to yourself and to your people. Folks, we’re here to reach lost people; we’re here to reach incarnation; we’re here to advance the Kingdom of God; we’re here to grow people to become just like Jesus. [49:51] If we could keep our eyes in a very kind of balanced way, neither one eclipsing the other, does that make sense? But both end paralleling, I think we’ll have ministry. I think we’ll have good ministry. If your philosophy drives you that way, I think you’re going to be on good ground. What a great way to stop.

[Giggling]

[50:16] Okay. See you next week.
Chapter 5

We expect to see believers choosing a proliferation of options is how he puts it. We expect to see believers choosing a proliferation of options, in this context of ministry, which will lead to a reduction in the number of churches presently configured and a decline in the professional clergy —

Sorry to give you the news. [Laughter] That's this little book by Barner, Revolution — subtitle: "Worn Out on Church." I don't know if I recommend it so much as just to say you should be aware of it and what it's saying.

And it'll be interesting to see what its impact is. Another book that raises similar questions, and one that I've liked a lot — in fact I've liked so much I invited Michael Frost to come and teach a [inaudible] course, which he did about 3 weeks ago, and I found to be a really interesting, good guy.

The Shaping of Things to Come, perhaps you've seen this book or read it. It's a really valuable and important book to read, in part because he does grapple with theology more than most people who write in these kinds of themes and also because he's Australian.

So he is outside of our immediate culture looking at broader culture. He and a guy named Hirsh also see an end of Christendom, or I should say the end of a Christendom-style church as we know it today — that is the church institutional, and the emergence of what he calls the church missional.

So the end of the Christendom style of church, the church institutional and the emergence of the church missional, a movement church replacing the existing church. Because the existing church, particularly as we're talking about this institutional church as he would put it — three major flaws.

And here they are. The first flaw is that it focuses on being attractional versus incarnational. What does he mean by that? — Attractional versus incarnational.

Audience Member: [02:44] Drawing people in but not necessarily [inaudible] [02:47].

[02:48] Yes, partially. It's more of an approach to the mission of "Let's get them here rather than us going out there." So it is more of a "come to us" ministry versus a [03:00] "go out to them ministry." Attractional is mobilizing believers to attract unbelievers to the church.

"Okay, we're going to have friendship Sunday in 4 weeks, okay? Everybody know who you're praying for? Invite them to church." That's all you gotta do. Just get 'em here. We'll do the rest. Just get them in the door. That would be attractional ministry.

So you see that is the first flaw. The second flaw is what he calls dualistic — [03:30] dualistic. That is a mindset that separates sacred from secular. So we [phonetic] made us the church to protect the sacred, but we don't any of the secular.

We don't want anything profane getting in so we've got these separations, this dualism we've created. Here's the sacred. Here's the secular. And they don't have a relationship to one another. And then the third major flaw of this [04:00] Christendom church that is going its way and dying is that it's hierarchical [04:11] hierarchical.

That is it tends to be bureaucratic, top-down as a model of leadership. The shaping of things to come is saying it's what it is to come, sort of like Barner. What's coming is a different age and age of the church
that's largely about not being attractional but incarnational, of getting out into the communities, infiltrating, dissipating and starting church there if you will.

If you play sunset tennis club, then that's your community of pagans and that's where you're seeking to reach people for Christ, then that's what church should be, so to speak. Start church there at some point. That becomes the incarnational versus the "come to us over here on this block where this church building meets."

Audience Member: about the skydiving problem

[05:06] Yes, that's what he would say is getting back to what initially we were called to do and to be, taking his model would be Jesus. And I had dinner with him 3 weeks ago or so, and he — it's a place where artists meet. And he's just started to engage.

And that's where he's probably going to land and create church, even do communion with mostly unbelievers, because they've asked for that. They want to have that experience. It doesn't mean anything to them except that it seems to be a spiritual experience.

Because he's tapping in to something that a lot of people are hungry for, and that is spirituality. So I mean that's where you can get at least on the same page with people. Though, is that really spirituality? Frost would say what this would do is give me a wonderful opportunity, because they want to have, say, a communion experience.

That would be my moment to share with the elements do mean. So in a very incarnational way, I'm trying to be Jesus to this group. This is where church in a sense is forming. And it gives me great opportunity to share the gospel.

You listen and you think about it. And he would say that's a lot more effective that trying to get those people to church who probably may never go to an institutional church out of fear or out of maybe the fact that they went and they found religion but didn't find spirituality —

Just one more example on blog site "Next Reformation." You guys, you're familiar with Leonard — and I'm not sure — is it Hjalmarson? You're familiar with that name? — H-J-A-L-M-A-R-S-O-N. He writes a number of articles on this particular blog site which —

By the way, just out of curiously, how many of you read on a pretty regular basis a number of different blog sites just to read what people are thinking and seeing. I'm finding something pretty interesting that actually some of the most stimulating things I'm reading nowadays are not in books but are on blog sites.

They're just thousands of them now. But take some time and begin to say "Okay, what are some sites that I really should try to be reading?" — Whether it's Andrew Jones or all the way to an Al Moller from Southern Seminary.

For example, Al Moller and his blog site wrote, I think, a wonderful piece today on what is true spirituality. And he basically just takes to task the empty spirituality a lot of people are pursuing, a lot of Christians are pursuing. He's going to be pretty much on one extreme as opposed to guys on another side.
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Anyone wanna share two or three blog sites that you find quite stimulating and informative? — And just this whole idea of thinking about ministry... Troy’s? Yes? Yes. What’s your blog site? What is it?

Audience Member: [08:52] [inaudible][08:53]

[08:56] Okay.

Audience Member: [08:57] [inaudible][08:57 - 09:06]

[09:06] Yes, if you go to Next Reformation — go to that blog site — and you scroll down, you’ll find an article entitled "Toward a Theology of Public Presence" in which he — he writes a pretty length article on this whole question of context for ministry and raises these kinds of questions —

What kind of presence is redemptive presence? What kind of presence is redemptive presence? How did we choose the attractional over incarnational? Is non-institutional form of church possible? How does theology guide us?

Does it guide us? I think it does. Should we address these pretty significant questions? So let’s see if we can just put a few pieces together. And I try to always just go back and think of "Okay, what are the things I know for sure?"

And here’s what I know for sure: number one, our mission, our theology, declares that it’s to be done in the context of community. This is just foundational, but I know that’s true, right? You know that to be true.

You believe that? Our mission, our theology, of ministry is to be done in the context of community. We’re not saved to be individuals. We’re saved and formed into community. What would be a central text that underscores that?

Audience Member: [10:30] Acts II.

[10:30] Acts II, okay — one that seems central would be 1 Corinthians 12:13. We have all been baptized into one body. We’ve all been incorporated into a community. Coming to Christ, we were not only invited. Far more than invited, we were baptized into community.

First Corinthians 12:13: The spirit has formed to us into one body so that we can then do the mission of redemption and this mission of building up saints.

So first of all, when I think about context — and I read a lot of this thinking today — I want to go back and say "Okay, what are some bedrock issues?" I know this, that first of all there’s no place for individualism, that we are called into community.

And not that I’ve read it, but I think it would be interesting to read "Work Through Some Days," Stanley Grenz’s theology of community. It’s a pretty massive work, which probably is built around this whole theme.

Here’s a second thing. The second thing I know is that the New Testament is largely the record of communities in localized gatherings. Okay, so let’s just think about that. Is that a fair statement? The New Testament is largely the record of communities in a localized gathering.

Is that fair? So we see it in seed form in Acts 1 as they are waiting, and [phonetic] Pentecost comes in Act II. And we begin to see at its earliest expressions people again and community and localized gatherings — Acts 2, Acts 6 — well, pretty much the rest of the book of Acts, Acts 6 in particular.
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It's also evidenced in Paul's letters. Paul is writing to communities, to gatherings, to people in localized places, whether it's Colossi or Rome or the region in Galatia or Corinth. So what we're not finding, at least in our theology, is isolated believers or ministers.

In fact what we find is not to be a part of a community is disobedience, Hebrews 10:24-26, where — what does it say? We're not to forsake the what? — [Crosstalk] The gathering, the assembling of the saints.

So there is a direct admonition there to be part of a community. Here's the third thing. And this is the thing I want us to really think about here. Third thing is that, in these communities, structure is necessary. And I'll put it another way. Institution is unavoidable.

Institution is unavoidable. A non-institutional form of church is impossible. Okay, you've got to think about that. Is that true? Can it be challenged? — [Crosstalk] Initially, okay. Paul into a what...?

Audience Member: [14:25] that have those values that you spoke about.

[14:30] Yes, yeah.

Audience Member: ...and that are feeling that way and want to move away from that. But [inaudible] is a perfect example of that. They started with [inaudible] way. Institution is unavoidable.

You've got to make some decisions. Either we stop growing — you know we chase kind of the stroke away and move away so they don't have to make these decisions to and create these structures in which they organize our people in.

If you define institution by bringing on those kinds of things. If we define institution in terms of structure — structure is unavoidable. In fact, it may be fair to say it's unbiblical. Because when we look at the church, if we all are saying "Well, the church, if it's to be a legitimate context for ministry, it needs to look like the early church..." —

The early church had a lot of structure. And what would be some of that structure?

Audience Member: [15:41] Leisure goals,

[15:45] Yes. So we see a church structure for care. And when did that happen? Well that happened right at the very start, Acts Chapter 6. They were grappling with this kind of decision. What are we going to do in terms of caring for this people?

So we see the body of Christ needing to structure itself for care right from the start in order to be effective. And we find even by 1 Timothy 5 they're dealing with mundane issues, it would seem, of Weadle's list, 1 Timothy 5. So we see this church right from the very beginning as it emerges, as a plants emerges growth.

It's dealing with the structures for care. What are other structures emerging?

Audience Member: [16:37] Leisure goals,

[16:38] Sure.

Audience Member: [16:39] Right.
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Audience Member: [16:43] Well, very early on, the [inaudible][16:46] as well. [Phonetic] They felt there was a mandate [inaudible][16:53].

[16:54] Yes, good point. Even in Acts 1, they’re dealing with this — they’re structuring themselves for leadership. And when we see structuring for leadership, just some of the passages that underscore this is Paul reminding the Romans of the gifting of leadership, Romans 12:8.

Ephesians 4 is the classic passage where Paul is telling the church why God has given gifted leaders and what role they play. 1 Thes 5:12, Paul refers to those [17:30] who "have charge over you." And one can include 1 Timothy 3, the characteristics, qualities of elders, deacons.

First Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17 obey those who one will one day give an account. And probably another classic passage is 1 Peter 5:1-4, where [18:00] Peter gives instructions to those who are undershepherds in terms of how they are to be, not lording it over those allotted to your charge.

Some of these terms here describe a fairly hierarchical structure, right? — From the beginning. See, what I’m just trying to point out is that some of the assumptions, I think, that some people that these are things that, say, were created] 300 years later [18:30] with Constantin were there right from the very beginning when the church was structured —

Structured for leadership, structured for care, structured for accountability and instruction and discipline. So there is already in place a structure Pall calls the church of [phonetic] Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 to deal with the unruly.

And one can add here [19:00] Act 2:42-27 as the — we see the early church in its formative stages structuring for what they did when they gather together. I’m trying to remember — I think it’s in Timothy, or it might also be in Thessalonians, where Paul talks about what you do with divisive people.

There’s some kind of structural form, institutional form, pretty much taking place right from the start. I’d also say you could argue from the metaphors here, the [19:30] metaphors that God uses to describe the church’s call for structures. So if it’s going to be the body, it needs to act as the body.

So structures will have to be in place for it to be the body of Christ. If it’s to be a priesthood, which is another metaphor for the church, it implies a certain structure. If it’s going to be a holy bride, then it implies a certain structure to keep it [20:00] holy.

And you can maybe add one here. If the church is to be a place that gathers, it’s going to have to have a place. It requires some structure.

Audience Member: [20:11] [inaudible][20:12]

[20:15] Yes. What I see a lot and being thrown around a lot — this word "institution" is not necessarily a bad word or an unbiblical word. In fact, it’s hard to escape it [20:30] being a necessary part of the church.

I gave this quote earlier from Newhouse, Richard Newhouse. But he puts it this way: "Even the most spontaneous and prophetic of movements cannot last until they find institutional form." I mean, I find it with my small group. My small group meets.

How are we going to lead this? What are we going to discuss? Where are we going to meet? Who’s going to bring what? Institutional church is a [21:00] easy target today. But where I turn sideways with it is where I find myself asking the question, "Well then, what would an institutional church look like? And is there any such thing as that?"
Newhouse goes on to say "We can't get away from church and all its sweaty, smelly concreteness. However, we can avoid institutionalism." We can't avoid institution, but we can avoid institutionalism if by institutionalism we mean two things.

And here they are: If form becomes more important than function or if structure becomes an end rather than a means to an end. I think a lot of the criticism of the institutional church today is directed at institutionalism where form has become more important than function and structure becomes the end rather than the means.

How does that play itself out? It creeps in in subtle ways. It's like when somebody comes up to you at the end of worship and says "Why did we have to sing that verse three times?" And you're saying to yourself "Why are you focused on form rather than function?"

Or, you know, "your style of preaching is..." Yes, but I thought we were here to hear the voice of God. So it can start really subtly. It settles in. Every church has its tendency once it gives birth and moves to move to institutionalism. We all understand that.

Institutionalism is dangerous for the church because it's in our DNA, cos we all do it ourselves. We start to get older. I know you can't imagine this, but one day you will. And you start letting structure become more important, form over function.

Well, I do this because I do this at this time every day. This is my order. This is when I do it. And we become more and more rigid rather than flexible. In my first church that I mentioned to you where I first pastored, it was a highly institutional church that had become deeply afflicted with institutionalism.

So when we at one point said, "You know, it would make a lot of sense for us to move to a different place over here where we could be more effective in who we're trying to reach," the response was: "Wait pastor, you don't realize this building was where I was married."

Okay, so? Well, we can't leave the building. The form, the structure was more important. As much as I at times would try to say "It's just a means. It's just the facilitation of ministry." Now I'm dealing with it from another angle where we're on the form of building a new sanctuary.

And what do you think happens with that? What gets lost? — The vision. The building is just to facilitate the vision. The vision's more important. But what do people want to talk about? They want to talk about the building?

As much as you say "It's not about the building. It's our vision of the kind of church we want to be where we're going," people want to go to bricks and mortar. Why do we do that? It's just something in us. I don't know what it is.

You can talk to people about vision and they sort of look at you with a little bit of haze. And then you start talking about the building and "[Excited] Wow, yeah, okay, we need this kind of square footage. And, you know, how much is it gonna cost?"

And that's when people get really, you [laughter] know, "How much is it gonna cost?" I thought we were talking about — gosh, it would have been nice to see this passion when we were talking about the vision, what we want to try to do with this.

Why do we do that? I don't know. It's just — it's just part of human nature I suppose. So sometimes when people make all these shots at the institutional church, part of me wants to go "Well, wait a minute. We're all institutional."
And if you're not institutional, you're not even a church. We're all institutional. And I [25:30] hate to say this but if you're taking shots over here, it's in your DNA too. Potentially you'll be there too, like Bob. You know, Bob and I are really good friends at Evergreen.

But I say — I kid Bob all the time. I go "You'll be institutional before you know it. Oh no, yeah, you will Bob. [Laughter] You're going to have to figure out leadership at some point. What are you going to do with the youth? What are you going to do with the kids?"

At a certain point, yes, you're going to grow to this point. And then you're going to face a real hard decision. Okay, well at this [26:00] point we just go out and plant. Well, what happens if people go "Well, we don't — No, we don't want to leave each other.

And Bob, you're our shepherd. We don't want to leave you. What are you gonna do?" These are all questions we face. So how do we avoid this institutionalism? Here are a couple things. Keep the function always out in front. Keep the function always out in front as much as you can.

Preach it. Live [26:30] it. Keep it out in front. Keep the mission always out in front. And when people try to draw you back from that, resist like crazy. So if somebody comes up to you and says "Why did we sing that verse four times?"

Just — you need to say not "Well, I'm sorry. We'll try to do it just two times next time." No, but something like "You know, I thought this was about [27:00] worshipping God. I mean that's what the whole intent of this — Could we talk about your worship of God?" — See?

We need to help people see that we're about the function, not the form. So we have to model that.

Number two: always keep the structures as servants. Always keep the structures as servants, not serve the structures. Here's a [27:30] third thing is constantly check the wine skins, you know? Just kinda every now and then do a periodic check. Are they still kinda soft and able to encase the fermenting Jesus? — Whatever that means. [Laughter] Or if Jesus really truly came into your forms, would it [28:00] explode, the wine skins? That's a good question, every now and then.

Can we accommodate Jesus? Or have our structures become so rigid that he just, actually if he was here he'd explode them? Cos that was the issue in Mark Chapter 2. See, here's the interesting thing. I haven't thought too much about this.

But, you know, Jesus didn't come and just say "Man, I'm really down with the institutional church. It just [28:30] sucks." I don't see Jesus saying that. "[Loudly] You know, we've got to get rid of the temple. Get rid of these paid clergy. Come on let's get back."

No, he didn't do that. It wasn't the structures that so incensed him. It was the institutionalism. It was the rigidity that those structures took on. I mean he still went into the synagogue. The disciples went into the synagogue. Paul, the first place he went to and preached was [29:00] the synagogue.

It wasn't the structures. It was the encasing of the structures. And what I fear is happening today is we're throwing the baby out with the bath water in a lot of the discussion out there and missing the point. This is what I love to say to our 60-year old church every now and then.

I like to say something like this "You know what? We've got such an advantage. We've got the building. It's paid [29:30] off. Well, [chuckles] till we get going to deep debt here soon. [Laughter] But we've got the building. We've got the staffing.
We’ve got structures. We’ve got policies. We’ve got all this stuff because we’ve had to have these things that we feel in order to do ministry. Let’s let it work for us. Let’s not work for them. Let’s let it work for us, right?

A church that does that I think is smart. It’s gonna — could, should [30:00] have phenomenal ministry. But a lot of churches get all those layers and they don’t have phenomenal ministry because they start serving them instead of letting the structures serve them.

I’m just working all this through and thinking all this through. I’m not coming as any expert. So if you wanna just take a shot — you know, your grade’s on the line but go ahead. [Laughter] No, really. If there’s something, just say “Wait a minute. Okay, I’m not sure.”

Please, this [30:30] is —

Audience Member: [30:32] If we’re not gonna have the benefit of starting our own church... We’re going to go into a situation where, you know, possible a lot of this institutionalism is already present. How can you go about being a change agent and saying "Well look, we have to get back to the here of what this is about and not get crucified for it?"

[30:55] Yes, you ask a really good question. That’s a question obviously I asked myself early on. In fact, out of those 10 years, I remember thinking to myself “If I ever teach in seminary and somebody comes up to me and say ‘I had this opportunity to go to this,’ would I say go for it?”

Or would I say ”No, please don’t. Don’t do that.” For me, I invested 10 of my — some of my best years of my life in that. Do I regret it? And I don’t think I do, because I think God used it to [31:30] shape a lot in me and help me to understand the church in profound ways I wouldn’t have and also to love the church in spite of.

Because you realize the longer you’re in ministry that if Jesus died for the church, who am I not to love the church? — That the church is wherever we go, whether it’s a startup or it’s an older institution, that they’ll all have their set of problems.

But if knowing what I know now, what I would say to anyone going into that [32:00] is the first thing you do is right up front really ask the people “Tell me how willing you are to become new wine skins.” If you get some indicator that says ”Look, institutionalism has killed us.

We’ve plateaued. We’re dead in the water. We’re sitting at anchor. We’re rusting in the harbor... help,” then I think you come in and say okay. Maybe you look at the potential and [32:30] [phonetic] ”maybe God.”

And then I think you just call for a lot of early-on repentance and renewal and exercise a lot of patience instead of try to be a change agent in the first month, be flamethrowers burning everything out. It takes a lot of wisdom.

That’s for sure. But I would say it’s possible. I mean there are a lot of [33:00] people today that say it takes a lot more energy to bring something from the dead rather than give birth. So I’d rather put my energy into giving birth than raising something from the dead.

But I would say raising something from the dead has its own powerful witness. For some of you here, you might have that powerful calling, like a Nehemiah. Nehemiah wasn’t called to go [33:30] build a new city. He was called to come into a place that was totally devastated and rebuild it from ground level.
And he did. Some of us are going to be Nehemiahs. Some of us are going to go and start things — the point — here’s the thing. It doesn’t really matter really in a lot of ways which way you go. I think what we’ve got to get our discussion back to is to give a lot of credibility and respect to both ends.

What a lot of our discussion has got to today is right or wrong, sort of like back to institutional church as something wrong. Well no, there’s a big umbrella and God’s doing a lot of different things. And there’s enough room under God’s umbrella if you’re called to this kind of church or this kind of church —

Whether you’re going to start a church or go to an 80-year old church, either one’s okay. It’s just what you feel uniquely called to and gifted to do. And what I’m trying to do into this whole discussion of context is to legitimize the context of the institutional church as well as legitimize the context of peer church ministry — a lot of great ministries out there.

But I fear people are starting to say “This is the legitimate, and this is the illegitimate.” And that’s where I get real nervous. Were there on or two other questions before we close? — Yes.

Audience Member: [inaudible]

Well, I hadn’t thought about it that way. But Paul went there because that’s where he had the easiest entry point and where he would have a pretty instantaneous audience. He was pretty smart that way.

So I think there’s parallel. Okay, we’ll see you next week. We’ll finish this and then move on.
I want to finish up context. And then I want to move into requirements. And then we'll talk a little bit about [phonetic] Purvis. I don't know if we'll get to all of them. But I want to go back to context because we didn't finish it yet.

I started with this, you remember, this kind of thesis that there was a day and age more like in my seminary days anyway when we questioned the legitimacy of the [phonetic] parachurch, whereas there's been kind of a shift [00:30] it would seem that we almost are at the place today where we question church itself, at least what's commonly referred to as the institutional or traditional church.

I move to this question of "How does our theology guide us?" What I'm reacting to a little bit is a book like [phonetic] Barnis that I've mentioned revolution, where he sort of almost calls into question the institutional church [01:00] today.

So, building our theology, here's where we started. We started with the fact that — first of all whatever we do in ministry; it's to be done in community, that there is no place for individualism in scripture. And we built that argument based on what passage of scripture? ... First Corinthians 12:13, which tells us again our identity is found in community.

And then we move from there to [01:30] talk about the fact that the New Testament is largely the record of communities and a localized gathering. And each of these gatherings — I underscored this that I hope you underscored that in these communities structure is necessary.

It's inevitable first of all. And it's necessary. Part of what I am again reacting to there are those who almost refer to the institutional church as if it's something different than [02:00] any other church. Every church is institutional.

It can't help but me. Everything has some form of structure if it has any existence at all. We talked about the structures in which we see a structure for leadership and a structure for care and a structure for accountability and even mentioned the metaphors themselves.

One of them that I think you mentioned that underscores this, the metaphor of [02:30] building, which again underscores some structure. And that is something as I mentioned we can't avoid. What must we avoid? What were they? What's the first one?

It's to keep the function always in front. This is how we avoid it. We keep the function before the what? — Before the form, just like if you're taking [03:00] Greek, while it's important to know the form — this is a present passive participle. What we want to know is "so what?" How is it functioning?

So function always is where we want to get to. So how do we avoid institutionalism? We keep the function in front of the form. We make the structures number 2, always the servants and not serve the structures. And we do [03:30] that all the time if we're not careful.

We can do that with technology. Technology is to be our servant. But sometimes we can almost unconsciously make them the masters. You know how i know that's true? Walk in almost any day to my church. Walk by almost all the offices, and I see almost all of my staff sitting there in front of this screen.
That's not to say there's necessarily anything wrong with sitting in front of a screen. But if somebody from 100 years ago walked into the church not knowing what these are they'd go, "What are all those things that it seems like everybody bows down to or almost are glued to?"

When I discovered how subtly that structure becomes my master is when I find that I am responsive to every little sound of email that comes in. I almost become chained to it, instead of saying, "You know, I don't have to necessarily know when the next email comes in."

And it's a subtle form of mastery if we're not careful. So making structures, keeping structures the servants and not serving the structures, not serving the buildings, not serving the constitution, all of these kinds of things that can become our masters... And what I just want to make sure you underscore in your notes is that —

Just put something like this. It's very subtle. It's not something we just see, we recognize. We may be much more serving structures, serving technologies, serving buildings than we're aware of — Paul.

Audience Member: I think it's also important to us as well that in that behind that computer, behind that computer, [inaudible].


Audience Member: Where does that fit in what you're saying?

[05:27] Well, here's where it fits in, Paul. It is its own shepherding that — but it doesn't replace certain aspects that really nothing can be a substitute for, like interfacing with flesh and blood. I'll use some of my staff as an example here.

I'm less concerned that they are making sure that they are responding to all of the emails with people as much as out there with people face to face, heart to heart.

Audience Member: I mean, I agree with that. I agree that face to face is better than email. But it seems that few people [inaudible]. I've gotten way further by email. And maybe it's because they're behind the screen typing and it's less intimidating.

And face to face wouldn't have got [crosstalk] even close to where I've gotten with that person by emailing back and forth.

[06:25] Yes, I'm not trying to discount the place of this. I'm saying there's a subtle form of starting to serve it that I think we need to be careful for. Sometimes we can look at an older generation that tended to serve the structure of the building.

And we in a younger generation might go "You know, a building is just a building." But in all fairness, all of us are prone to serve forms if we're not careful. A younger generation, a next generation might be subtly serving technology more than they think they are, just like another generation might be serving the building more than they think they are.

How do we guard against institutionalism of any form of shape? We ask ourselves "What are we serving?" That's the point. It's a tool. It's a wonderful tool. But we can be a slave to it. A building can be a wonderful part of ministry.

But we can be a slave to it. Constitution can be a very important part of helping us understand policies, but we can be a slave to it when it becomes more important, you see, than other things. So keep the structures the servants.
Thirdly, I mentioned check that the wine skins can accommodate the fermenting Jesus. What does that mean?

Audience Member: [07:54] [inaudible][07:56]

[08:00] Yes, because Jesus himself is not rigid or unchanging. In a certain sense, there’s a fluidity to Jesus’ mission, how he moves his mysteries, where he’s going. And we sometimes want to take all that and try to fit ‘em into, again, our structures.

And Jesus can’t be fit into rigid structures. That’s, I think, behind that parable he gave about the cloth sewing the new cloth sewing on the old cloth [08:30] that rips it apart. And here’s our challenge in this context of ministry is we keep the cloth new.

We keep the wine skins new. That’s a huge challenge. For those of you in new planted churches, the wine cloth is new. The wine skin, I should say, is new. The cloth is new. But anything that's new immediately begins to get [09:00] old.

As I share in some of my other classes, that goes back to something that I always think about from McManus — that the point of atrophy is at the highest point. Beware of the highest point. Atrophy is always something that started from the top.

Or oldest started from something new. Okay, here’s the fourth. And I think this is where we [09:30] left off here. The church in this context can be, in fact should be, both incarnational and attractional. Our theology would seem to argue that the church in terms of its context of ministry can be, should be both incarnational and attractional.

What I’m addressing here is this tendency to set up these “Are you incarnational or attractional? Or are you non-institutional or [10:00] institutional?” — Saying we’re all institutional, saying here’s another aspect of the context. There is an incarnational and attractional aspect to ministry that we shouldn’t necessarily deny.

Jesus became fresh and blood. And he entered into the neighborhood, so to speak, John 1:14, which is our mandate to enter into the neighborhood to be [10:30] incarnational. So our context for ministry — if we’re here gathered, our context in one sense has to be here, incarnational, fleshing out truth and unbelieving context.

That’s a clear mandate from scripture. But let’s not overlook the fact that the church gathered here as a [11:00] context can also be a legitimate place for ministry, not only a ministry of edification but also a ministry of evangelism.

It can be the context also for reaching lost people. I sometimes think that we have made some of these things so black and white, so right and wrong, instead of saying “Wait a minute. There’s a legitimate context in both places.”

Is there a place for the church to be attractional? I think so. There should be [11:30] times, occasions, places. Let me give you a very fresh illustration. Last night, we opened our church. We called it the harvest festival. We’ve done it now for 2 or 3 years.

But last night we just blitzed the area and just said, “Bring your kids. We’re going to have inflatables. We’re going to have a great time. We’re going to have games. We’re going to have prizes. We’re going to have food.”
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And we just had a ton of people come. I was the [12:00] cashier where we were selling food. I'd say 80 percent of the people I never saw before. And it was wonderful. And in fact, my executive pastor came up at a certain point.

He said, "You know, here's an encouraging word." He said, "A family came up to me and said 'You know, we've never been in this place. And, you know, what we see in this place tells us maybe this is a church we oughta check [12:30] out.'"

There's a place for that. And 1 Corinthians 14, a passage that Sally Morgenthaler brings out in her book "Worship Evangelism," where she says worship is its own evangelism. She builds an argument out of 1 Corinthians 14:25 where the unbeliever sees something that he cannot identify any other place, something that's profound, that's different from anything he's ever experienced.

And makes the [13:00] point that the church-gathered can be also a place where the witness of worship itself. In fact she makes an argument — and I tend to agree with her — that perhaps one of our greatest witnesses is worship, where we historically tended to say "Well, worship is for the believers."

And then we move from that orientation to say "Let's really — let's reduce it down to where it can really relate to the unbeliever, the [13:30] seeker mentality." There's a place for that, and I'm okay with that.

But could it be that sometimes we're missing some of our greatest, most powerful evangelism by letting the outside world come and see authentic worship. And then say "Wow, what is this? This is something profoundly different." There is a case for the context of ministry being here that can also do something that is [14:00] being done here.

The important thing is that it's not a substitute for. And that's where I think the church, a lot of institutional churches, have got off track. It's that they have made it a substitute. They've made it all this.

And they have minimalized this. And what that looks like is like Bob Krepp when he comes to town and we talk about this church in Naples, Florida, which is to me as he describes it [14:30] the ultimate attractional church.

Everything is based on "We're going to have Christian golf tournaments. We're going to have Christian this, Christian this, Christian this..." It's all happening there. Y'all come. So it's just built on attractional. And what that can do is begin to say to people "Hey, this is great. I don't have to really go out there in pagan places if we can just [15:00] get 'em all here."

And that's a misguided theology of context, right? I'm building an argument that it can also be a misguided theology of context to say that this doesn't count, because it does. It has its own place. Okay, any question on that?


[15:51] Yes, there's that pendulum that tends to — when we see we've gone too far over here, we instinctively wanna go way over here. Number five: Our theology would also affirm that the church gathered in a structured context is essential to building up the same.

That's pretty obvious. But I think in terms of building a theology of context we need a context of gathered, because it's in that gathering that we have the accountability. We have the edification. We have the growth that needs to happen, that otherwise [16:30] won't happen —
Because we grow largely in the context of community, because that’s where the gifts gather and grace is ministered to one another. Number six: The church gathered can also serve as a sort of mediator between God and the world. I’ll try to explain what I mean by [17:00] this.

The church gathered context for ministry can serve as a role, a mediator, a mediating kind of role between God and the world. Sometimes the church can be something like this, the church gathered here. And here is God. And here is the world in this kind of priestly ministry that we identified when we talked about the identity of a minister earlier —

That the church can be that role too. What I mean by that is sometimes when the [17:30] church gathers to pray for the community — when our church gathers maybe every now and then to pray specifically for Washington County or for Portland, that can be a legitimate and important role.

Maybe part of it is where we see 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 6:19. They both talk about the indwelling spirit of [18:00] God. But one seems to refer to the individual. And one seems to refer to the corporate body.

So we the church then are the [phonetic] Naas, the temple of God, the indwelling of God’s spirit — just as individually we are this indwelling of the spirit. We can get out in the world and people see us individually.

And if we are truly representing Jesus, they see a foretaste of the kingdom of [18:30] God, because they see the indwelling spirit in us. And the church gathered can be the same thing is what Paul seems to be indicating by talking about the indwelling Jesus in the corporate, where the church itself gathered is referred to the temple of the spirit.

Are you following what I’m saying? The church can have that powerful witnessing role itself as being this temple of the spirit of [19:00] God. And if we truly are acting that out, people walk in and they get a taste of the future kingdom of God, which is its own powerful witness, just as they do individually with us.

Audience Member: [19:16] Do you think that [inaudible][19:19]?

[19:22] In the gathered?

Audience Member: [19:22] In the gathered.

[19:23] Well, you would think so if the church was truly being what it is called to be. You know, I always go back to Larry Crab’s book “Connecting,” in which he makes that powerful point that there would be a lot less need for psychologists if people would release the indwelling spirit of God within them to each other —

Through the love of God, through their spiritual gifts, et cetera. If that’s happening corporately, just imagine how powerful that could be. I just don’t want to discount the power of the [20:00] corporate community. Right now I think there’s a refreshing and important corrective — too much of the church gathered.

But the word we use “incarnational,” which is a great word — and we use it a lot — has to be tempered in balance with the fact that we also need to keep high this importance of the gathered, corporate community, not only for the place of edification but also for its own powerful [20:30] witness that again one could build a case going back to 1 Corinthians 14.
That's the theology of context, something to think about. As you build your context for ministry, I think what I would say in all of this is make sure you keep things in kind of a balance — yeah.

Audience Member: [20:47] [inaudible] [20:48] that nuance of the attractional between us as a community witnessing the power of [inaudible] [20:55] Christ and us having a great program — the difference of when your, let's say, friend's [inaudible] [21:02] program —

And that will get up to Christ versus getting them into the church and we as a body [inaudible] [21:11] through all of our gifts combined, through us being in church together... [Inaudible] [21:17] size of attractional —

[21:20] It seems to me a healthy ministry is where you are building into people this sense that they've got to be radically incarnational out there in [21:30] unchurched, unbelieving context. And you're also building in here that this is going to be a powerful witness itself.

But this witness can agree or disagree. But this witness cannot compromise the worship and the edification and all that needs to happen there. For example, and maybe this is going too far, but let's say a [22:00] willow creek for example that says —

Or that kind of ministry that says "Well, we'll put the worship in mid-week, for the believers may be missing again the fact that maybe one of its most powerful evangelistic ministries might be the worship itself.

Audience Member: [22:16] Yes, I guess that's a [phonetic] good point out there. Thank you.

[22:19] Yes. What Morgenthaler argues for is that — she says that in their surveys, a lot of people — there's a big front door, but there's also a huge back door, because a lot of people come in.

And because they don't [22:30] see so much that powerful worshipping element might after a while say, "Well, it's a lot like what I already experienced. It just got a little God overlay." Now whether that's fair or not, I don't know. That's just her critique.

But these are the kinds of good things that you read that you say "Okay, so I got to step back and say 'What's my theology of context? How am I going to do this?" And in this course on theology of ministry, it's really important that we all think that true — Paul.

Audience Member: [23:00] I was just looking at [inaudible] [23:00]. Are you talking about the one we incorporated [inaudible] [23:06 - 23:12]

[23:13] The 1 Corinthians 6:19 is more the focus on the individual. And the 3:16 would be more the corporate.

Audience Member: [23:23] [inaudible] [23:23]

[23:25] Yes. At least contextually I think, Paul, one might build a case that contextually one is speaking more to the individual being indwelled and one is speaking more to the corporate being indwelled. To go beyond that, I think what Ephesians — is it Ephesians 1 o Ephesians 2? — Uses the metaphor of the church is the temple, that we're building this building.

Again, we're the spirit of God in dwells in Ephesians. Why don't we look at that? Yes, read that for us Paul. And I'm thinking of near the end about 20 — in whom the whole structure — [crosstalk] yeah, you're right.

Audience Member: [24:07] [inaudible] [24:08 - 24:24]
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[24:24] Yes, so there Paul likens the church to a holy temple in which we all are the pieces coming together and then there in which the spirit of God indwells — any other questions on context? ... Okay, let’s shift gears now and talk about requirements for ministry.

As we talk about building a theology, we’ve talked about identity, who is a minster... We’ve talked about the context. Where does ministry take place? I want to talk [25:00] about — what does our theology tell us in terms of requirements?

And let me just start off with a little bit of introduction and just make this point that at the heart of ministry we are caring for souls. So it’s really critical that we pay attention to our own. And that’s a lot of work, isn’t it? And we realize if we don’t get that right it’s really hard to be very effective as ministers.

It’s what our people [25:30] need in us. We can’t overlook this or take this lightly. In fact we might almost say ”Well, why do we have to spend some time on this? We kind of already know some of this.” Maybe we don’t know near as much about it as we should.

Ambrose rightly asked ”Who seeks for a spring in the mud? Or who wants to drink from muddy waters?” Or he puts it another way: ”Who will think a person to be [26:00] useful when this person is useless to himself or to herself?”

Requirements — what’s required? I’m gonna give you about six things or so that are required and spend some time on each one of those, more time on few of them. The first one is obvious. I’m not going to spend much time. But our theology does tell us that, first of all, a requirement of [26:30] a minister is that there is a clear conversion.

First Timothy 1:12-17, as Paul is charging Timothy with ministry, he recounts his own conversion experience, maybe in part. And Paul would do this from time to time to maybe give legitimacy to his ministry, which by the way is a good example for us —

That from time to time we [27:00] look for those opportunities to do that with the people we minster to. Never tire of when you sense it’s the right moment to share your conversion moment, because it’s part of what gives legitimacy, authenticity to your ministry.

I did that this weekend. And I look for opportunities sometimes when I preach to, if it’s the right moment, to just say ”Here’s how God grabbed [27:30] hold of me — 16 years of age, Santa Barbara, Westmont College, at a rock, during a campus life retreat, God grabbed hold of my life.”

Paul is doing that with Timothy. And we need to do that because there are a lot of counterfeits out there. We need to make our calling, our election sure, Paul is writing. So clear [28:00] conversion, make sure that we are clear with people.

Make sure those you work with who are ministers, that their conversion is clear. Number two — and we’ve talked about this. And so I’m just going to say a little bit. And that is as far as requirement for ministry, there needs to be a calling.

We did that in ministerial identity. But it fits a little bit here too, so I just want to say a [28:30] couple things. I want to re-emphasize that we think through our theology in this matter because it’s not an easy issue to think through.

Contemporary ministry as well as an emerging generation places a lot of value on community, which is great, and a certain value on egalitarianism when it comes to ministry, which is again a helpful corrective
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to a clergy-led [29:00] emphasis — what I think Michael Frost refers to as [phonetic] hierarchicalism in ministry.

But again this pendulum can also swing almost too far in the other direction. Paul puts it this way in his book "Shaping of Things to Come." How much longer can the church ignore Paul's radical dissolution of the traditional distinction between priest and laity, between holy mean and common people?

But here's a question, maybe [29:30] in fairness back to Frost: Does Paul do that? Does Paul make this radical dissolution? Or does Paul make distinctions? And I think you can again build a case — and this is all, refers back to calling.

Paul does make a distinction at different points, for example in Ephesians where God has called gifted leaders to equip [30:00] saints. Where you might find this tension — I'll point you to an article by Gordon McDonald in Leadership Journal. It was about 2 years ago.

And it's a journal — in fact you'll know it's the right journal because it's subtitle is "The Call." Each leadership journal has a particular theme. And this one is on the call. And there's a really good article by Gordon McDonald.

And he makes the point that we sort of walk a theological tightrope here. And it looks something [30:30] like this. Here's this tightrope. And on one side it's critical to affirm that we've all been called [clicking on blackboard] into ministry.

James White's book, "Serious Times," makes this point that all of us have two callings as Christians: a calling to forgiveness and reconciliation and, secondly, a calling to follow Jesus into ministry. And it's important that we affirm that.

But on [31:00] the other hand, and McDonald makes this point, it's also important to respect the particular [clicking on blackboard] call to I guess you might say God's leaders — that there's also a theology to build on there.

There's a place to respect the fact that God called certain ones into ministry. And Paul alludes to that again himself. For example in 2 Timothy 1:9 or 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul uses some pretty powerful language to talk about if he doesn't fulfill what he's been called to do.

Now here's McDonald's point. If we nullify this, if we say "Well, we're all called to ministry," and there's not this distinction, we may [32:00] go too far and then nullify the special place God has for ministers to lead the church.

And we may diminish the role or the sense of need for people to follow, which could be the church's undoing. And I go back to something I quoted by Will [phonetic] Willimont who said damage is done to the inequality of the ministry vocation when it is combined with the vocation of all Christians to follow [32:30] Jesus.

That's something you — in our theology, we're going to have to think that through. In that leadership journal, The Call, there's another article by a guy who says "When you think about it in scripture, there are three calls." There's a call to all believers to forgiveness, reconciliation.

There's the call to all believers to follow Jesus and determine their calling, so to speak, what God has called them to. And then there is this third call. This third call for [33:00] particular people, God says "I'm calling you to do this."
And again the argument goes something like this: Not everybody is called to be a Nehemiah. Not everybody is called to be an Amos. Amos is out there and all of a sudden God [claps] calls him and says "I want you to go." Not everybody is called to be a Jonah.

Not everybody is called to be an apostle Paul. The record of scripture is God reaching out and in this distinctive way calling certain people into ministry that [33:30] is not the same as all of us having this general call to serve God.

So it's like; step one, call to forgiveness; step two, called to follow Jesus; step three, for certain ones. How do you build your theology? You’re going to have to work that through, think that through. I think one can make arguments in different ways.

Where do I land on it? I’ve come to the place where I believe that there is a [34:00] place for all three. In my church, I have no hesitation. In fact, I make it a real part of my ministry to remind people often if they follow Christ they’ve been called into ministry.

And I challenge them to find what that is in their lives. All of us have this call on our lives. I preached that this weekend. But in this context in seminary, I also to you would say I [34:30] believe God has called particular people into ministry that’s distinct from what I preached yesterday.

In a certain sense, I’m not speaking to you like I spoke to my congregation yesterday. I think there’s something distinct. And I build that on what I see God doing in a distinctive way with people in scripture.

McDonald, whether you agree with him or not — but he cites an interesting passage, Numbers 16. And maybe it would be good to [35:00] turn to Numbers 16 for a moment. I hadn’t thought about it before, but it’s interesting.

Numbers 16, someone read the first few verses if you would.

Audience Member: [35:12] Now [inaudible][35:14], the son of [inaudible][35:17], the son of [inaudible][35:19] with the [inaudible][35:23], the sons of Elia and all the sons of [inaudible][35:26]. And they rose up before Moses together in the sons of Israel, 250 [phonetic] meters of the congregation chosen in the assembly [inaudible][35:39].

They assembled together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You’ve gone far enough for all the congregation [inaudible][35:47], every one of them. And the Lord is in their midst. So why do you exalt yourself above the assembly of the Lord?"

[35:56] Okay. You see where McDonald might be coming from here. For example, if you build too much of a case for, "You know, we’re all ministers. We’re all in this together. There are no distinctions here," you may be setting yourself up for maybe a moment like this as a leader in a ministry when someone might say "Well, building on the theology you’ve just built here, then what makes you any different than any of us?

So why should we hear you when we [36:30] might hear from someone else?" Now you might say "Well, okay that’s fair. That’s okay." But you also might say "You know, but the church requires leadership, needs leadership, needs a shepherd.

It would seem that this is what God has called me to." And McDonald goes on to make the point here that eventually those who raised this question got swallowed up by an earthquake. So do [laughs] with that what you want. But you’re going to have to think this [37:00] piece of your theology through.
I would just say that again, in terms of requirements for ministry, there has to be a definite conversion. But I would also argue that there has to be a calling, calling that could be dramatic as I mentioned few weeks ago. Or it can be gradual over time, necessitated by the demands of ministry and the place of ministry — yeah, Heather.

Audience Member: [37:25] [inaudible][37:26 - 37:33]

[37:33] I suppose it would be a lot like gifts. I think if you are beginning to see God build a passion in you that you can't explain any other way, like I think I may have shared when I came to seminary and I told everyone before I came the one thing I'd never be in my life is a pastor.

How did that happen? Something God began to do in my life that I can only explain as a God thing. So I think you look at what your passions are [38:00] and you begin to look really hard at what you begin to sense God has designed you for, what he's enabled and gifted you to do.

I think those would be a couple of indicators. And then I think, certainly, another indicator is if you begin to sense people that love you really well and know you really well are saying "You know, I can see God doing something, calling you to something."

How does a person know they're called? For example, I have gone overseas many times in my [38:30] life. And one of my goals is to go overseas every year, whether it's to India or Beirut in particular or maybe some other place.

And I love teaching overseas. But if somebody ever said to me, "Do you have that call in your life to do that? I mean, could you see yourself as a missionary?" And I'd say no. I've never had any sense of that. I mean I love it.

I love what I do there, but I have no compulsion, no desire. I do [39:00] have a compulsion to pastor church, so much so that when I came back here to teach a seminary I couldn't stay away from it. How do I explain that?

So Heather I think that you just have to look at what compels you, what when you're doing it you say I'd rather not do anything else? — Yes, JR.

Audience Member: [39:24] One of the aspects of [inaudible][39:26].

[39:29] Yes. I think the important thing for us to keep in mind is it's not a cookie cutter thing. When you hear someone give their testimony of their call, our tendency is to sometimes go "Well, that didn't happen to me."

But then it shouldn't have necessarily happened to you. Your call will have its own story. Now I would say this. It's also fair — and I think we should all be open to this — that when we say go to seminary, part of seminary — and I think it was for a number of my peers.

I assume it's the same with [40:00] you. It's a sorting out time. You're asking yourself the question: "So is God calling me into this ministry?" Whatever that is — leading a church, going overseas. And seminary, at times, is kind of a shaking out ground where you say "You know, I discovered that I'm not called into ministry" — not that seminary then turns out to be a wasted experience.

My best friend, one of my closest friends I should say, is my financial planner. He is [40:30] smart. He understands finance like no one I know. He graduated from Cornell at the top of his class in economics. He also is one of the smartest graduates that ever graduated from Western.
But he's not leading a church. He came to realize "You know, this is not me." In a certain sense, he's not called into ministry. But on the other side of the coin, he has been powerfully used by God in what he's doing as a [41:00] financial planner.

It takes lots of turns. Justin, you were going to say something.

Audience Member: [41:04] In terms of [inaudible][41:06], it seems like the main difference between the two lines there [inaudible][41:12] would be one of the [phonetic] clipping. Is that your understanding of the difference in the God-given [inaudible][41:17]?

[41:15] Yes.

Audience Member: [41:18] ...Jesus gets those people in particular to the church not because [inaudible] [41:25] specific purpose.

[41:29] Correct. A lot of what I read today is sort of arguing for the fact that these are ongoing, whereas in my training we took pretty much the position that these each had their day. Apostle was more of the foundational stones, going back to Ephesians 1 and 2.

And they served their purpose. And prophets —

Audience Member: [41:51] [inaudible][41:51]

[41:54] Certainly by the end of the first century, and the prophets having served their purpose and their function. But now with the completion of the word of God, that particular role is no longer valid. I'm not saying that's my position.

I'm saying that I was pretty steep in that kind of training. But it's interesting. A lot of what you read today in ministry would make the argument that those roles are ongoing. So it's causing me to rethink that through. I think there is an apostolic dimension of ministry.

In fact I wrote an article for Trinity Journal a few years ago [42:30] entitled "The Recovery of the Prophetic Role for the Preacher." My argument there is that preachers have gone away from their prophetic role.

That goes back to the Old Testament. So I'm rather inconsistent. And I'm not sure I've really though it through enough. What I have come to a pretty settled conviction about — pretty settled, do you like that? — is that I believe there is a distinction of roles.

There is a called role of leadership in the church, whatever [43:00] form that takes. That is distinctive from all of us called into ministry. I do resonate with McDonald when he says "If we carry this too far here, then we lose that distinction and almost lose then our legitimacy of leading the church."

And I do find it somewhat fascinating. Numbers 16 seems to be kind of people rising up and sort of saying "Well, what makes you any [43:30] different than us?" When in reality God in effect, in that story, said "He is distinct. And you challenging it will have a price tag."

Okay, now think about that. Is that fair to make — it's a pretty big leap over to say the minister today, whether it's pastor or whatever role leading the church — is it fair to argue as strongly today?

McDonald would seem to make that [44:00] argument — So, Scott.

Audience Member: [44:02] [inaudible][44:03] his argument is that there is no letter that Paul wrote that addressed specifically church leaders. They're all too general [inaudible][44:16] you have Paul address [inaudible][44:18] an Acts.
Then you have Hebrews 13 [inaudible][44:23].


Audience Member: [44:24] It seems to me that there is a distinction [inaudible][44:31] separates [inaudible][44:32] from the people but [inaudible][44:34] within the people.

[44:37] Yes, but maybe part of the argument for that is these were formative communities who didn't really have too much established in terms of leadership yet. And maybe part of the reason Paul didn't is because he was giving birth to these and moving on.

So maybe there were no point people. Now Colossians — it's interesting. He, at the very end, says "And say to [phonetic] Archippus, take heed to the ministry [45:00] God's called you to." Why does he single out — and some would say Archippus was the leader.

But maybe he wasn't, [laughs] he wasn't living up to his calling. I don't know. I don't know if I'd build too much of an argument on the fact Paul's not addressing leaders, because of where these churches were. I think the thing we can all agree on is that there's clearly leaders.

And are they called? Based on what God has done all through scripture, I think there [45:30] is a recognized calling on them. And those who are called — like I'm assuming most of you have a sense of that. Did I have a profound sense of that when I went to seminary? — Not really.

I couldn't identify with some of my peers who gave this glowing testimony of how — but by the time I graduated from seminary, it was pretty darn clear to me that this is what God had called me to do. That may be your testimony.

I think it's [46:00] really interesting to talk about these things in this day and age though, because it seems like a lot of things are up for grab, whether you talk about context for ministry or role of calling.

These things are much more up for grabs than they were in my day, which only underscores to me why it's so critical to think through your theology. Because I think, in the next generation, it's going to be even more up for grabs, a lot of these things, than they are today.

And I think those who [46:30] win the argument tomorrow are going to be the ones who think through their theology. On that note, let's take a 10-minute break.
Okay, let’s go back to our notes then. I wanna finish up a little bit of what I talked about last time, and then I wanna talk about the Trinitarian center of ministry. We started, by talking about why build theological foundations. And I mentioned it’s because these theological foundations form the lines and shape the angles of ministry. If we don’t have our theology right we can get ministry all messed up. Whatever ministry we do.

And let me give an example, [00:47] in our church right now I think I’ve been more impressed, more than ever, over the last few years, with a grace-centered ministry. I just find people hunger so much for grace today. When we use phrases like, you know, we wanna be a place where failure connects with grace. It resonates. And I think part of it, because particularly in Baptist circles, we’ve not necessarily been known so much for grace. We’ve actually been very – quite [01:17] graceless. But your theology, you need to make sure you have intact because you know as pendulum’s tend to swing you can – one could find themselves going too far over here, and say: okay so where’s the place for repentance and justice and holiness.

You know theology’s what keeps ya centered. Forms the lines, shapes the angles. It’s, as I mentioned last time secondly, what guided the early ministry of the church. [01:47] [clears throat] I took ya through the fact that many of the early theologians were bishops, and bishops were theologians. And let’s remind ourselves of the fact that it’s not because – well they were just – they just loved theology more then maybe ministers do today. They were forced to. They were forced to because the church was in its infancy.

And so there were all kind of heresies afoot that were, you know, that’s why you have all these early church [02:17] councils, in Nicaea and other places around there. Just because, there were just horrific heresies and you can see the devil behind all of this. Here’s the church struggling, still small, theologians needed to kind of rise to the surface and lead the church. And these largely were the pastors of the day.

When you go back and you study that period of time, if some of these great leaders did not come to the fore [02:47] like we’re gonna read – Gregory and some of the others. Cristisum [phonetic] and others. Who knows what would’ve happened. I mean, i-it had to obviously be a very God-thing, that these men stood up. Because Christology, Trinitarianism, all kinds of things would’ve gotten really screwed up, because as you know when you go back, you just read some of the voices that were tryin’ to get the church off-center. So they had to, they faced these huge debates. They had no choice but to be theologians. [03:17]

But here’s the key. The key is they never separated it from their ministry. At least in that time period. The two went together. They sought to unfold the mystery of God. At the same time they were seeking to bring people to a deeper level of spiritual growth. So it wasn’t one or the other, it was both / and. But this began to change, and there were different influences, and I think I mentioned last time that one of them was...[03:47] what?:

Audience: [03:48] [inaudible]

[03:49] Well, before the renaissance. There was more of the monastic movement of those who began to, withdraw from the practice. Who were still theologians, so to speak, but began to desire to get away. And maybe in part what drove some of that – I don’t know I’m not a great historian on this and don’t wanna
pretend to be…but I suspect some of it was that marriage – unfortunate marriage of church and state.

And in that marriage of church and state whaddya think began [04:19] to happen?

Audience Member: [04:22] Compromise.

[04:23] Yes, just the tendency of compromise. You’re dealing with power now. And not o-only maybe your own temptations to power but, the temptations of others around you. And I think guys like Cristisum [phonetic] and others who, I mean they ran, they literally ran from the parish, so to speak. They ran for the mountains. Because they ran from being in a situation where ya had maybe a king or a queen or, important people [04:53] and all the pressures that came with, ya know, don’t say things that are gonna, ya know, if you say things that are gonna questions my immoral lifestyle I-I will do great damage to you.

And-and so y-y-a know some began to say: “I-I don’t want any of this.” So there began to be a-a bit of a break between theology and practice. By, in part, a monastic movement. That then led to, ya know, [05:23] down the road a number of centuries we have the renaissance, and we have the enlightenment. Where, now with man beginning to vault reason as supreme, there began to be again, this division, and now truth was located in the academy. And truth began to be relegated into facts and ideas. And search for truth became [05:53] more of a cognitive enterprise. Limited demands reason empirical evidence. Truth began to become more about knowing truth then loving truth. And it wasn’t so much about being transformed by truth anymore.

Someone put it this way: “Theology worked to be considered [06:23] intellectually accessible on modern terms of rationality.” I’ll say that again: theology worked to be considered intellectually accessible on modern terms of rationality. So you had those, maybe prone in their theology to wanna be accepted more in the academy and to…accommodate to a rational-centered approach to things, and this gap between theology and ministry began to widen. [06:53] The line between academic theology and practical theology wa-began to be drawn by the academic faculties in Europe, which then was imported to Divinity Schools in Am-in America.

And as I mentioned this bridge connecting practical theology to pure theology began to be constructive for one-way traffic, and practical theologians didn’t have the union cards and were not [07:23] admitted across the bridge. And a divorce of sorts occurred. Theology was shoved to the margins. And ministry returned the favor. By shoving theology to the margins. And we see, I think again…do you see that? If it-is it just me or do you see that a bit today? Where you see evidences of this. Where you can be-sometimes be in a-a [07:53] conference of practitioners who don’t give much weight to theology. And in a sense what is that? Is it-it is a bit of a reaction. It is sort of okay well…so, you can separate from us we can separate from you. Methodology separated from its m-theological home, and it began to look for shelter in-in a places that invited it. More receptive homes such as psychology and business. [08:23]

And that’s led again to people like Eugene Peterson you see, and others who have stood up as- I may have mentioned in written books like “Workin the Angles” in which they say – in which he says in his introduction: “Ministers are leavin’ the ministry in droves.” Not that their names are no longer on the door posts. They still are. It’s just that they departed from the ministry and they’ve become something else. What is it that they’ve become? Well he says they’ve-ministers have become [08:53] … they’ve become therapists. Not there is anything wrong with therapy, it’s just that that’s not the first calling. At least in the pastoral side of things. Or they’ve become CEO’s. And missed what they were called to be.

This is the result. Without a home where theology and ministry co-habit and complement and build off one another, you have some unfortunate things that happen. On the ministry side, [09:23] ya have
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ministry that’s concerned largely with again, methods, and techniques, and strategies. And I see that a lot. And I see it sometimes with my peers. That-the questions that we largely talk about in ministry are not about – not so much about theology, it’s about the next program or the latest strategy or the latest techniques.

Without the influence of sound theology we can become, as Peterson puts it: “Reduced to technicians. Or therapists.” Or maybe perhaps a more, something that seems to be a more popular metaphor today is artists. Not that there’s anything wrong with artists. Again, there’s nothing wrong with any of these terms. It’s only when they begin to take center stage in ministry.

On the theology side theology gets reduced to academics. And less oriented towards ministry. And when that happens then theology becomes irrelevant. An example of that – at least for me – as largely a pastor, is when I go to like, ETS conferences. And I find myself looking hard to find any pre-presentation that I can take to my church, that anyone in my church would say “oh that sounds interesting”. We’re saying that it’s critical that they come back together. That somehow these two, that once kind of had a nice marriage and then got separated and almost seemed to have gotten a divorce, kinda need to make up. Theology-ministry need to come back because they realize they can’t live, without each other. They really can’t. Theology can’t live without ministry.

Audience Member: [coughing]

[11:20] And ministry can’t live without theology. Y’all-ya’ll agree with that dontcha? Sometimes when I go to like a pastor’s convention, I wanna stand up and say: “Hey, what do ya-no you can’t live without theology. You need theology.” And sometimes when I’m at ETS meetings I wanna say: “Hey, come on. Make room. Bring your wife back.” So it’s critical they come together because ministry only becomes effective when we allow God’s truth to penetrate hearts and minds.

And it’s because we’re also dealing with some huge issues…today. We’re re-thinking mission, we’re talkin’ about reforming culture. We are in this whole, season of change. And we better have our theology down. So, when we look at influential voices today, for example like the McLaren or the Driscolls or the Hybels, at least in church ministry, or other voices in your particular areas of ministry. We better know how to critique them, before we just buy everything they say. So we need to come back to where we were. The bridge needs to allow for two-way traffic. And the breach has gotta be repaired, that’s another way to put it. What I’m saying is that ministers need to become theologians again, and theologians need to become ministers. [12:51]

The last thing on your notes, “why do we ne-need to do all of this” is because the theology of ministry is what our people need from us. It’s not just what we need for ourselves, it’s what our people need. Your people need whoever you minister to, whatever…kind of ministry you’re in. They need you to be a minister/theologian. They need that from you. They don’t just want your theology. But on the other side of the coin they just don’t want your care. They-They’ve gotta have both.

People I minister to need to know I care for them, but they also need to know that I can answer questions like, “Is God good?” You know: “Why do these things happen in my life. Where am I going? Where is the universe going?” I mean, these are fundamental issues I better have some answers. But they just don’t wanna hear it from a cold theologian either. So. Okay. So this is all largely introduction, but I’m- you hear what I’m arguing for. Theology of ministry. That we bring these two together.

Questions? [silence] Yes?
Audience Member: [14:08] It seems that in some ways too, it’s not just theology and ministry but it’s the content that encourages. I heard a lot of talk about ya know, is this church based or is this academic based, or inside or outside of the church. And it seems that’s maybe part of the [inaudible] [14:22] too.

[14:24] We set these-

Audience Member: [14:25] -these arbitrary[crosstalk] locations where this happens at.

[14:31] Yes, right. Yes. Yes. I think I may have mentioned that I would see that a lot when I first started in church ministry and was an an adjunct here, and would hear people disparage one another on both sides. And that’s what has to change. And I think in some respects, in some ways I see in some areas it is changing and it’s good. I don’t mean to sound all negative here. I see some theologians who are very practical orie-in orientation and I see some out there in ministry who are very theological [15:01] in orientation, and they’re a breath of fresh air.

Okay, we’re gonna shift now and talk about this…Trinitarian center. So what I wanna try to do here is web theology and ministry here, by first of all talking about God. And the first statement I wanna make here is that ministry first of all concerns itself with the practice of God. If we’re gonna understand a theology of ministry, if we’re gonna get our bearings [15:31] for doing ministry, then, the natural place to start is with God, right? And we ask our self the question: Who God is, what does God do, what has God done, how does that inform me about ministry?

That should at least be one of our fundamental questions, every time we do ministry. Is…this…what Jesus did? Is this…who Jesus is? Is this how the Holy Spirit works? [16:01] If we find ourselves departing, that probably is a clue right then and there we better stop what we’re doin’ right? So, let’s think for a moment. Just when we think about God and ministry, who God is, or what God does, this informs me about my ministry…I must relational…what else? [silence]

Audience Member: [16:30] God is relational.

[16:32] Yes. So, because of who God is, it doesn’t give us any real room to be a non-relational minister right? There’s just no place that one can justify that. Though some of us do. What else? Because of who God is, or what God does, this informs me about my ministry…I must relational…what else? [silence]

Audience Member: [17:01] God is forgiving.

[17:03] Okay.

Audience Member: [17:05] So that grace to abound.

[17:06] Yes. So, not only for me as a personally, but for the ministry that I have a role in. I must try to build a very reconciling kind of atmosphere. A place where forgiveness is real. And yet, paradoxically, that’s one of the things churches [chuckles] are not known for. Churches can ironically be some of the most unforgiving, places in the world. Which makes absolutely no sense when we think about who God is.

Audience Member: [17:43] Serving.

[17:44] Yes. Jesus comes, as the one who did not come to be served but to serve. Which again, tells us a lot of what our orientation is to be. Seminary, to a large extent, is servant training. Is a s-servant training institution, if we think about our theology. And yet again, sometimes if we’re not careful we can go out
there seeking to get, the position [18:14] in ministry so people can follow us, serve us. That’s not what ministry is.

I think it was Derek Tidball – I’ll refer to him now and then. D-e-r-e-k Tidball. I don’t know if—I think he might be in some of the books I gave you. But he is a pastoral theolo-theologian in England. Says: “Ministry is only legitimate to the extent that it is derived from God.” Ministry is only legitimate [18:44] to the extent that it is derived from God. God is the starting point. Unless ministry begins here it will spin off, and become controlled by someone or something else.

When we look at scripture we discover that God’s ministry is Trinitarian. That is, there is Father, there is Son, there is Spirit. And all ministry must be [19:14] grounded in this…Anderson puts it this way, in this, “Intra-Trinitarian ministry”. That is, the Father leading us. Christ with us. The spirit working within us. Or, I’m gonna break it down this way. The Father as the origination of ministry, Jesus as the model of ministry, and the spirit as the power for ministry. [19:44] So we’re gonna look at this model being God, that then helps define ministry for us. And we’re gonna look I’m-what I wanna do is break it down at looking at the trinity from the three angles, and see what they each teach us.

So let’s start with Father…y’all with me so far? See where we’re goin’— wh-what we’re tryin’ to do here? Father is origination of ministry. Ministry begins with understanding the ministry of the Father. And when we survey the ministry of the father, here are several things at least, we begin to [20:14] discover. He is, you ready, this is a profound thought, ready? Okay. He is Father. Who demonstrates his fatherhood not with sentimental, or indulgent love. But he demonstrates it with a purposeful love. A purposeful love that sometimes disciplines those who go astray. Deuteronomy 28.

When you look at the [20:44] ministry of Father in scripture, you also discover that he is a-a essentially shepherd. When Jacob reflected on God, in Genesis 48. It’s one of the first descriptions of God’s ministry in scripture. He refers to him as shepherd. Genesis 48:15. Which is how the Psalmists describe the ministry of God. And God throughout, especially the Old Testament, [21:14] is described as the one who leads, who pastures, who carries, who heals. I love Moses who describes God this way at times in the wilderness, with the people, as the one who “carried them through”.

God is also referred to as Savior, who saves his people. Isaiah12, verse 2: [21:44] “Surely God is my salvation.” He saves people through the Exodus. Where am I goin’ with all of this? Well, to a certain extent, if ministry originates in God and we start here with Father, then what does that say to us? That says that there is a father role to our ministry as well. Now you might say well that seems kinda odd. I mean am I really a-a father? I mean [22:14] this isn’t a catholic seminary is it, are we training to go out and be called Father? I’ve had some call me that. That – can tell they have a catholic background. I have to say: “no, no, wait a minute I’m not father.” But in a certain sense, I am, and you are. It’s part of what we sign up for.


In 2 Corinthians 11, and I never saw it until I read it at the end of Purvis. Maybe if you’ve had [23:14] a sneak towards the very back, he gives I thi-an appendix and talks about this, and it’s a great thought. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul portrays himself as father. Maybe in a way you haven’t thought of. I hadn’t thought of this. Notice if you ta-take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians 11. 2 Corinthians 11:1: “I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness, but indeed you are bearing with me for I am jealous for you
with a Godly jealousy, [23:44] for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ—catch these words—"that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin." What is Paul liken himself to, as a minister?

Audience Member: [23:59] Paul...[inaudible]

[24:01] Yes. Isn’t that an incredible thought? Paul likens himself to a father, walking down the aisle to present the bride to her husband. And Paul likens himself therefore, I take it, in the same way as one who will present those he ministered to, to the groom in heaven. That’s a scary thought isn’t it? Just an amazing thought. I have a daughter. One day, [24:31] I hope I can walk down an aisle with her, and I hope I can in affect say: “I poured myself into her. I didn’t—by God’s grace my best to shape her, mold her, exhort her, encourage her to stay pure. And here she is. And I’m presentin’ her to you.” And Paul says that’s what he—a role he likens himself to as minister, is in affect saying: [25:01] here’s this Corinthian church. And well, there’s parts of the book of, you know, [joking] Corinthians that you can almost hear Paul say, “Here! Have her!”

Audience: [25:11] [laughing]

[25:11] “Phew, I’m done with her.” You know. [laughing] But I don’t think that’s the kind of father he’s talkin’ about here. I think he’s saying “oh if I can just bring her, to the groom, at the marriage.” Well, think about that for you and your ministry. I mean, think about that for a moment. What does that mean? What are the implications? Tell me, what are the implications of that? Mark, what’s the—what are the implications?

Mark: [25:41] I think I’d really get to know the folks that are under my care. I think there’s a verse in Hebrews, I don’t remember what chapter, I think it’s thirteen. And it refers to those that are overseeing you, I think that [crosstalk] are responsible to give an account [crosstalk] [inaudible] [25:58] a little more seriously.

[26:00] Yes. Hebrews 13:17. Yes. I hope you guys aren’t missing this. I mean just think about the implications. It scares me.

Audience Member: In Purvis’ book. [crosstalk] Two of the...the first two people that he writes about I believe, fled once they were ordained. Just because of the seriousness of the task of caring for so [inaudible] [26:20].

[26:20] Yes. It’s the same thing. Yes.

Brian: [inaudible] [26:22] not being willing to give up on those we’re trying to nurture. I think if you look at someone in a church setting versus in their home setting and if they’re not home they’re gonna keep working with that child.

[26:33] You know, that’s a good point Brian, and you know it says something in this whole father picture...how many are fathers here? Okay, a-a good chunk of you are. Here’s something I’ve learned about being a father. First of all, I discovered a whole dimension of my heart I never knew. It’s a whole different kind of love. I continue to be amazed how I can one moment want to kill...[joking]

Audience: [27:01] [laughter]

[27:02]...almost. Someone, that I’m parenting, and find myself like 30minutes later restless in bed until I go up and tell that person I love them. I mean, I can get angry if someone cuts me off in the freeway, hope I never see them again. But then, I can have someone that I just wanna kill and yet there’s something
about a father’s love that just, cries out and wants to love and be loved. It’s just a profound experience.

In a sense, that’s part of this whole thing. When we see what ministry is, what is the theology of ministry, we start with who God is. God is Father, which has implications for us. We are Father too. And then has profound implications for how serious we take ministry and what we do, and how we love our people. You know sometimes, we don’t love our people like a father. We go well, ya know if you’re gonna treat me this way then fine. I mean, why is it pastors, for example, leave average, [28:02] every two and a half years. I bet a big part of it is cuz they never got their theology right that they’re called to be Father. And that means, ya are gonna get people mad at you. I mean sometimes I’ll say to my son, “why are you treating me like this?” and he’ll go “but Dad, I’m 18 I’m supposed to treat you this way.”

There’s a certain amount of truth to that. I mean, sometimes you’ll say, “Why”, to your church, “are you treating me like this?” Not there there’s an answer like that I think. But it’s just that you have to roll with it, you have to love through it all. And a lot of us aren’t willing to love through it. We just say, “Okay, fine. The heck with you guys. I’ll find somebody that wants to love me.” And the problem with that is, they always love ya for the first few hours. And then, it happens. [28:53]

There’s also a shepherd role here that we saw with God, that informs us. That informs us again that a-an essential part of our role as minister is shepherd. Whatever that means. We do know some of the things that that refers to. Feeding. Drawing people to God. Strengthening the weak. And we see it again in such passages as 1 Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28. [29:23] Where Paul, Peter, exhorting those who are ministers to shepherd. Shepherd people. And I come back to Tidball who says, “the image of the shepherd is the underlying paradigm of ministry.” The image of the shepherd is the underlying paradigm of ministry. This single image contains within it references to authority, to tender care, [29:53] to specific task, to courage, to sacrifice.

Though when we think of God – here’s the last thing and then we’ll take a break here for a moment – when we think of God in this saving role, in a certain sense that’s part of ours, at least we’ve been given this ministry of reconciliation. Helping people cross the gap from their own Egypt to Israel, from alienation to reconciliation. [30:23] 2 Corinthians 5:18. So that means that a central part of a minister’s task is to minister grace.

Now it’s not our ministry to achieve reconciliation. We’re not responsible for someone else’s piety, this is God’s responsibility. We can only do so much. Sometimes we try to do-to do more then we’re called to do and that can lead to great fatigue. [30:53] But what I wanna just close with, is saying that nonetheless we do have this ministry of being like God. God s-serves as an essential model for us, and our ministry is derived from His ministry. And that’s confirmed by Jesus, who also came to reflect the Father’s ministry, and he serves as a model for us. John 14:31, “I do as the Father commanded me.” And now catch what I’m gonna say [31:23] here. Jesus did not come to introduce his ministry. You with me? Jesus did not come to introduce his ministry. He came to do what?

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He came to carry out, the will, of the Father. You see where I’m going here? We’re not graduating from seminary to go out and introduce our ministry. Looking at God as the model here, as the working model, we’re not here to introduce our ministry. Sometimes someone says to us, “Well tell-tell me about
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your ministry.” Probably in a more-to be more theologically precise, our answer should be, “Well [32:08]
lemme tell you about His ministry. That he has called me to do.”

So Jesus when he said, “I do as the Father commanded me” in John 17 at the end, ya know in a sense,
’Okay, I’ve carried out what you’ve called me to do. This is all about God’s ministry.’ And we just need to
remember, this is about God’s ministry. It’s about His ministry not our ministry. And so Jesus came not to
the world with the ministry based [32:38] upon a response to human need. But with the ministry based
upon obedience to the Father. In other words, here’s again where you can see applicationally how this
fits. He-the needs of the world did not set the agenda for Jesus. Ya thinkin’? Didja catch that last point?
The needs of the world…what did I say?

Audience: [33:05] Did not set the agenda...[crosstalk] [inaudible] [33:06]

[33:06] Did not set the agenda for Jesus. What set the agenda? Who set the agenda? Father set the agenda.
Jesus comes to carry out the agenda of the Father. Who sets the agenda for you, as a minister? The
people? See? We think a lot of times that we have to keep following the agenda of the people, and a
theology of ministry [33:36] helps you realize, “No wait. No, you don’t set the agenda. God sets the
agenda.”

Classic illustration: Mark chapter one, big healing service in Peter’s home. Everybody comes out,
everybody’s all excited. Jesus is doing some wonderful healing. Gets late in the night, everybody goes to
bed, they wake up in the morning and what? Where–where’s Jesus? He’s supposed to be here. [34:06] And
they go on a search-send out a search party. And they go lookin’ and where do they find ‘im?

Audience: [inaudible] [34:14]

[34:14] He’s out in-the wilderness praying. So, they kinda go “hey ‘scuse me. Nice. I’m glad you’re
havin’ this little devotional time with…the Father. That’s good, that’s all good, can ya get back home?
We’ve got a-there’s still a line of people that’ve been waiting for you.” And Jesus says the most amazing
thing. What’d he say? “I-I’m sorry, time got away from me. Okay let’s go let’s get back.” Is that what he
said?

Audience: [inaudible] [34:43]

[34:46] Let’s go on to other villages. Because, I came for this purpose: to carry out the will of the Father,
who did not call me to be a faith healer. Father set the agenda. Father sets the agenda for us. Our ministry
is an extension of His ministry. Our ministry is what he has called us to do. That helps us, doesn’t it? Just
that little bit of theology [35:16] of ministry; I think can begin to liberate some of you here. If not liberate
you, at least protect you from what you might be oriented to do if you’re not careful. And that is to let
your ministry become hijacked by others with their agenda.
A couple of people asked about, and maybe part of was provoked by Gregory here, is just this whole aspect of call to ministry and I’m going to try to address a little bit of that in this lecture. And I’m just trying to build block by block this theology of ministry and started with looking at the whole foundation of the Trinity. And made the statement that ministry is grounded in intra-Trinitarian ministry. Does that make sense? All ministry is grounded based in intra-Trinitarian ministry.

Male 2: Are you saying within the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then it happens within the interdynamic approval?

At least what I am trying to say by that statement is that as we build our theology of our ministry the first place we go to is the Trinity. And ask the question what does the Trinity teach me about ministry? When we looked at that last week I broke it down into those three components. What does the Father teach us about ministry? The Father’s ministry is a ministry that’s largely about what?

Shepherding, caring so shepherd becomes an essential metaphor that we see from Genesis 48 all the way through Psalm 23. Isaiah 49, et cetera. Yes.

Male 2: When you have this shepherding site of God, of the Father but the real is King.

Yes.

Male 2: And there’s churches where it’s like oh you’re going pastor because he’s God but the real is King.

Yes.

Male 2: In the Old Testament Jesus is God’s [inaudible] but the real is King.

Yes.

Male 2: There are a lot of metaphors. And what I tried to do there is just use perhaps, I think it might be fair to say the essential metaphor. I mean there are a lot of them. Paul uses a lot of metaphors as well, but he tends to circle around one, one or two. I’m not trying to suggest it’s the only metaphor but it is maybe the leading metaphor that therefore tells us something anyway about ministry. And what I drive from it is that ministry it largely about caring.

We then went to Jesus and we looked again and saw in him that there, again, is this essential metaphor of shepherd. That he comes, he is the shepherd part excellence. And we looked at his ministry and step back from it to say, okay what did we learn about ministries we look at Jesus. Ministry is largely relational because Jesus was relational. In fact what’s another word here, he was – the word I used, he is incarnational. He comes and he comes into our neighborhood.

As I was saying to my church yesterday, Jesus didn’t yell out from heaven, by the way if you all need any help I’m here. Just you know, give me a call. I’m available between these hours. Nor did he come and walk this Earth and say you know I’ve got my headquarters in South Jerusalem on Murray Street. If you need me, come by. Be happy to help.

And Jesus didn’t come and say, you know where’s a good church? I’m looking for a good church to really get in with the body and spend – no he came into the neighborhood in an incarnational way. He came and he went all the way to the worst of the worst. It’s amazing isn’t it, still to think about that.
When Jesus came the first thing he said, kind of, well not the first but I mean, somewhere early on he basically said, you know where’s a good party to go to? You guys know? And that’s what he did, where he went, and where he hung out.

I just love that, because again, [04:00] you can’t imagine Jesus in that setting, kind of going, hey you know what you’re wearing offends me. I didn’t appreciate that statement. This is what I imagine. I imagine Jesus there with the tax collectors and the prostitutes and they’re probably all eating and just having a good time and probably in some of their coarse language saying things, and I can hear Jesus saying, you think that’s a good joke? Let me tell you. I mean probably no one knew [04:30] jokes like Jesus. Right?

I mean who could probably be funnier than Jesus without the coarseness, without – I just imagine him there and just people probably laughing like crazy. I think a lot of Christians would go, oh, I just can’t imagine that. Because our view of Jesus is I think, Philip Yancey said, the Prozac Jesus. He just walks around completely without any emotion because all the movies make him out like that right? [05:00] You know he’s walking, you know and everybody’s walking with him and there’s absolutely no expression. I am the Father of One. You know kind of thing.

Whereas I mean what you picture when you read scripture is he must have really connected because it wasn’t like they threw him out and said, hey, you’re wrecking the party, get out of here. But they kept inviting him back without compromising holiness, [05:30] which therefore says to us, that in our ministry, ministry is by its very definition, its nature is going into the neighborhood. It’s incarnational.

We also saw that ministry is by its very nature it’s inclusive. Jesus doesn’t exclude, he includes. To say to us, our ministry has to be inclusive. And ministry by its very nature I just give you another one, by way of reminder, [06:00] is subversive. What do we mean by that? Jesus’s ministry was subversive, suggesting ours is subversive. The nature of ministry is subversive. It means what? That we’re sly? Okay, maybe another word.

Male 3: [06:19] At least the impact and it can’t hurt. It can impact people where they don’t want to be impacted and they should.

[06:28] And impacting maybe in ways that are not so [06:30] obvious upfront but work interiorly in a powerful way that transforms and changes. So people didn’t realize it at first. Like his parables did. Like salt that’s imperceptible or seed working beneath the surface, which Jesus, again remember, he said this is what the kingdom of God is like. It’s like someone who plants seed, and the farmer sows, and he works at it day and night and then something mysterious happens [07:00] that no one can explain. You know there’s a crop.

That is the nature of ministry. It is not so obvious. It’s inclusive, incarnational. The spirit then also comes along and teaches us something else about ministry, that ministry what, what did we say on that? What’s the spirit’s primary role as he comes Pentecost? What is he – he’s coming to give power so that the very nature of ministry [07:30] if we’re thinking Trinitarian is that ministry has something of power to it. And if it doesn’t have power, it means what? It doesn’t have?

Male 4: [07:43] Spirit.

[07:44] It doesn’t have spirit because that’s the spirit of God’s foundational roles. So we’re getting a little bit of a feel of ministry. Now what I’d like to do is move to a second piece of this and then talk about the nature of minister. We talked about ministry but I’d like to talk about the nature [08:00] of minister. And talk about identity, because if we’re going to effectively ministry and have a good theology of ministry we
have to know who we are. And as I have shared with some of you that one of the real crises is we don’t know who we are.

We know we’re minister. We’re here training for ministry. But what does minster mean anyway? And sometimes we may not be sure. And part of it goes to misguided models. [08:30] In fact let me go back here and ask a question, what’s created this confusion regarding identity? There are a lot of things, but I’ll give you at least three I’ve thought of. And one is a lack of training. We don’t know who we are because no one really has helped us understand who we are. I’m not sure when I graduated from seminary back in the dark ages that I knew really who I was when I came out of seminary. I knew I was a seminary graduate [09:00] but I didn’t really know what – who I was as a minster. I didn’t know for a long time.

Part of it is a failure of training, part of it is misguided models. And when I say misguided models who do we fundamentally view ourselves as, we almost can’t help but see ourselves as if we’ve given our whole self to seminary for a few years. What begins to get kind of locked in our brains as far as our identity? [09:30] Well actually we go out and now there’s – I think there’s kind of a shift. Now we’re no longer the student. We’re a graduate. So who are we?

Well the model I’ve had in front of me for quite a while is teacher. So I went out and saw myself as teacher. Now is that a bad model? Well I can’t say it’s a bad model since I’m a teacher now. And it’s okay if I’m going to out and as a minister [10:00] be a professor and some of you are – have said here in this course I’m training to be a teacher. This is the future teacher role.

But that’s okay unless we’re going to be something else. So I sometimes use the illustration for me, I ended up as pastor but because I still didn’t know who I was I first of all approached my ministry as teacher, which means the very first day I preached a sermon I got up and what do you think I did? [10:30] Audience: [inaudible] [10:31]

[10:32] As you can see this is a [hotpoxlugomina] [10:34] here we’re looking at. It’s found only here in the New Testament. Although as we look at the second word, it’s a – Paul uses this seven times here in Philippians. In fact it’s only found eight times in all of the rest of scripture. And everybody was just right there on the edge of their seat. Give us more. No, actually the crisis was when I preached my first sermon [11:00] I got to the end. What do you think I did? We’ll take this up next week. No, I didn’t say that. But I had been trained to think like that. So I get to the end, I don’t know what to do. Everybody is looking at me. I’m looking at them.

So I did what any good pastor does. What do you think? Let’s pray. Pray is always our out, isn’t it? [11:30] You know some day someone is going to write an article on the abuses to prayer. Ever notice when you’re trying to get everybody’s attention. Hey, everybody, come on. Hey. You know no one is listening. And then what do you do? You always pull out your prayer card. Okay, let’s pray. All the sudden it gets quite. You know? You go this works good. Or I’ve got to get the choir out of here and I don’t know really what would be a good way to – let’s pray. Okay, that’s your queue. Exit. So that’s what I did. [12:00]

Male 5: [12:01] The same thing it’s always the same thing when you transition [inaudible] [12:07]

[12:08] And it was pretty easy to pray that first time, but I remember driving home thinking who am I? I’m somebody else. But I wasn’t sure who I was. And I’m simply saying that you have to wrestle with that too. Whatever you’re going to be you’re going to be minister and as I’ve heard you share a little bit of where you’re going with your lives that’s going to take a lot of different forms, but who is a minister? [12:30] And what is your essential identity?
Part of what creates the confusion is misguided models such as teacher for me, or technician is another misguided model. I think a lot of people see today because they go to conferences and it’s all about how you can be a better technically in your ministry. It hasn’t answered the question who you are but it’s certainly focused on helping you do it better.

[13:00] And then of course another, on this number two misguided models, is often times we begin to take our identity from what everybody else expects us to be. That’s the worst of all. Because the problem is whatever ministry you go in, everybody has an expectation. Correct? I mean if you’re in a church, everyone has an expectation, if you’re pastor, of what you should be. And some of the things I’ve listed over my tenure [13:30] as a pastor is errand boy. I mean when I first started out, in my very first church, I remember this lady calling me one day and she said, “Pastor, Pastor John?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Pastor I need you.” I said, “Okay.” She said, “I need some Pepto-Bismol. Can you pick it up?” I thought, okay. Is that who I am? Am I an errand boy?

Referee. [14:00] Sometimes all the sudden you’re thrust into being a referee. You know between a husband and wife and they all want you to take sides. That’s the problem. A lot – they want you to take sides. And when you don’t take sides, then they get mad at you; therapists, repairman, rabbit’s foot. Rabbit’s foot is one of my favorites. I had this guy that would every now and again call me and go, hey, Pastor John. I’m going on a couple of appointments [14:30] you just want to kind of ride along and we can just visit? Of course in my early naïveness, well of course. Yes. It would be great to be with you Paul. And then, come in I want to meet a perspective job here. Oh this is my pastor. Suddenly I realize, I’m just this guy’s rabbit’s foot.

Punching bag. I won’t go into all the stories on that one. Savior, keeper of tradition, justice of the peace, recruiter, gateway to the flock, [15:00] employee, healer, priest, CEO, friend, spiritual cheerleader, matchmaker, well you can see after several years I was thoroughly screwed up. I didn’t know who I was. You know it’s kind of a work of art. It’s whatever people see. So what’s created this confusion? Misguided models and lack of training are a couple of things. [15:30] What’s needed is the theology of identity. I needed to figure out who I was just like you do. And I’m trying to save you some grief by figuring this out before you go out there and let people figure it out for you.

So you go back and you build theology and you say, okay, I should take, first of all, my essential identity, it goes back to who God is, as we mentioned last time. And in particular I’d like to focus on a couple of things here. I think first of all we say, [16:00] who am I? It goes back to who Jesus is because Jesus clearly established what minster is. I mean he came and flushed out God. In it he tells us what minister is. And we look at that and we say, okay, that begins to give me a clue of who I am. I am shepherd, whatever that means. I’m also this because this is who Jesus was. Secondly I’m servant. Jesus didn’t just model servanthood, he was servant. Mark 10:45. I came not to be served but to serve, which implies several things. [17:00] It implies that I get in sync with God. Get in sync with what God is doing and serve him. That my first task is not to serve to people, it’s serve God.
Here’s the second implication for ministry that I don’t use my position to appear busy or important or to exercise power over but I use my position to serve people. [18:00] Matthew 23. And I resist any urges to dominate, browbeat, control, coheres, because none of those things are marks of a servant. I’m saying the obvious and yet there are just a lot of people in ministry that don’t understand that. Seminary is essentially servant school, servant training school. [18:30] Essentially what seminary is. Somebody said that to me when I was in seminary early on and I always remember that. It just kind of puts things in perspective. I mean this what makes seminary different than a whole lot of other institutions. You’re not training for some important position with a lot of money and you’re training to go out and be servants.

So who am I? In all this mix, now you could take all those things that people assumed I should be and say [19:00] well, you could be a servant to all that. Isn’t that okay? Well not quite, because there are some other things.

A logical place then, and when I began to really work through my identity then I went to the Apostles, who give their own models of ministry. I found some similarities because you see shepherd again come up. Peter understood that role, 1 Peter 5:2. Paul [19:30] references that with the word pastor or shepherd in Ephesians 4:11. It becomes sort of the metaphorical cast that shapes a lot of ministry.


Another metaphor that used is, is here’s a third one. Steward. Again, back to 1st Corinthians 4:1 Let a man regard us as stewards of God’s mysteries. I’m just trying to begin to lay out a foundation here theologically, who are you as minster? You are a shepherd. You care for people. You are a servant. You take your queues from someone else. [21:00] And you are a steward that means you are to manage resources. 1st Corinthians 3:5, same passage. Yes. Paul uses both in that same verse.

What is steward? It’s a technical term of that day for someone who managed, ordered, regulated estates. Peter uses it, borrows from it to describe the responsibility of stewarding gifts. [21:30] Paul used it to talk about stewarding what? Do you remember? I am a steward of the mysteries of God. I have a stewardship of that. So now you’re starting to begin to understand who you are. You are a steward and you are called to steward these mysteries. This, this is what we go out and we steward. That’s part of our identity. People ask you, well you’re a minster. What does that mean? That means I steward God’s mysteries. [22:00]

There are other metaphors here and let me just list them real quickly. Ambassador. 2nd Corinthians 5:20, it means that part of our identity is found in trying to reconcile relationships between parties. That’s part of who we are, right? We’re trying to reconcile people with God. Paul likened himself to a builder, 1st Corinthians 3:10. What are we building? [22:30]


They cultivate. Yes, they sow. It requires a lot of patience.

Male 4: They care.

And they care.

Yes. They pull weeds, always looking for weeds. Sometimes though as Jesus said maybe sometimes we have to leave the weeds there unless we damage other things. But we’re trying to make sure that one day there is fruit. Speaking of that, what else are we doing then? What’s the nature of our ministry? We’re harvesting. We’re watching. We’re seeing the seasons. The time, the cuirass moment and we harvest.

At least for me as I began to work through my identity I went to Jesus and you and put this maybe next to your notes, what became also a very good help for me was Thomas Oden and his book on pastoral theology because Jesus becomes the central paradigm for him in terms of identity. And I learned a lot from reading Thomas Oden. In terms of the metaphors I went to a guy named David Fisher who in his own question, who am I? And he raises that question it was a crisis for him too in his ministry. He went back to the all the metaphors of Paul. I’ve just given you a few. But he went to all these metaphors and he began to – because he said I could use Jesus as my model but I’m not the son of God. There’s only one son of God but I can relate to Paul. So he went to Paul and he studied this out and he said who did Paul see himself as? And Paul used metaphoric language to say this is who I am. And you put all those metaphors together and you begin to get a picture.

So what I did is I read Oden, I read Fisher, I looked at Christ, I looked at the – all these different metaphors and something just kept pushing me to look deeper, to go further. I went back to the Old Testament and I began to understand this whole identity thing by looking at offices. Or I should say really looking at Old Testament leaders. What are they tell me about my identity?

In studying this realized that Christ has been historically viewed as having three roles or offices that all go back to three essential Old Testaments offices. You know them, right? What’s the first one? Prophet. What’s the second one? Priest. What’s the second one? Priest. What’s the first one? Prophet. What’s the first one? Prophet. So Christ comes and he brings all three of those to perfect fulfillment.

Okay, so follow my logic for a moment. In a certain sense the offices, these Old Testament positions were like the roots of who Jesus was. They all form, so to speak, the tree, Jesus being the tree. And say this is Jesus, let’s say the branches in that then become the apostles, and then the ministers, us out here, and if you take the roots kind of like this that go back to the very beginning you see the role of prophet, so where does Jesus manifest his ministries of prophet?

Practically every time he spoke right? He was declaring thus say it, the Lord. He was giving a prophetic message. He was speaking the word of God. So he comes and he speaks and he speaks with such power he is speaking prophetically and he’s speaking kingdom language such that people are saying he doesn’t sound like anybody else. So we see him there. And then he comes are priest. And what was the role of a priest. What does a priest do?
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[26:58] Yes. So a priest, [27:00] I always think of a priest this way. A priest stands in the gap in the middle and the priest is representing God and the priest then comes to God and represents who?


[27:14] People. So here are the people, the priest is the middle, turn from God to represent God and to lead people to God. The priest is the essential worshiper. And then at the same time [27:30] the priest comes and he brings to God the people. So he stands in the middle. So Jesus comes at what? The perfect high priest. He comes and represents God and he stands in the middle as the intercessor then he comes and he brings to God our failures. And he still lives to make intercession. He still is carrying out his [28:00] priestly role. So we see the king. What’s the king’s role?

Audience: [28:04] To rule.

[28:05] The king’s role is to rule, to administer the resources, to give the direction, here’s where we’re going. So Jesus comes – I’m sorry?

Male 5: [28:14] [inaudible]

[28:15] Yes. And to fight. So Jesus comes and he comes as the what? The king? The king of kings. So Jesus in a sense does the same thing. He comes to set the vision. He comes to lead his people [28:30] and he comes to in a sense manage the resources. Yes?

Male 6: [28:36] He is human, I mean much like Xavier, [inaudible] Paul was building some power.

[28:42] Right.

Male 6: [28:43] But he has not seen Christ in his communication yet.

[28:47] Yes. And we will come one day to make war The other one I think that’s often left off and some add this as a fourth office is the sage. What’s a sage’s role? [29:00] When we look in the Old Testament these are four essential leadership roles and the sage comes to do what?

Audience: [29:07] [Inaudible]

[29:08] Okay. The sage comes to speak words of wisdom. Here’s another way to describe it. The sage comes to take truth and distill it and bring it into life. The Old Testament sage took the Torah and flushed it out in language people could [29:30] relate to, could live out. That’s what wisdom is. It is truth flushed out. So does Jesus come as a sage?

Audience: [29:40] Yes.

[29:41] Wait a minute, he’s constantly speaking wisdom, in fact, Matthew 12 says, there’s one wiser than Solomon who’s here. And of course that was a reference to Jesus. Here’s what happens. Jesus comes and his essential identity you could say goes back to these four offices. [30:00] He comes as the profit, he comes as the priest, he comes as the sage and he comes as the king. In a sense, just about everything Jesus does relates to those four.

And he integrates all four of those. In the Old Testament a king wasn’t a priest. Sometimes there was some integration. Solomon is a king and he’s what?

Audience: [30:27] He’s a sage.

[30:28] And he’s a sage. And sometimes [30:30] you have people in dual roles. Only Christ brought all four of them and integrated all four of them together. The application for ministry is that as I was
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working through my identity I went back to these four and it began to click for me. I began to say, okay, I think I know who I am. Jesus comes and he says as the Father has sent me, what? So I am sending you. [31:00] And find my identity in a certain sense in Christ by Christ identity to a certain extent goes back in these roots that he comes in manifest.

Building a theology of ministry somewhere you have to work out a theology of identity, who you are. When I kind of worked this through for me, in my particular function as pastor under this larger umbrella of ministry for the first time I figured out who I was. [31:30] And from that point on when I do ministry for me everything I’m expected to do or I’m determined to do I have to go back and go through this sort of mental grid. I’m a minister. I’m a pastor. Therefore if Jesus is my model and I go back here and actually these four models can be found in the metaphors of Paul, all four of them. That’s what in fact really kind of like sealed [32:00] the deal, it confirmed it for me. Putting that all together, for me in terms of identity, here’s kind of a little check list I go through.

Am I carrying out a prophetic role? That is when it comes to speaking am I declaring what? Thus say it the Lord. People don’t come to hear me. They come to hear a word from God, as they come to you [32:30] in your minister role. Because of our identity we have a prophetic role.

Secondly, you have a priestly role. This where people get nervous a little bit. Maybe with some Catholic hangover for some, but as ministers we have a priestly act. And in a certain sense I think all of us who are ministers will find ourselves standing here. [33:00] If you’re truly a minister you will stand here.

What that means is is that there is a priestly task, a role that you have if you’re a minister that says I stand before God representing the people God has called me to minister, whether it’s the group of clients in a counseling office, and maybe I shouldn’t have used the word clients, excuse me, but whether it’s them or whether it’s a congregants or whether you’re a parachurch leader and you’re leading these people you have a priestly role, [33:30] a function to bring them before God.

At the same time you have a responsibility to represent God to them. Okay? That’s what a priest does. There are people in my church that I realize that I need to come before God, so to speak, and pray for them because they don’t have enough maturity to pray for themselves. And they don’t know what to pray for, but I do. Like God you’ve got to deliver this person from this sin that they are [34:00] blind to. And they can’t even see it. God, I’ve got an abusive husband right now. He thinks he’s just being a strong man but he’s an abusive man and God you’ve got to change his heart. That’s a priestly function right? That’s part of my role. That’s part of your role.

There’s a sagely role too. And the sagely role says that I have a responsibility to take truth and distill into life. [34:30] That can happen in a pulpit. It happens in a counseling situation. In fact when people come to me for counseling I realize this is my sagely role. And I tell people right up front, I am here to try to minister the truth of God in a relevant way that hopefully is going to relate to what you’re facing in your life. That’s my sagely task because that’s what the sage did.

Now the last one, okay, this could get real misunderstood. Yes I am – [35:00] see myself as a king. I am the head of the church. No, a king’s role is to provide leadership in my ministry. I have that role too, to help shape vision, to administrate the resources, and to lead. And you as a minister have a leadership role as well. You don’t have to buy into my model, what I want you to buy into is this. [35:30] This whole experience for me came out of thinking theologically about who I am. That’s what I want you to get from this lecture. Think through who you are theologically. I gave you a process I worked through. You have to have the similar process. You may come to a different conclusion, but I’ll tell you this, when I came to this
here 10 years ago. In fact it was 10 years ago this year [36:00] that I worked this all through theologically and it’s the first time I began to figure out who I was, who I am. I have used this as the grid for what I do every day.

And if what I’m expected, what people ask of me, if it doesn’t fit that identity, guess what? I’m really liberated. Just say I’m sorry, but that’s, that’s not who I am. You need somebody and that’s who they are but I’m not [36:30] who that is. And the sooner you work that out you’ll be liberated from people’s expectations.

Okay, now what we’ll do next time is I want to talk about if I am a minster does that set me apart from others? What is this clergy laity distinction? Do I have to have a special call? What does that look like? I want to talk a little bit about that because that goes all back to your identity, who you see yourself.

[37:00] See you next week.
Chapter 9

Service is the term for what you and I are giving our lives to.

It underscores that there is messiness, which there is. There is a lot of messiness in ministry, like waiting on tables. So, it gives us an understanding that what we’re getting into something where we serve. Is a place of service that's going to be messy every Tuesday when our staff meets and we go over the needs in our body. I refer to that time each week has the mess.

People get their lives messed up every week and a lot of what we pray over is the mess. Sort of like the mess when you’re cleaning up tables. We said that the service implies a couple of things: submission and humility. Humility because our model is Christ and the cross and we sense that he is calling us as ministers to work and develop a cruciform community. You know what I mean by that word?

Cruciform community, marked by people who been crucified with Christ. Which goes back to the heart of the ministry. Back to the heart of humility. Back to the heart of service. And you know we see if for example in Paul who saw his ministry much that way. I think one of the most interesting description, in one way I think we alluded to earlier, in Romans 15:16.

And let’s just take our Bibles for a moment and go back to that text. Because in Romans 15 he has one more allusion to this, that I can think of and that’s in Timothy, where he refers to himself as a drink offering. Someone read verse 15 and 16.

[02:00] Audience: [02:05 - 02:21] [inaudible]

[02:22] In a certain sense, Paul gives his philosophy of ministry there.

The people he ministers to, the ministry God’s given him he likens to what? The very ministry God’s given him is an offering. He's the priest who comes and so he sees himself with his ministry that God has given them as something he brings to what? What does the priest do?

[02:52] Audience: [02:52] [inaudible]

[02:53] He brings an offering to the altar and in that statement as he gives it to, on the altar, what is he doing? He’s giving it to God. Just like you and me. When we present ourselves before God or we give our offerings to God they are no longer ours but God’s. This is a pretty profound statement Paul makes about ministry. Ministry philosophically for him is not something he owns. It’s not, these are my people. This is my thing. This is God’s. And he sees himself bringing this offering to God.

This is, okay, God, so, here’s my church. Here’s my, you know, the place where I counsel. This is that, this is my ministry. I’m presenting it to you on the altar. It’s yours for you to do whatever you want with. Now, when we bring an offering, back in that culture, you bring something that what? You bring something that’s costly. Something that cost you. So, the ministry that Paul had cost him a lot.

[03:30] When you think about ministry, philosophically, ministry is, and this all goes back to service. Part of servant hood is seeing ministry is not your possession but it is your offering that you bring to the altar to God. And you can take anything I think as I may have mentioned. You can apply that to a sermon.
You’re called to preach a sermon and at the end of that whole preparation there comes a moment where, really, I think if we think about it theologically we take that and bring it to the alter.

Okay. God, this is something that has cost me. Now, if it didn’t cost you, you know, if it was a quick Saturday night prep, I don’t know if I think too much about the altar experience. But, if truly you know you have work this through. And, God is taking this and he is just taking you through the rigors. And yet, through it all you’ve heard god’s voice and come now just before you present it to the people, you presented to God as an offering.

Simply saying to you, realize how that theologically makes you think a lot differently about what you’re doing? Because now you realize it’s God’s and you realize now it’s up to him. You’ve done your part. Your part is to bring the offering to the altar. It’s now God’s to do what he wants with it. Which liberates you but it also gives you a mentality of how to look at it. See, how many people in ministry, think of their ministry like that? As an offering brought to the altar to God.

That’s how Paul saw his ministry. That’s great theology isn’t it? It goes back to understanding what Ministry is in its essence. It is service. It is a servant and this is part of the humility that goes with that. Now, the second major word I’ve been working with is this: ministry is service. Secondly, ministry is participation. And, I can, on the fact that we are in union with Christ. And, so, in this union we who are in ministry are doing something in union with him or the word participation.

I go back to Purvis who’s helped me think this through. Where, remember I said, ministry is not about imitating Christ, though it is, but it’s a lot more than that. It’s not just about being obedient, it is that. But it’s about being in union with Christ and so, where he goes we go and we’re doing this thing. And it’s a participation that starts with what did I say last week? Participation in, in word. We look at Christ. Christ ministry the essence of his ministry was the Ministry of word. Which therefore says, if we’re in union with him our ministry and essence should be about word.

Whatever ministry God’s called you to. Whatever it looks like out there. Ultimately it should be largely a ministry of word. You are representing revelation. You are representing God. You’re representing his will. And I’m not saying, well, if I don’t preach than that doesn’t really. No, it doesn’t matter what you do, in a certain sense we all preach. We preach in different ways. Ministry is largely word. So, we share in the speaking forth of that of that word and it is a word.

As I think I left you with last week, entirely of its own order. It’s never in our power to speak. It is a word in which, in its own power and majesty stands against all other words, is the antithesis of human capacity. Let me expand on that a little bit more. What all of this means is, first of all we have no right to alter its message. A ministry by it’s very fundamental nature is a participation in word and this union with the word of God.

First of all, we need to just remember we have no right to alter its message. Paul was very much aware of that. First Corinthians chapter two, take your Bibles because we’re gonna look at a few verses along the way.

First Corinthians two, verse one.

When I came, brethren, I did not come to superiority of speech or of wisdom. Proclaiming to you the testimony of God quite determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you, and weakness, and fear, and much trembling, and my message, and my
preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom. But in demonstration of the spirit and the power that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.

I think somewhere that's a text that could be preached today. I don't know about your observation. Paul understood this, that his ministry was about revelation and what Paul was concerned with is that he would not get in the way of that. People would not be so amazed at his rhetorical skills. That they would hear the word of God. Second Corinthians chapter two comes at this again, verse 17.

For we are not like many peddling the word of God. Bt it's from sincerity. But it's from God we speak in Christ in the side of God.

[09:30] So, he again wants to be very careful about how people perceive when he ministers word. Another passage you could just write down here, second Timothy 2:15, where he says, you know, gives that admonition to Timothy to handle accurately the word of God. Don't adapt the message to the desires and ambitions of the world. Don't tickle the ears.

[10:00] If you're in ministry and ministry is a participation in word then make sure you're representing the word. Not your word but the word. If I can put it another way, don't use the word as a launchpad to go off and stay with you now really want to say. Which is probably about 80% of the preaching out there today. That's not a participation in word. So, we have no right to alter its message. We also have no right to determine whether we want to [10:30] declare it or not.

That's also a part of participation in word. We have no right to determine whether we want to declare it or not. Well, I know the word of God can be offensive. So, you know what? Let's just keep the Bible out of this while we talk together. That's not Ministry that's something else. Ministry is not ashamed and is not intent on avoiding the word. [11:00] So, what that means is you're willing to just let it stand and say what it's going to say and realize that might come with a price.

That's part of participation in word. So, it begins with our willingness to receive it. It begins with their willingness to listen to the word and that's not always easy and it's not always easy because [11:30] the word has a certain hidden dimension to it. Have you noticed that? While in a certain sense the word is there an addressed to all and easy enough for us to understand.

Yet, in almost every verse of Scripture I find there's a mystery. Still, nonetheless, in the word there's a hidden dimension to it that is... What? Trying to just be mysterious and not reveal itself. No, it's written I think [12:00] in a way to say that it wants to unveil and disclose itself through faithful servants that allow people to say, "oh, now I hear it. Oh, now I see. I hear a voice. I hear God."

A concealment that leads to disclosure that takes the credit. That, by the way, puts us therefore in utter desperation. Which is a great place [12:30] for me and what I do. I minister word week by week by week and most, I'd say 99% of those weeks, I'm a man in utter desperation. I find working with word leaves me in that condition which often I hate.

I'm preaching Nehemiah right now. So, there I am Saturday afternoon. I thought this through. I've translated to text. I've done my exegetical work. I've gone back and read [13:00] theologies. I've read commentaries. I've done all of my work and I've meditated, reflected, thought it through. Tried to find the best minds and what they say about the passage. And nonetheless, I get to Saturday afternoon an hour before I'm supposed to preach. And I'm going, "God, I don't understand this at all. I'm a desperate man. It hasn't captured me. I'm going to go out and make an absolute fool of myself."
Any of you ever experience that? [13:30] I experience it every week. There's something about the word in that way, that is all. It's not like God just playing with your mind. But I think it's God just saying in this participation with me. A union of word and this participation. This is right where I want you, in total absolute dependence. You're dealing with something eternal, something profound.

[14:00] And when you find yourself in that condition where you find yourself begging for God to do what he's going to do and he does it. It's a wonderful moment, isn't it? It's just like, one of the greatest moments on earth. Now, it doesn't just have to happen that way in the pulpit. It can happen one to one. It's all ministry of word. There's something in that mystery.

What's [14:30] necessary is listening and that's not easy for us to do. Mark chapter 4, I think is a scary text. Mark 4:24, someone read that verse.

Audience: [14:46 -14:55] [inaudible]


Audience: [14:58 -15:05] [inaudible]

[15:06] So, in the context of word it starts with the sower and seed.

So, the whole setting of all of this is word, about word. He is given a warning, isn't he? Be careful how you, what? Be careful how you hear. And if you're willing to really hear, what's going to happen? [15:30] You'll hear. What if you're not all that serious about hearing?

Audience: [15:35 - 15:37] [inaudible]

[15:38] Yes, now someday, I mean, this is like one of your last sermons before you leave a church. Cause you wouldn't want to preach it somewhere in the middle if you want to keep your job. But sometime, you know, what a text to say. You know, I wonder if for some of you, you gave so little effort to hearing that today you can't hear at all. [16:00] Because there's something very serious God is saying about this discipline of hearing.

Isn't it scary? Scares me. But Jesus has given a warning about listening. And he's talking about all back in this participation in word. The degree to which you listen, that is you allow the word into your heart. To the degree to which you're willing to do that is the degree to which you will receive. [16:30] Those who knock, who pursue, who diligently dig will find disclosure. Those with a hurried search who's thinking, who study is superficial may discover, in fact, to the great, maybe even their great surprise, that they've lost even what they had.

I like Eugene Peterson who speaks of this task [17:00] in this ministry of word as turning eyes into ears. What a great chapter in working the angles and that's what he titles it, turning eyes into ears. And he makes a great statement that most of us read with a distancing eye, that's how he calls it. The distancing eye but not a listening ear. To put it another way, reading is not the same as listening.

[17:30] See, do you ever find yourself, sometimes you say, “Okay, I've just got a little bit of time for my morning devotions." I'm reading through Jeremiah and you know that your eye has connected with the words on the page but nothing else it's connected. But something sort of subtly says as long as my eye keeps connecting with word I can get through the chapter. And then you say, I read it. But if somebody said, "But did you hear what God was saying?" That's when it gets kind of convicting, right?
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[18:00] The eye can fool you is part of what Peterson’s getting at. We have to read to listen but we can read without going on to listening is the point. And Jesus here, I think in Mark 4, is saying you’ve got to listen. Nurture a listening disposition so that the voice can be heard. Another great way he describes it is contemplative exegesis. I think that’s my favorite phrase, contemplative [18:30] exegesis.

In all of that, by listening to word, that’s all necessary to participation in word. Don’t think, well, okay, I’m in the ministry and part of this, the very essence of ministry is participation in word that it’s just going to happen. It’s not going to just happen. It’s going to require of you and of me, a profound discipline of listening. But if we don’t do that then we are negating our essential ministry, [19:00] one of our central ministries, the essence of ministry, and that’s word.

People look to you as ministers. Whatever ministry you go into they’re going to need from you ministry of word, participation in word. Because in of yourself, you really have not much to offer. Just as I don’t have much to offer. If I didn’t have word I wouldn’t have much of anything to say, I really wouldn’t. I don’t have the gift of gab. [19:30] Some people can wing it and I can’t. And if you can wing it, that is your blessing it is your curse.

I hope most of you don’t have that gift. What I hope you have is a sense of, I’m in ministry. I don’t really have anything I know what to say unless it’s right here but that requires listening. That then we’ll move us to speaking that will shape the consciousness of people. [20:00] We’ll hopefully do what Paul said in Colossians 128, that we might bring people to maturity. That’s what it’s all about. Nature of ministry is this participation in word to bring people to Christ like maturity, that’s ministry in a nutshell.

Part of the crisis today is I think a lot of people are enamored with their own words, their own constructions. Maybe their own self importance. [20:30] Or maybe, I think this is a bit of it, I think people won’t say this and admit it. But, also, because of their own lack of confidence in the efficacy of the word. I need to add this and I need to do this because only then will people listen. We sometimes don’t give the word of God the credit it deserves.

Ministry is a participation work. I think that’s about [21:00] all I say about... You are listing, right? Okay, ministry is a participation. Here’s the second one in grace. I mean our ministry, the essence of ministry is in this union of participation with Christ we’re participating in grace. And what that means is simply this, in this union with Christ and Christ was all about Grace. As we share in his life, as we share in the life of his grace, then our ministry by [21:30] its very nature should just be all about Grace.

I mean people should see grace all over us, inside of us, outside of us, all around us. If people don’t sense grace in us, they have a fair reason to question it for really doing ministry, if we’re in union with Christ. Because it we’re in union with Christ how can there not be but Grace. A big part of that means a heart of forgiveness. [22:00] Showing forgiveness to needy people. It is a ministry that’s largely defined as reconciliation. That must be part of our main conversation because it was Christ conversation, though a lot of times people didn’t get it.

You know there’s a great story back in Mark, Mark chapter 2, where they’re lowering the paralytic member. So, they’ve gotten the tile out of the way. They’re lowering them down. They’re really ingenious [22:30] with what they’re doing and so here he comes down. So, everybody’s their Christ is teaching the word and suddenly interrupted by this guy being lowered down from the ceiling. And then in verse 5, Christ, after looking around at them, he’d seen their faith. He said the most amazing thing to the paralytic. What did he say? Your sins are forgiven.

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With just completely, it's the profound twist in the story [23:00] nobody expects that. You just didn't expect that to happen. He was not brought down there because he needed forgiveness. Not in the minds of those lowering him and they were hoping to get them right there, and yet, that's what Christ does. In the process he creates a scandal. And everybody gets upset with him. They just wanted, you know, a heartwarming healing not something different.

[23:30] Now, what am I trying to say? This is Christ doing the essence of ministry. He's getting to the heart of ministry. Heart of ministry is going beyond the physical needs to heart needs. He's addressing what needs to be done. And he's showing us that if we're going to be in ministry with him in this participation that in a certain sense we're looking at people, needs in the same way. We are looking beyond the obvious. We're looking beyond the physical. We're looking into the heart condition.

[24:00] Not that we can forgive like Christ forgives but we bring his ministry of forgiveness in that sense. It's the same thing, for example, is if you turn the James 5. Where, you remember, he says their if any one among you is sick James 5:14. If anyone is sick what are you supposed to do? Well, no, you got to do something first. You've got to call the elders. Somebody’s got to be there [24:30] so let them call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Okay, so, what is James saying has to happen? Got a person there they've been sick for a long time. They're dealing with cancer. Call the elders. What's the ministry here about? Praying for healing. Are we done? According to the passage of we, [25:00] i-is this what's required? All that's... If we're in ministry we're doing ministry and a legitimate part of ministry is, and a legitimate part of grace is ministering healing.

James is not done here is he? What else does he call them to do?

Audience: [25:17] [inaudible]


Audience: [25:19] [inaudible]

[25:22] And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who sick

and the Lord will raise him up and if he's committed sins they will be forgiven him. What does that seem to imply needs to happen? [25:30] In that setting what are elders, ministers called to do? Just ask how you're feeling? Yes, it seems to suggest that part of the ministry there, sort of like the paralytic been dropped down and Jesus is a physician to the soul. Is to say something like this as I've been learning to do. And actually, I found that it's really, been very well received.

I thought people [26:00] would be offended at first when I would say something like this. Now, before we pray over your cancerous condition I just need to ask you is there any sin in your life that you're not dealing with? That you are not letting God come and deal with in your life. Anything you're not confessing or repenting of? Because that seems to be part of the story. You see what I'm saying? When you look at Mark 2 you realize that's part of the story there [26:30] too in the context of healing.

Which seems to say that a big part of our ministry, the essence of ministry, as ministers of Grace is to bring the ministry of reconciliation. Which means we look for opportunities to bring healing to the soul. That we're not afraid to ask some of the hard questions sometimes. So, is her sin in your life we need to talk about? That you know, maybe together we can go and seek the Lord’s forgiveness together.
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[27:00] A minister of reconciliation is, like in the context there, an ambassador. An ambassador sometimes is playing that role of trying to bridge alienated parties and that’s our role. We’ve got two parties that have this barrier between them. It’s called sin and a minister of reconciliation is coming to try to bridge that together. In this case, God is use-calling us to do that. So, I think [27:30] that’s fundamentally what ministry is largely about. Yes.

Audience: [27:34 - 27:41] [inaudible]

[27:42] I think it’s a ministry all believers have a responsibility for.

Just like it, you could take like a, Colossians 3:16. In a certain sense all ministers have a responsibility of word. Remember, we talked about that-that when we gather together bring a word. So, I think we all bring reconciliation. But, I think there [28:00] is, if I can use the term vocational ministry. I think that there is a more profound sense of reconciliation and I talked about it with identity.

That means that maybe I’m praying for people to get reconciled to themselves maybe are not out of place to seek for it. Maybe because they’re too deep in sin or in ignorance. And I think it also calls for us to go a step further than maybe most would. And take advantage of a role [28:30] we have filled that others don’t have that sometimes we don’t take advantage of. I mean, I found that in a Pastoral role, for example people give me more room to ask questions that, maybe, otherwise I wouldn’t maybe have so much freedom to ask.

So, one of our defining active ministries is to ask the question from time to time. Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know that? Do you know that [29:00] he’s taking our place? That there is this Emmanule, Emmanuel, God is with us. But at that, also means that now we are with God. That’s what his forgiveness can provide. Purvis put it this way, Emmanuel means homecoming. We often think of it as God with us, God come to us. We’re seeing that at Christmas. But this whole work of reconciliation is really us coming to God.

[29:30] So, in this here, what is in this ministry of participation and grace, we declare these things. We declare he is Lord and that he loves us. He demonstrated that by taking our sins onto the cross. So, we minister this that Jesus is God and we minister this that Jesus is grace and they both must be held together. Ministry is thirdly, participation [30:00] in presence. A minister realizes that in this union with God just as Jesus came and became the presence of God on earth, his life is the story of God. He bore the image of God perfectly.

Jesus brings us to God. In our Union with him now we are also bearers of the presence of God. To put it another way if we live in this union [30:30] and our lives are intimate and we follow Christ we can bring Jesus to people. So, for example Paul talks about it in second Corinthians one and two. As Christ has comforted him out of this comfort that he’s received in Christ. He ministers what? He ministers the same thing.

He’s simply a channel because God is ministered this presents, this comfort now [31:00] he simply transfers it on. In a certain sense that’s what ministry is, we, in our own walk with God we receive word. It just becomes a ministry of presence to people. Comfort becomes ministry of the presence of comfort to people. Which implies that if we bring a ministry of comfort, in which people sense the presence of God, then we need to be prepared [31:30] for the fact that we will go through our own suffering.

Second Corinthians one and two suggest, anyway, that if we’re going to be ministers of comfort then we will go through our own suffering. Because somehow that’s generally the only way we can do that. And
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it's part of being in union Christ. If we're in union with him he suffered, we will suffer. We will participate in Christ’s afflictions. We will share his comfort [32:00] and then we will share his presence. Now, that's kind of a tough news.

The good news is that affliction therefore for us and ministry and I think at times we will face maybe more profound affliction because we are in ministry. What this also means is this, that we can't lose sight of, it therefore it gives meaning to affliction. That it’s not meaningless. That God is redeeming it for good. [32:30] Afflictions become transformed into empowerments from ministry. God is comforting us and then as we go out into this world to comfort people Christ has comforted them through us.

Comforting them through our own tribulations and trials. So, we bring comfort but back to this word we bring [33:00] presence to people. We bring God’s presence and we can bring that a lot of ways. We can bring God’s presence when we preach. We can sometimes bring God’s presence when we pray with others. Sometimes, I've been with godly people and they minister God’s presence. It’s not them it’s God. Just being around them because they’re around God their in this holy union.

It can happen when we counsel people. It can [33:30] happen when we visit. In fact, in many ways when we visit people what they really need is not so much us, they need the presence of God. And if we share in this union with God and we understand the essence of ministry is participation with him, in his presence we can bring that.

Audience: [33:48 - 33:50] [inaudible]

[33:51] Well, that's a great question it's interesting a lot of times in our vocabulary how will say, sometimes we'll say in worship, right. We'll just say, you know, [34:00] tonight let’s just pray that God’s presence just comes and fills this place. If he’s omnipresent, isn’t he already here? That's where sometimes I zone out a little bit into mystery. There’s something about god’s particular presents and his omnipresent that I’m not sure I can rationally explain but I believe both are true.

You know a lot of times people pray God I just, I just need you [34:30] to be with me in this moment. Now, they already understand omnipresence. I think they do. But they’re saying, I just need something of you manifesting itself, maybe, in a way that becomes more real to me. That I think sometimes God does. And I think God will do through us as ministers. Yes.

Audience: [34:54 - 35:01] [inaudible]

[35:01] I'm not thought of it that way. J.I. Packer and his, one of the best books on the Holy Spirit. It was written years ago but he makes the point that the Holy Spirit’s primary ministry. This how he defines it. The Holy Spirit’s primary ministry is to mediate the presence of Christ. Maybe I’m back to little bit of what you’re saying there and I don’t know if this makes sense.

Let me just try it on you. That when we sometimes, in the worship or [35:30] whatever, and we’re just saying God we just, we just are seeking for a sense of your presence this morning, or tonight, or whatever it is. What we’re really asking at that moment is for the Holy Spirit to do this work. The Holy Spirit whose role is not to glorify himself as Jesus said. The Holy Spirit's role, I think, is to focus on mediating the presence of Jesus. So, that when we have a profound sense of Christ in that moment I think that’s [36:00] evidence of the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.
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Now, back to then the nature of ministry. The nature of ministry is participation and presence. What I think that means is that we are walking in the Spirit. That we are filled with the spirit and I think a good and important prayer to pray before you counsel, before you go into a hospital room, before you preach. Whatever you do as ministry, is to say God I want to make sure I am filled with your spirit. [36:30] Because that’s not an automatic thing.

That it’s not permanent thing. In dwelling, yes of course. But filling, if it was permanent Paul wouldn’t command us to be filled with the spirit. I would think, sometimes it’s really important that we pray that prayer. And that we ask ourselves is there anything that is interrupting his filling of our lives? Because when we know we're filled with the spirit, I think then that’s when we will minister presence. [37:00] Because the Spirit of God filling our lives is going to mediate presence. Makes sense?

So, you're in a hospital room, a minister comes. Whoever he or she is, but it is come in the name of Jesus to minister to you. If that person is profoundly filled with the spirit I would think that in that experience I will experience something of the presence of God. And in that, if that happens, [37:30] ministry has happened. And we got back to the nature and essence of what ministry is.

Audience: [37:35 - 37:44] [inaudible]

[37:44] Yes.

Audience: [37:45 -37:47] [inaudible]

[37:48] Yes, I think so. It's another kind of mysterious text. David Hanson in his book The Art of the Pasturing uses the phrase, be the parable of Jesus. [38:00] Our lives are to be a parable. He sees Jesus, in a sense, as a parable of God. He came and he personified the story of God. And what he takes from that, is that now we are the living representatives of Jesus as ministers. I don't know. All I can say is that works with me. Sometimes I'll find myself getting out of my car, walking into a hospital and I’ll find myself saying Lord let me be a parable of you.

[38:30] I don't know all that that means, honestly. It’s just that somehow it reminds me this is not about me seeing this person. It’s about me simply being an instrument so that person experiences Jesus. Cause that's what they need. And I'm simply saying in this then that's what ministry is, that's participation in presence, participation in presence.

Here’s the last thing, ministry is a participation in reign. [39:00] Ultimately, in ministry we're participating in this work of transforming the community and preparing it until it is blameless at the coming of Christ. And maybe think of it this way, in ministry, in this union with Christ, who has died been buried and risen. And I have died and been buried and have risen with him. I'm participating in his resurrection. And I'm living out resurrected [39:30] life.

And as living out a resurrected life as a minister, what am I thing bringing to people? I'm bringing I think one of the keywords here is hope. That dispels hopelessness, dispels darkness, rebukes, in fact, hopelessness. I'm calling for a liberation from sin because sin no longer has authority over our [40:00] lives.

That's an essential rule of a minister is to remind people of that. I find that I can't remind my people enough. Sin no longer has authority. Do you believe that? It no longer has to dominate. Paul says, Colossians 1:13, we have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of light. Jesus gives the disciples in Mark 3:15 authority over the powers of darkness.
The essence of ministry is also I am participating in this reign with him. He has come in and he's brought the kingdom of God. I'm part of the kingdom of God. And I am part of that reign. And we need to, therefore, have ministries that reflect that. And that means we reflect hope, and power. And encourages people to pray in the kind of way in which they are laying hold of God's willingness, and God's power to change the world.

Because God is living and his kingdom is here. What is the nature of ministry? The nature of ministry, also, in essence is giving people profound hope. And saying to people like--I like I love to always say to people, without exception, God has a profound purpose for all of you. God wants to change the world through you. That's part of reigning with Christ. And it's not just the reign that's in the future. It's a reign that already is here.

Talk about tension, we live in the already and not yet. We live in this crazy tension. The kingdom of God is here and yet we're awaiting the kingdom of God. Can I explain that clearly? I can't. I just know it's both true. That Christ, when he came he brought the kingdom and it's here. And in a certain sense, as Colossians 2:15 declares, "the enemy has been triumph over. The war is won." And yet, we're still living in this tension with the spiritual battle that rages.

And in this you and I have to bring a ministry of reign, so to speak, a ministry of hope. We have to convince saints that they are not worthless worms saved by grace because that's what a lot of them think of themselves. And the devil laughs all the way to hell when he gets people to think that way. We have to tell people, you know what, there is now therefore no condemnation. OK, so quit living your lives like you're condemned.

I get so frustrated sometimes with Christians that way. You know, oh, I just, you know, really getting beat up and I just, I'm so worthless, and... But wait a minute where's that coming from? Is that coming from the Holy Spirit? I don't find anything says that's the role of the Holy Spirit, that's the role of the devil. Holy Spirit will come to convict but what's the role of conviction? Is it to put us down? No, I don't about you but when I since the convicting work of the Spirit it's always God saying, "Come on, come on, let's go. You don't have to be there."

He convicts me to live differently, to live more powerfully. The work of the evil spirit is to condemn us, and to put us down, and to push us down, and drive us down. And we minister to a lot of people who feel pushed down. And they bought into the lie. So, you ask what's the nature of ministry? A big part of nature of ministry is to go out and minister grace, and word, and presents, and reign.

Tell them, whether it's in the counseling office or from the pulpit or wherever you are at. Tell them, Christ is on the throne in the kingdom of God is come and you can live triumphantly and victoriously. And you have a purpose for living. It's a profound purpose unique just to you. And get about discovering it. Don't let your life waste because God didn't intend for your life to waste away.

Do people need to hear that today? Golly, and I never tire of telling people that because I sense, somehow, if you're like me that God never tires of telling me that either. Cause we need to hear that. So, the ministry is about communicating that we live, we can live powerfully. We can live in the light. That the world belongs to God's. That his kingdom has come and our hopes in him.

Okay, so that's a stab at the nature ministry. So, think about it. Next week we'll talk about the mission of ministry.
Chapter 10

There is a series that was put out some years ago by [inaudible][00:20] Press in which they condensed some of these major works and they did it with reformed pastor. It would be worth looking at. It’s called [00:30] The Reformed pastor put out by [inaudible][00:33] Press. Maybe it’s about 180 pages but it distills a lot of what Baxter said and his philosophy of ministry and it gives a nice introduction to it as well.

What I want to do with Purvis before I leave this here is that in the schedule, I had you read the conclusion. I’d like you go back and read the conclusion one more time, the summary at the end and I want to take next week and talk a little bit about kind of [01:00] bringing this all together, some things from Purvis.

Context of ministry, now again, we’ve been trying to take piece by piece and think about ministry theologically and think about identity, nature of ministry, the mission of ministry, which we talked about last week and made the point that we’re all called into this mission, a mission that is a mission that what were some of the [01:30] key words we used? Incarnational, okay. What were my major points?

Audience: [01:39] Intentional.

[01:40] It’s first of all intentional by the very nature of the term mission, Apostille sent. Secondly?

Audience: [01:49] [inaudible][01:49-01:50].

[01:51] It is a mission that is perpetuation. We’re not here to invent the mission but to continue the mission. What’s a key verse again we keep going back to? [02:00] John 20:21. Then as we begin to see that mission unfold, what is it we found in scripture? Ministry as a mission has a redemptive side to it and what’s the other side? Edification, building up the same, reaching lost people is our mission. Building up people who have been found is the other side of it.

Now what I want to talk about here today is the context. [02:30] And I think this is a pretty important theme today because a lot of people are writing about the context of where ministry is done. Now, a number of years ago, in fact it was about 1991 when I was early on doing some adjunct teaching here, I was asked to put together a theology of ministry course, which is largely different than what I’m doing today but I did deal with context then.

[03:00] Back in ‘91, the big debate subject was church versus para-church. Okay, so when you talk about context of ministry, you raise that question. It was ingrained in me in seminary that the local church is the central agency for ministry. I mean it is where ministry legitimately takes place and any other context of ministry, if you will, finds its legitimacy, [03:30] how would you complete that sentence?

Audience: [03:33] As it relates.

[03:34] As it relates to the local church. Any ministry, any agency that’s doing ministry finds its legitimacy as it relates to the local church, as they work closely and the work of the local church is channeled through it. Now that was a prevailing position on context of ministry. Back in the ‘70s when I came to seminary [04:00] everything centered about the local church. And it was interesting, many of us who came to seminary in the ‘70s were products of the para-church however.

Most of my peers, there was a large surge. It was almost like a wave that went through in the early ‘70s, Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, Young Life. Most of my peers going to school at Western back then
were products of that and we came and we were schooled in the centrality of the local church. And of course, part of that is because Earl Radmacker was the president and he taught ecclesiology and he wrote the book on ecclesiology. It was his textbook, which was his dissertation at Dallas Seminary and these in fact are his words. “The local church is the central agency of God for the work of ministry on Earth. All other Christian agencies find legitimacy only as they work closely with this divine institution and channel their work through it.”

To an extreme you would meet some people who would say unless it’s the local church, ministry has no legitimacy. That would be in a pretty extreme but that wasn’t that hard to find back then. There’s still remnants of that I think but because of the success of parachurch ministries, there was also a recognition that the parachurch was doing what the local church was failing to do. So, Youth for Christ was reaching a lot of kids that the local church was failing to reach and I was one of them.

If it wasn’t for Youth for Christ I don’t know if I would’ve come to Jesus. I don’t know if I’d be in ministry today because the local church just did not attract me at all when I was 16, 17 years of age. It was in that time a guy named John White wrote a book on the church and the parachurch. He described back then the relationship of church and parachurch.

Now, stay with me because I’m building something here that you’ll see where I’m going in a moment. As he looked at the prevailing positions, and this pretty well reflects the ‘60s and ‘70s, he said there were four positions and here they are. You’ve got them listed there, temporary legitimacy, that is the local church is the primary agency. Parachurch ministries are the temporary corrective, okay?

Local church is the primary context, if you will, for ministry. Parachurch ministries are the temporary corrective until the local church gets its act together. In other words, seminary is a seminary local church? No, of course not. It is a parachurch. John White, in this position, would say that a seminary was created because the local church began to fail at its task of training future leaders.

So, seminaries emerged to fill that gap. And so a seminary has temporary legitimacy until the church one day says, “Hey, we need to get back to training pastors,” or “Campus Crusade has temporary legitimacy until the church gets back to reaching lost people, particularly college students,” let’s say. The second position is two structure. What he meant by that is that there are two biblical structures. The local church’s role is edification and the parachurch’s role is evangelism. This is how some people define the context of ministry.

The local church is there to build up the saint. The parachurch is out there to win people to Jesus. It would be an attitude that goes something like this, back in the ‘60s, yeah, I worked for Youth for Christ. What I’m doing is out there on campus reaching people for Jesus and as soon as we see them come to Christ, we get them into a local church where they’ll get built up because that’s a role of the local church. We’re out here winning people to Jesus. They’re building the saints up. So, that would be the two structure.

The third, third position in this church/parachurch relationship is what he calls church planting. That is parachurch ministries have legitimacy so long as their goal is simply to be an arm of the church planting churches. So the role of parachurch ministries are to plant churches. They simply serve the local church by planting other local churches.

The fourth position is what he called dual-legitimacy and that is the church and the parachurch both are legitimate expressions. They both have their own legitimacy and context for doing ministry. Each
of them have a little bit of a distinction from one another. When White wrote this book, he simply said, “Okay, to this whole question of context for ministry, here’s the local church. Here’s the parachurch and they have some relationship.” And people found themselves in one of those four generally.

But times have changed, haven’t they? It’s not quite that way today. In fact, I’d go so far as to say this. I’ll throw this out on the table. Say what you think about this. The issue today is not whether the parachurch is legitimate. Actually, the question has more turn to is the local church legitimate? And that’s a huge shift from 30 years ago. That question would’ve seldom been even raised but it is actually a question that’s out on the table raised so much today that it doesn’t raise anyone’s eyebrows, I think.

When I think it first kind of hit me in the face was a couple of years ago I was in Beirut and I was with Grant Porter who heads up Operation Mobilization. And we were talking about his ministry. I was involved with him and one day we were talking about ministry and I referred to his ministry as a parachurch ministry and he said, “Wait a minute. What did you just say?” I said, “You know, we talked about Operation Mobilization as a parachurch.” And he said, “No, we-we’re not a parachurch. We are the church.” Why did Grant say that?

Audience: Exactly but it’s more than that.

Audience: There is no church.

[11:01] Yes, we are the church because frankly, the church that is the institutional church here in Beirut has lost its mission, lost its way, is into simply trying to maintain traditions, would even really question its role. And has seen, in his case, the need for Operation Mobilization to in effect fill the vacuum. So, it’s raised a number of questions that I’d like to throw out and here are some of the questions. I think these are questions today as we think about context for ministry we need to think about.

The first one is this, is the local institutional church a legitimate context for ministry anymore? Is the local institutional church a legitimate context for ministry anymore? That is, and I’ll expand on this question a little bit. Is the institution, this institution of brick, and mortar, and clergy, of carryover of a different dispensation? Are we kind of trying to keep propped up something that really gave way when Jesus came, that we’re still trying to continue on a temple spirituality, if you will, with its established priesthood, that Jesus came and replaced, so to speak?

Are we funding out legitimacy in something that’s really not legitimate anymore? In this first question, here’s another way to ask it. Is what we see largely today in an institutional church a product of Christendom, Christendom? I think you know what I mean by this word.
subversives because they had to to survive, to now an institution [13:30] where now it was legitimate to be public, to be in buildings, to build buildings that were largely, if you look architecturally, were what? They were the replicas of the civil institutions of the day. If you go into the great cathedrals in Europe, and I’ve been in many of them having lived there for seven years, and you look back architecturally, they are largely [14:00] reflections of the civil buildings of the day going back to 300.

So, this line of argument would say well when we look at institutional church today, isn’t it just a carryover going back to Constantine, which maybe was not such a great thing? Did all of that veer us off of the path of incarnational to attractional might be another way to put it? The reality is Constantine for all of the nice things [14:30] that it was great that, you know, Christianity was Christians were no longer persecuted. It really screwed up the church and is the institutional church today largely a hangover carryover of that? Heather?

Heather: [14:45] Do you mean by [inaudible][14:46] do you mean like the whole worldwide like [inaudible][14:50] including all of the [inaudible][14:52].

[14:52] No, the church that takes the form of institution, building, structure. Going back again to the church that began to shift from the scattered communities out there to where now Christianity became legitimate and official. So now there were official buildings and now there were clergy and trained clergy and Bishops and all of that.

Another way to put still under this first question, is it fair to say Christianity started out in Palestine as a fellowship, moved to Greece, became a philosophy, went to Rome, became an [15:30] institution, went to Europe and became a government, and came to America and became an enterprise? See? Some people raising these kind of questions are looking at the church, the local church, the institutional church and saying, “You know, is this thing really legitimate,” which is a huge step from the day when the question went the other way, is anything but the local church legitimate?

[16:00] You see how far we’ve come? Which then almost leads to, and this is the last part of the first question, would we be faithful to our mission by selling our properties, disbanding our organizations, and getting out of the business so to speak? Would we be faithful to our mission, more faithful to our mission by selling our properties, disbanding our organizations, getting out of the business of church so that we can go back [16:30] and fulfill the mission that we’ve been called to do?

These are big questions, aren’t they? These are important questions and it’s going to be the kind of questions that we’re going to need to think through. Do we have answer for them? Here’s a second major question. It goes a lot with what I’ve already said and that is can we carry out the mission without the institutional church? Not only is the issue is it legitimate but that leads then to the second question. [17:00] Can we carry out the mission without the institutional church?

Can other context for ministry fill the gap? So, can we carry out the mission without the institutional church? Can other gap context fill the gap or here’s another way to put it under number two. Do we need a public presence? Do we need a public presence or can the church be purely subversive and infiltrative?

[17:30] Do we need these gathered structured places or would we be better off without them? And then number three, is a non-institutional form of church possible anyway? Is a non-institutional form of church possible anyway? [18:00] Can you be communal without institutional? See, by what I’m reading today would almost suggest yes, you can. In fact, you must but I’m just raising a question here but can you? Is that really possible? Can you be communal without being institutional? Is a non-institutional form of church possible?
Now, who are some of the voices? Well, let me ask you. Are you familiar with these questions, the questions you hear out there, think about, and if so, [18:30] where do you hear these questions being raised? Heather?

Heather: [18:35] I hear them [inaudible] [18:37].

[18:37] Really? Yes, at your church?

Heather: [18:40] At my church and by the like people.

[18:44] Theology on tap?

Heather: [18:45] [inaudible] [18:45-18:48] and there’s the section of the [inaudible] [18:52-18:54] and they say the bottle and [inaudible] [18:56-19:00] Now they bring him back looking for churches because what he what he, you were talking [inaudible] [19:05-19:22].

Audience: [19:22] [inaudible] [19:22].

[19:23] Yes, the interesting thing in some of those is speaking out against the institutional church for example and calling for needed reform of being much more incarnational but at the same time calling for something of profound community. How does that all relate to the institutional church? I think these are some of the questions that are out there and some of the people raising those questions, I’ll give you a couple of [19:53] names anyway. One that I’ve recently read is Barnes’s book, Revolution.

[20:00] Let me just give you a few soundbites from his book and just to give you a flavor. These are people who are influencers out there. He refers to our age as the Revolutionary Age. You know, he talks about all of these different ages through history but he says now we’re in what he calls the Revolutionary Age in which there’s a revolution.

[20:30] There’s a revolution against established systems, among them the established church. To put it another way, a radical shift of context for ministry is taking place. As he puts it, to place our hope in the local church as a context for ministry is a, and these are his words, a mis-placed hope today. To place our hope in the [21:00] local church as a context for ministry is a mis-placed hope. As he puts it, if the local church is the hope of the world, then the world has no hope, page 36.

If the local church is the hope of the world, then the world has no hope. Now his rationale is that the context of local church as we define it today, and he’s really addressing the local church in its form, in it’s structure. As he sees the local [21:30] church and he, you have to keep in mind, and this is what makes Barner at least a voice worth listening to, he’s been studying, surveying the local church for 20 years. So, at the end of 20 years, he’s had a huge turn in his life.

What he’s basically says here is the context of local church for ministry as we define it today, is abiblical, abiblical. [22:00] What does he mean abiblical?

Audience: [22:03] [inaudible] [22:03-22:06].

[22:06] Yes, it’s non-biblical. That is if we define church as a definable group of people who meet regularly at the same place to engage in religious routines and programs under a paid clergy who provide teaching and leadership, it is not in scripture. That’s his statement. It is not in scripture. The church, the local institutional church as largely defined is abiblical. [22:30] That is it doesn’t have any grounding because you can’t find it in scripture.
What we see as church was developed long after scripture was written, which if you said, “Well, how long after?” He’d probably say, what would be your guess? How many years? About 300, yeah. Probably again, back to that bad guy [23:00] Constantine. And what we have today as church is just as he would say is one interpretation. So, where’s he going? Well, you can start to see where he’s going. He’s basically building a case that the context of local church for ministry doesn’t really have a lot of credibility or legitimacy and even if it does, it doesn’t mean it’s the only place for ministry.

There are a lot of other places for ministry [23:30] and actually those better places for ministry, those other contexts, are really better. So, he goes on to say in effect, the days of the institutional church are over. I didn’t say the days of ethnos are over. The days of this institutional church are over giving way to other expressions. That is people are moving to other contexts for ministry.

[24:00] Which he as an example gives or like house-churches, small aggregations, which is an interesting phrase, small aggregations versus congregations. In fact, sometimes when I read on different blog sites, some people really say well, that’s the word we should be using today, aggregations versus congregations. I’m not sure exactly what that means because when I look at least definitionally, [24:30] an aggregation is just a composition of a lot of different parts whereas a congregation is composed of people who largely come for an intended purpose.

So, I don’t know what that distinction is except to say, well, one is just a grouping of people all over the place, which is what it should be versus this institutional place that’s largely about worshippers. [25:00] Other expressions can include family, where the family now is the gathering place, the spiritual unit. The father is the pastor or the mother or it can be cyber-churches, a church that’s experienced on the Internet, communities developed by way of chatrooms. Yes?

Audience: [25:25] Does he give any specific examples of what is going on in the church right now that makes it abiblical?

[25:31] In terms of institutional church?


[25:33] Yes, I’m sure that if you asked him he’d say, “Why don’t you just look at my data right here. Here’s my date. Okay, and here’s what my data basically shows is that what you’re largely interested in is measuring numbers and giving but you’re not measuring transformation.” I think this is where he turned was saying, you know, “I have studied. I’ve researched the local church for [26:00] the last 20 years and found that by and large, almost all of them are not interested in measuring transformation.

So, in other words, they’re doing lots of activity and lots of ministry but they’re really not doing what counts. Their methodology is all messed up. They’ve got these paid guys who are trying to be CEO’s or whatever and this thing called local church just isn’t changing people. It’s gathering people but it’s not changing lives.

[26:30] And in effect, he’s saying it’s time for a revolution. I think that’s where he’s coming from if I understand. Yes?

Audience: [26:37] A good reference to this is Barnes’s other book, the Second Coming of the Church. I think he wrote it about 10 years ago but it basically is the presentation of the Christ that he sees and I think this is sort of his...

[26:49] Yes, or this might be saying the second coming didn’t come.
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Audience: [26:52] Yes, have you heard [inaudible][26:54]?
[26:56] Yes, I have.

Audience: [26:57] [inaudible][27:01].

[27:01] Yes, and I think Barnes would just say this is the new monasticism that all of these are just part of this revolution that’s going on. If our eyes our open, we-we need to realize that the revolution is at hand and what the implications are for the local church and so he says, for example, and I’ll give you a break in just a second here, that by 2025, this is part of what Barnes does is he looks out into the future, he says, “By 2025, only about [27:30] a third of the population will rely upon the local church.” At best, a third will have really any relationship with the local church.

Audience: [27:43] Christian population?

[27:44] Yes because the other two-thirds are also, a third are going to be related to local congregation. A third through these many or faith-based communities, whatever they, and it can take lots of different forms, and then a third through his other categories through media arts. I suppose it’s back to cyber-church. I need to give you a 10 minute break so let’s come back at 4:20 and we’ll finish out a little [28:14] of Barnes thinking and give you a couple of others and then we’ll start to think theologically about all of this.
Three, godly character is the third requirement. We know that, again, from a number of passages all through scripture, Moses, God spent 80 years working on his life before he used him —

Joseph, 13 years, and on go the stories in the Old Testament. David, who had a lot of work done in him in the wilderness; Paul, three years in the desert — all of these, one would say, character was getting forged. And God was using lots of things from prayer and meditation to temptation to forge this character. I think I put a quote there by Spurgin. "It would be in vain for me to stock my library or organize societies or project schemes if I neglect the culture of myself. For books and agencies and systems are only remotely the instruments of my holy calling.

My own spirit, soul and body are my nearest machinery for sacred service. My spiritual faculties and my inner life are my battle axe and weapons of war." — Great statement, huh? He was so much more eloquent back then.

It is a habit that is important to develop. And I can stress enough that that's not something you wait to develop when you graduate from seminary. That's gotta be done here. If you can't do it here, you won't do it there.

Well, I don't know if you know that. But if you don't know that, you need to know that. Form your habits. Build into your habits right now giving careful attention to your soul. Guard your emotions. Watch your spirit.

Watch your life. Now why is character so important? Obviously it's what validates ministry. There's got to be a coherence between the public and the private. So in this thing called ministry, there's got to be coherence between who we are and what we do.

As Odin puts it, you must embody the behavior you teach. And Paul's warning to Timothy is a good passage to underscore, 1 Timothy 4:16 where Paul exhorts Timothy to watch yourself. For if you do — remember what he said?

If you do you will save who? You will save yourself and your hearers. So paying attention to our self is critical if we're going to save both our self and our hearers. We are what God uses.

Peter says to the leaders there in 1 Peter 5:3, "Prove yourself to be examples." Second Corinthians 6:3, Paul says "giving no offense for anything that the ministry not be discredited." First Thes 2:10: "You are witnesses. And show is God how uprightly, devoutly, blamelessly we behave towards you."

So Paul would have to go back and use that issue of his personal credibility to legitimize his ministry as you and I would have to do from time to time. Acts 20: With the Ephesian elders, Paul did the same thing. He says "remember, remember my life. Remember how I lived."

What is he doing? He's arguing for what I said is true. Look at my life. And that's what we have to say to people too when we minister God's work. We have to in effect say as Paul said, "Look at my life. It's true."

So that means we've got to really develop that part of our life. If we don't believe it, no one else is going to believe it that we're trying to convince to believe it. Yesterday I said to the congregation, "God has set something on your heart. Has he? Are you aware of what he's called you to, what he's said on your heart?
Are you aware that God’s [05:00] hand is upon you? Are you really aware of that?” But it sounds
inaudible[05:05] and doesn’t go very far if I’m not thoroughly convinced that God said something on my
heart and God’s hand is not on my life.

It’s what validates ministry. It’s what, secondly, empowers ministry. It’s what gives force to what we say,
what we do. Joseph [phonetic] Stowall puts it this way: “Character is [05:30] the critical mass of ministry.”

Matthew 7:17-20: “Fruitfulness of our ministry is in proportion to the sanctification of our soul.”
Fruitfulness of our ministry is in direct proportion to the sanctification of our soul. If it’s what validates, if
it’s what empowers our ministry, this is where the devil will attack us all the [06:00] time.

He will do everything he can. He will be merciless, because it only takes on small thing, right? — One
small thing. Ecclesiastes 10:1, just one fly in the moment. We can spend years and years and years trying
to say it right, do it right, and it only takes one unright thing to undo all those years.

It’s an amazing thing, the power of [06:30] value, moral value. And every now and then when we look at
scripture passages like — what is it? — Numbers 20 with Moses and its impatience and his
disqualification from entering the land oughta just kind of shake us a little bit and just remind us that
God takes serious sin.

So what are some of those [07:00] critical dimensions of spiritual character? I’m going to mention some
obvious and maybe a few that are not so obvious. One of the obvious ones is purity of motive. And the
point just to put here in your notes is that self-interest has no place or maybe little place.

It’s almost impossible to not have some self-interest as I think of this statement. But it should have small
place. A couple [07:30] passages, 2 Corinthians 5:9, Paul’s ambition is to please God not men.

And along with that, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Paul from time to time really wanted to clarify his motives. He
wanted people to know what his motives were, so purity of motive — secondly, purity of life.

To be a minister is to [08:00] promise to live a life of purity. Richard Newhouse in his book “Freedom for
Ministry” refers to it as — it’s a wonderful phrase — vocation to holiness. It’s a vocation to holiness.

That’s what military really is. It’s a vocation to holiness. And so it means that we take at times radical
actions, like Paul says to Timothy, "Flee [phonetic] youth for [08:30] less." Paul doesn’t say try to conquer
it. Try to work it out.

You know, sometimes run for your life, right? Second Timothy 2:22, there are times as ministers we just
have to realize, “Hey, there’s no place for me to be here. I’ve got to get out of here and get out of this
situation.”

So, moral purity is just huge. This is where the adversary can be very subtle. We’ve had on our staff a very
godly [09:00] woman who leads one of our ethnic ministries — single woman, just really loves God.

Would have been the last person that I would have guessed would have experienced moral failure. But
just 2 weeks ago she came in our office and said, “I’m pregnant.” That’s a hard thing.

You never know. You never know. And I think we need to be very careful in this day in which [09:30] we
have tendered to take a lot of restraints down in terms of movies we watch, things we read...

And every now and then we need to just remind ourselves — Okay, just remember a lot of those things
get etched in the brain. And they stay there for a long time. If you’re married, it’s not a bad idea from time
to time to say to your spouse, "Look, I just want to make sure you understand and I understand that it's vital that we stay attractive for each other."

Because the enemy will do all we can to encourage us to be attractive to somebody else — so, purity. Thirdly, when I think about requirements for ministry, one that we may not think about too much — I'm going to move from a little bit of the obvious to a little bit of the less obvious.

And that's — I want to talk about diligence for a little bit. Ministry is hard work. If anybody thinks you've entered into ministry because it's a, you know, easy way to go then they don't understand ministry.

I have a brother-in-law who always likes to kid me. "Well John, you know, difference between you and me is you only have to work one day a week." [Chuckles] And I always tell him, "Keith, you know, that's one of the worst jokes that I hear."

And we laugh. And we kid each other, cos he knows that that's not true. But the reality is sometimes people think that's true. I remember my elder chairman a number of years ago had a younger daughter who said to him one day, she said, "Daddy, does pastor John do anything else the other 6 days of the week?"

She really didn't think I did, except maybe just have fun. It's sort of like Rick — he's the writer in the back of Sports Illustrated — Rick Riley, right? He writes a great column every week there. And he tells about one time his daughter came in and said, "Daddy, you just write one article a week for the back of Sports Illustrated.

What do you do with the rest of your time?" And he had a great answer. He said, "I worry what I'm going to write in that one page." [Laughs] And that's a lot of what ministry can feel like.

But it is hard work. And there are two dangers we need to avoid. The first one I think I've listed there is — Do you see it — [Phonetic] Acedia? I'm not sure if that's the right pronunciation.

But it is a word of Greek origin that means literally "without care," without care. Let me develop this a little bit. Another description of it is — there's a wonderful article that came out in First Things a number of years ago entitled "The Noon Day Demon."

This Acedia that creeps up in the heat of day. And it was something in the early Monastic tradition that they really work for because people in ministry struggled with it. Here are some descriptions.

It is a despair over continuing to stay passionate about the things of God. It is a despair over continuing to stay passionate. Or maybe somewhere in ministry you begin to doubt whether God intended for ministers to reach for the heavens.

What I'm talking about is really subtle stuff, not the obvious like moral impurity. But it's the more subtle ways that the adversary begins to creep in — a dullness of the soul, a dullness of the soul that can stem from a restlessness that we're not getting a handle on — a dryness of the soul, a dryness of the soul that lets the word became tasteless, prayer monotonous, even maybe pointless.

Have any of you ever experienced this? — All of this, as opposed to a vigorous piety if you will. And it's something we really have to watch over because if our zeal begins to dull, people will feel your barrenness.
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It will come out. It just can't help but come out. You can't hide it. They may even perceive it before you perceive it. This part of — back to 1 Timothy 4. Watch over yourselves. Watch over your soul. Watch over this subtle thing in ministry that can begin to creep in.

Let me just say for those of you that preach, keep in mind that when you preach you’re expending more than just intellectual energy, if you will, or physical energy. You’re expending more than emotional energy.

You’re expending something of your soul. And whether you’re preaching in a counseling office — when I’m intensely involved in counseling with someone and I’m seeking to bring them to God’s truth and talk about what God is calling them and sharing with them how to live, that takes huge amounts of energy, from me anyway, just huge amounts.

The thing is we sometimes don’t realize how much is expended until we start to go dry. Paul talks about it, doesn’t he? What is it? — In Galatians 6 about being weary and what? Do you remember? — Weary and well-doing. There’s a weariness that can subtly move to a certain form of Acedia, where you wake up one morning and just go I don’t care and can’t explain what that is.

And you find you’re working with this passage, let’s say, but you don’t care. Or you’re ministering to someone in a counseling context and you find that way, way down deep you’re thinking “I don’t care. I really don’t care about this person and their — I’m tired of hearing people’s problems.”

It can manifest itself in a lot of ways. Now there is a kind of laziness that is more obvious. And yet it also is very subtle. It’s consuming time and nothingness. I’m still talking about Acedia here, consuming time and nothingness and chalking it up as study — anyone know what that means?

[Laughs] That would be a very good one. I had a friend who was an associate pastor who used to tell me that his pastor he worked under spent most of his week in the study reading novels. That’s what he did — most of the week spent in his study reading novels and chalking it up as study.

It’s when we start to become a dabbler in literature, dabbler in blog sites, indulging in too much light reading... We begin to become a social lounger. And we neglect the deeper study. What is this Acedia? It can be evenings obliterated by TV, neither of entertainment nor education.

This is how Newhouse puts it, “but of narcoticized defense against time and duty.” This is not to say we all don’t need that. Sometimes in the midst of a really hard week and it’s late at night and I come home and I’m not ready to go to sleep, I might just turn on something that I don’t have to think.

But what I’m talking about is something that’s more subtle. And that’s when that becomes a routine. You find yourself beginning to refuse to engage in the pathos of life. And you start to move to a certain apathos or apathy. And you find yourself beginning to fail to redeem the time, Ephesians 5:16.

Eugene Peterson, he’s written a lot about this. And he puts it this way. He says, “Sloth — Acedia here works as well — is not about doing nothing. It is about doing nothing of what we were created or called to do.” Now think about that statement. Sloth is not about doing nothing.

It’s about doing nothing of what we were created or called in ministry to do. Beware of a lot of activism that amounts to a whole lot of nothing. So one requirement of ministry here in this diligence is beware of Acedia. Here’s the other danger that’s obviously of the other extreme.
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It’s on the next page too. And that’s a certain workaholism. Here’s the danger. Here’s the subtlety of ministry. We throw ourselves into a work whose demands are never met. People’s expectations are never satisfied. And our own sense of spiritual adequacy is never met.

We can throw ourselves into a work whose demands are never met, people’s expectations that are never satisfied. And worst of all our own sense of spiritual adequacy for the task that’s never met. This is one of the great dangers of ministry. When are you done?

You’re never done. It’s like I’ve said before. When people ask me, "So John, how long does it take to do a sermon? When are you finished?" I go "I’m finished when I start preaching." I’m never finished. And that’s the nature of ministry.

When I was a kid, my dad worked for Fritos Lay. And I used to write the routes with him. That’s one of the great times in my life with my dad. There were some times where I thought it would really be great to work for Fritos Lay, you know.

You go in. You take the rack. You replace what needs to be there. You take any bad products out. You get done on Friday. You look back. It’s done, at least for the weekend it’s done. You never really have that feeling in ministry.

I don’t drive home going "It’s done." I drive home always with "It’s ongoing." This is how the subtleties of workaholism can come in and mess up this whole thing called diligence. And what happens is the sacred duty starts to feel like a joyless marathon that has no end point.

And we forget this, that just as Jesus knew his points of exhaustion, so must we. We know when in this unceasing activity and this unceasing expectation we put on ourselves and others put on us. We need to know when to retreat and say, like Jesus, "Okay, that’s unfortunate. Lazarus is sick. But I’m not going today," if only it were that easy. [Laughs] I mean I don’t know what my congregation would do if I said that and then came back 3 days later and Lazarus died. But Jesus did, didn’t he?

And I like how Ray Anderson and his practical theology — [crosstalk] Yes, excuse me.

Audience Member: [21:52] [inaudible][21:53], right? It’s not going to [inaudible][21:54].


Audience Member: [21:58] Wasn’t that the point? — Not that Jesus —

[22:01] Well, I think — Yes, I think that’s the point. But I think there’s also a point that you can build off of other things Jesus did in his ministry — that he didn’t always respond immediately in the situation. He responds to God’s, to the Father’s mission for his life.

And the point is we — if we’re not careful in this workaholism, we can be dictated by the crisis, the emergencies. To a certain extent, that’s unavoidable. But the point is that — well, let me just read you what Anderson says. And I think it’s a fair statement.

He says it’s bad theology. Now you have to think about what he’s saying. But I think it’s a fair statement. It’s bad theology to love the world more than God, to interpret our calling in terms of the needs of the world rather than the will of God.

Audience Member: [22:48] [inaudible][22:49]
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[22:53] Yes, I mean Jesus didn't come and take care of every situation. And he didn't fit it necessarily into the time demands and schedules of people's expectations. But what he did do is he came and in effect said at the end, "It's finished."

I've completed what God called me to do. It's just that you and I are in this profession, if I can put it that way, this calling, in which we will face the same kind of issues and the same kinds of temptations to try to meet [23:30] all of the demands. And we just have to tell ourselves we can't and it's okay.

Because we're not actually working for them, we're trying to follow him and fulfill what he's calling us to do.

Audience Member: [23:48] [inaudible][23:49]

[23:54] Yes.

Audience Member: [23:55] [inaudible][23:55] warning against the compulsively co-dependent and [inaudible][23:58]. They take it as pleasure to be weighed down [inaudible][24:03] and disregard those interior matters which they [inaudible][24:08].


[24:24] Yes, well said — page 71? Yes, Anderson goes on to say that a theology that allows no rest is not a theology of the cross but a theology of the curse. Peterson in fact puts it this way in one of his articles. He says, "Ironically, it is its own form of laziness."

He puts it this way: "Sloth is laziness at the center." Y'all want a good conviction, sentence? [Chuckles] — Convicts me. Sloth is laziness as the [25:00] center, while the periphery is a dazzle with the thorn of activity and talk. Sloth is laziness at the center, while the periphery is a dazzle with the thorn of activity and talk.

It is a refusal to do our real work. And I just think maybe it's really important that you all hear this. And you think about this because in this hyper-culture we live in, it's only going to be more hyper tomorrow. I have a feeling you're going to need to go back to these kinds of words [25:30] a lot, because otherwise you're just going to run dry.

Here's the interesting thing too. And I think it's something we really need to think about and goes back to this requirement of moral purity. And I go back to a guy like Gordon McDonald. And when you read really his pilgrimage, here was a guy that at the time that he entered into his impurity he was —

He was head of intervarsity. I mean he was on the fast track. He was writing great books. And basically what you get a sense of [26:00] is that it happened. Why did it happen? It made no sense. He had a wonderful marriage. He often talks in his books about his relationship with Gayle.

How does that happen? It doesn't make any sense, except for this. He basically says "Here's how it happened. I got so active in ministry. I just kind of got to a point where..." And here's how it works, something like this — You get to a point where you're running so hard trying to meet everybody's [26:30] expectations.

You're doing so many things that you start to feel like you deserve something for all of this. And then you go over the boundaries. Sometimes when you read about stories of people in ministry, they start doing some bizarre things. Oftentimes, those things happen when they get so busy.
What really convicts me about that is when I go back to somebody like Peterson who says, "Well, you think it's because you're so busy and important." He says "Not really. It's because you're so lazy," which you just go "Wait a minute, No, it's anything but that."

Peterson goes "Actually, it's all about that because you're lazy at the thing you should be doing the most. And that is focusing on the center, keeping your life in order..." — Important stuff, huh? Think about it.

He has a wonderful chapter in his book "Contemplative Pasture" entitled "The Unbusy Pasture," in which he says "anything that I get in the mail that says 'to the busy pastor," I throw in the trash can because they are only reinforcing what I'm trying not to be but what the world wants me to be because it gives the sense of importance."

And we all understand that. I think we do. It's a subtle thing. When people come up to me and say "You know, John, I know you're so busy." There's a part of me that likes to hear that because it somehow suggests that I'm important.

Peterson actually really takes me to task for that — says that's not about importance. That's about misplaced living — yeah?

Audience Member: Do you think that it's an issue of or is it management of how you view your time?

[28:20] Well, it's not an either or. If you're managing your time, there will be that aspect to it. But here's the thing. And this is what we have to come to grips with in the ministry. It's that most of us, just about all of us, will not punch a time clock.

And so we will have to be the managers of our times. Now it works both ways. We won't have to punch a time clock so we can get away with not putting in the time that ministry demands. But on the other side of the coin, we don't have to punch a time clock means that we could put way too much time in that God never demanded.

We can structure the day as we please. And we can get away with doing very little or doing very much. And a great deal of our success will depend upon how we manage this thing. And in that bill, part of that management is rest. Put it another way.

Ministry is not — and maybe some of you need to hear this. I don't know. I don't know your personal life and habits. But ministry is not for those that need external structures. It's just not. If you can't handle life without external structures then maybe ministry shouldn't be what you get into, because there won't be.

There will be the ones you set up. But I don't have an elder board that says "So John, can you give us your time sheet?" So those are two things. Somewhere we've got to figure out what it means to be diligent and fulfill that requirement.

That means that I give myself and I give myself wholeheartedly and passionately. And I know when I've gone too far and when I've not gone far enough. And here's the deal, it's that it's really kind of different for all of us. Some people look at my life and think "You're crazy."

But I know my own gauges. And I know my own life. And I know my own pockets where I find my rest. And it works for me. And you have to find what that is for you. And in a certain sense, not again fall prey to people judging what that should be. You need to figure that out, within reasonable standards.
If you say "Well, I figured that out for my life. I just work two days a week." No, that's not going to fly. But it's not going to fly either to work, you know, 10 days a week either — questions on this one?

[Silence]

[30:48] Okay, here's the fourth one. And this is another subtle one. But it's a requirement is reverence. And let me just describe this a little bit. It's respect for the things of God. That's obvious. But here's what I mean by it.

When you're in ministry, over time you can start to lose that sense of reverence. And this is what it looks like. You've just seen one too many behind the scene things that start to make you cynical. Eugene Peterson says when someone asks him about the ministry, he says the mess.

In a certain sense, I love the mess. But there's a certain part of me that [31:30] hates the mess. And the mess that I'm talking about is the mess of people's lives. Part of what drives us — I take it you — Why are you feel called to ministry?

I would guess in part you feel called because — kind of like Nehemiah. You want to go rebuild the wall. You want to go rebuild the brokenness. You want to go and care for people. What you may not realize you've signed up for is that because of your role you're going to discover a lot more of the mess than you ever [32:00] intended.

Almost every week I discover things I wish I never knew, about people, about their marriage, things behind closed doors. What can happen if we're not careful is we can begin to take on a certain form of cynicism. Or here's another way we can lose the sense of reference is we begin to treat the holy as common.

This is really subtle. And I hope you make sure you [32:30] write this down — to treat the holy as common. You know, leading worship begins to become mundane. Preaching is just another "get the sermon done." — Handling the sacred so often, it becomes banal, making light of the work of God.

Or treating it as business, as reports, graphs, [33:00] number of baptisms, conversions, people to become products, consumers, customers — this kind of language can get in and infect us. And we could lose the sense of reference in ministry. What's one of our core requirements?

We have to guard the reference — number five, a loving heart. That's, again, one of the more [33:30] obvious ones. And yet sometimes we can hate the church. And we have to remember, "No, if I'm going to fulfill the requirement of a minister, I've got to love the church and I've got to love God's people."

First Thessalonians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 — Here's Paul with the Church that he could have really hated, the church at Corinth that treated him with [34:00] contempt. And yet Paul just would refuse. He refused to no longer love them.

He was committed to love them. Dave Hanson's book — just write this name down, David Hanson. He's written a book on loving the church. I can't remember the exact title. It's well worth reading some time. I read this book about halfway into my first ministry.

And it was just one of those God things that [34:30] came at the right moment, because I was starting to hate my church. And that book so convicted me of the important of loving people — because we will confront self-willed people and self-centered people and jealous people and stubborn people and bitter people.
We just will need a lot of love. The book of Jude where he is writing about very difficult men concludes by saying keep yourself in the love of God — interesting [35:00] how he does that. He talks about, you know, these deceivers, all of these dangers.

And then he closes verse 21, "Keep yourself in the love of God," because he knows what bitterness can do. It can destroy our ministry and ruin our lives and ruin our families. Unhappy ministers, unloving ministers aren't worth much. They just aren't much help.

None of us intend to become that, but we [35:30] can if we're not careful. I think I'd given a quote there by [phonetic] Paul Lee Carp that might be helpful. So how do we do this? Here are a couple things. Make sure you lay your resentment before God daily.

Pray for those who are really difficult. And you will have difficult people. Pray for them daily. Submit your soul to constant surgery, because hate is [36:00] like little cancers that can grow in the heart. Okay, number 6: integrity.

And that's again an obvious one; but integrity with money, integrity with truth. Integrity can be lost a thousand ways. But it — it's gained in only one way: a rigorous devotion to truth. So what does that mean? That means [36:30] make your stories true.

Make your illustrations true. Try to avoid putting yourself in situations where people will try to compromise your truth. It means keeping what's shared being closed doors confidential. I think you know this. I hope you know this.

But when you sign up for ministry, you're going to have a lot of people say a lot of times to you, "You know, I can't say this [37:00] to anybody else." Or they will say something like "I'm going to share with you something that I'm going to ask you to keep confidential."

I hear that lots. So just kind of make a pact with yourself, you know? I want to be one of the safest persons on Earth. I want people to know that they can tell me anything and it never seeps out. It's never shared with a spouse. It's never shared with anybody — Yes?

Audience Member: [37:30] [inaudible][37:30 - 37:38]

[37:38] Yes, but I think there's a way to do that without betraying confidences. There are times I do that, but I just realize there's a line I can't cross — so maybe saying I'm dealing with a difficult situation and I'm not sure how to handle this and I don't want to reveal confidences.

But here's where I need some help. And I think I'm on pretty safe [38:00] ground. But there again I have to be careful that I don't give so much information that a person easily connects the dot. You know, we can kind of subtly betray confidence if we're not careful to.

Audience Member: [38:12] When a person's health or their life is on the line and that confidence [inaudible][38:21]

[38:23] Yes, and you know it's maybe in that is where you then, again with integrity, say "I can't keep this confidence, because it will destroy you if I do." I mean, I think there's a way — a way around that.

And I realize there are some exceptional — somebody comes in and says, "You know, I have to be really honest with you. I'm abusing my daughter, or I killed someone." Well, obviously it would be going way too extreme to say "Well, okay, you can tell me and I'll tell no one."
But I think integrity may mean I may need to say "I can’t retain that in confidence because this is more than [39:00] just about you. Okay, we'll pick up, finish up a few more thoughts on this and bring [phonetic] Purvis back.
Chapter 12

We're thinking theologically about ministry and part of the task in this course is to say OK, well let's look at, maybe, some contemporary ministry and think theologically about it. So, I chose Carson's book, it's not the perfect model. There's no perfect model, but yet someone who attempts to say let's look at a movement, a dialogue, whatever you wanna call it. And let's think it through theologically.

[00:44] So, we're focusing here on, how did we do that, how does he do that, what does he show us. We said, last week, one of the things he shows us is that, first of all, he has spent time understanding the movement. Which is important for us to make sure, theologically, we do that work. We do that work of, before we're gonna critique anything, make sure we understand its voices.

[01:12] Now there's some that would say, critical of Carson, well he didn't become near as familiar as he could. How many emergent pastor's has he really engaged in emergent dialogue with. So I've read some of those critiques of Carson. But, nonetheless we get the point. If you're gonna critique something, analyze something, the first thing is read what it is saying, and don't just read what someone was saying about it.

[01:38] That's the easy way out. It's easy for us in ministry, and I certainly confess my tendencies, sometimes, to do that. I'll read what someone says about it, and then embrace it as my scholarship. Well no, if I really want to critique something, I need to go back to the source. So, whether it's McLaren, Yakinelli, different people, Carson at least attempted to do that.

[02:08] And then he starts anyway, which is a good start point for us, and this is another piece of thinking theologically through. It's always easy to look at the negative, let's start with the positive. That's probably always a good start point, because our tendency is to be critical. It's more work to be charitable, charitable certainly includes, also, being fair.

[02:35] But being charitable, nonetheless. So what I think he does in this second chapter, I think in a charitable way, say OK, what are the strengths of this. This is his analysis. So, some of the strengths. First of all he looks at the emergent church and says it gives serious attention to culture and what the implications for ministry are. That's a real strong part.

[02:59] As opposed to some churches, some ministries, that might cocoon, hide themselves, the world's going to hell, let's just kinda circle the wagons and ride it out. Here's a very serious intention to engage with culture, to read, look at what culture is saying, and that's a really good thing. And it's a really good thing all of us need to do, don't get too holed up in your study, so to speak, and just read theology, that would be really bad for ministry.

[[03:34] A second thing he notes here, that's really good, is that those in the emergent have as one of their really key words, authenticity. And they settle for nothing less than that. Carson steps back and says that's a really good thing. Cause a lot of churches that have drifted into status quo and stagnancy, are going through the motions, and there's nothing authentic about that.

[04:02] When you're just saying phrases that are nice phrases, they're what people expect, but they're tinny. They don't have a solid tone. Thirdly, it recognizes our limitations, that we interpret things out of our own framework, that creates our own hermeneutical blind spots. And Carson says, OK, there's something good about that, and those in the emergent recognize that we're all, to a certain extent, culturally bound.
[04:39] Number four, an intention to reach out to those overlooked, those shaped by post-modern assumptions. Here's a fourth really good thing, is a willingness to go out to the perimeters and reach those that a lot of churches aren't interested in reaching. Sorta like when I was in high school, you know, there was always the quad, kind of where everybody had lunch, and the cafeteria.

[05:07] And then there was the outer perimeter, where you know, certain kids, outsiders, sat often by themselves. And nobody really went out to their neighborhood, so to speak. So one of the strengths of those in emergent is this desire to go out to the perimeter. And then, unwilling to be bound by tradition while aiming to link with historic Christianity.

[05:34] He mentions as a fifth strength, we don't do it just because that's the way it's been done. But on the other hand, aiming to go back and say what was the apostolic church all about. What was it doing. What have we missed. What about church practice before the reformation. That also had legitimacy, instead of just post-reformation.

[06:00] OK, so, some of the strengths, huh? Is that how you read it? Any one wanna add to that, make comments? Heather?

Woman: [06:12] [inaudible]

[06:18] Would that indicate anything? It certainly indicates that he's gonna be much more critical of the movement than positive. But even with his persuasion, he's teaching us something, nonetheless. And, and that is this is always a good start point. Because it can also soften, maybe what we're going to say on the other side, I don't know. It may not be fair to say it softened what he did on the other side.

[06:49] What strengths did he miss, as you understand the emergent movement. Anything he missed, that needs to be said, as well, that are not reflected in these five?

Man: [07:03] [inaudible]

[07:21] Yes, particularly on issues of justice. Diana, you were gonna say something?

Diana: [07:27] [inaudible]

[07:32] You mean more than just saying there's a heart there for that, but this is happening,

Diana: [07:37] [inaudible]

[07:50] Let's move to the other side. When you look at the other said. As Carson, I should say, looks at the other side. What stands out as some of the key, not strengths, but weaknesses, of this emergent movement, dialogue, whatever you wanna call it.

Woman: [08:13] [inaudible]

[08:38] So, be more psychological than theological. More therapeutic in orientation.

Woman: [08:46] [inaudible]

[08:50] OK. Anyone wanna take issue with that, or would you say yeah, that's one.

Man: [08:55] I don't know that that's really a emergent church issue. Is that more emergent, or is that more [09:01] [inaudible]
I think, Diana, what you’re saying is that you understand Carson, he’s applying that to the emergent. Which, yeah, it certainly isn’t just exclusively there, for sure. Paul, you were gonna say something?

Paul: It’s hard to say the emergent church is, because there’s so many fractions in the emergent church.

Right, right. Some people in the emergent love [phonetic]Brian Mclaren, and some hate him, so, yeah.

Paul: Right, so I don’t think that what Brian Mclaren says. I don’t think [inaudible] [09:38] is a good representation of the whole emergent church. [crosstalk] I don’t think what one person says is a good representation anymore.

Yes, right. Yes, sure.

Paul: I think it’s a movement that goes beyond that. What I see in the emergent church is more, is more, it seems that they’re, at least a healthy representation are more centered on a mission, and they turn to the gospel, you know?

Right, right. So, again, let’s keep the point of our exercise in front of us, here. As we then do a theological assessment, and we’re dealing with something that is a, when we say a movement, but it’s very diverse. What does that require of us when we assess something theological. We have to, we have to work really hard to see if there are common denominators, is that a fair way to put it?

OK, let’s ask this question. Does Carson do that, and if he does, does he do it very well, does he not do that.

Man: [inaudible]

He tries to look at, here’s the aspects that I think are good. But what’s taking place, I don’t think he ventures very far from, even in his critique. This is a good movement, but it’s either taken to the extreme, or it’s not taken far enough. For example, he speaks of the rejection of the modern church, and a lot of, and now I’m looking at the fact that they have done a lot of what the post-modern church is doing.

A lot of good at that. He also, I think, shows, when he goes to the next chapter, he begins to look at. What’s the epistemology of pre-modern, modern, post-modern, and he shows the great level of what leads to central, uh diverse areas where they overlap. He shows similarities between, I think what he’s trying to find is those bridging ideas.

And then try to show the divergence. And I think one of his bigger critiques is like what he said on page, basically 71 and 72, [inaudible] [11:46]. It’s the absolute, the emergent church is sometimes absolutist about being non-absolute. And that there is kind of an intellectual discontinuity.

Or intellectual incoherency. Saying that, basically, the issue is not anti-absolutism, or not having absolutists. But it’s, what is the source, and the origin, of that absolutism. And that’s where he kind of nuances in, he did speak to Mclaren quite a bit in that topic.

He also mentioned about rejection of the modern church, that there’s this kind of taking of extreme instances and then dismissing of the whole based off the one. I think he tries not to do that, he also says these individuals, given Mclaren’s inspection, have been carrying a lot of, they have a very large voice. So
they may not be representative of the whole, [crosstalk] but they carry a weight that needs to be addressed.

[12:49] Sure. OK, let’s go back again, and think through then. In this diverse movement, as Carson looks at it. What are things that pretty well cross all the boundaries within the movement, that it’s fair to critique. For example, when he assesses it, he says here’s a word I think that everyone can fit in the emergent under that umbrella.

[13:14] So, Paul, I’ll come back to you. Would that be a fair statement. That protest wither you’re more over here where, say McLaren is, or [phonetic]Driscol, or whatever. Would protest be.


[13:30] OK, yeah. Well, and I think they kinda go together, right. But, now let’s look at, again on this critiquing side of some of the negative things that fit under this broad umbrella. Can we find some that pretty much.

[13:50] Here’s the weakness that goes across all the diverse.

Man: [13:54] Trying to become relevant when we lost the counter-cultural element.

[14:00] You’d say, maybe one of the weaknesses is, maybe too much accommodation to culture. Heather.

Heather: [14:08] [inaudible]

[14:10] Yes, it can. OK. What else does Carson, in a critical way, say about emergent, here. [phonetic]Phil.

Phil: [14:19] The emergent church is pretty universally condemning of the modern church and conventional Christianity, in a way that, it just sees this big disaster, and nothing good came out of it.

[14:32] Is that they’re over-critical of traditional church. [crosstalk] Yes.

Phil: [14:36] That’s what I think, [inaudible][14:38]

[writing on chalkboard]

Man: [14:49] One other thing, John. I think in that same polar, maybe they overgeneralize.

Man: [14:56] I think one of the questions is what is the basis for which traditions are held on to and which ones are rejected. Is there a [phonetic]rubric for doing it, or are we just picking our preferences. [crosstalk] Subjective, maybe.

[15:08] So, subjective? We’re not here to critique whether this Carson’s right or wrong. We’re just simply trying to understand, what does he see as the major weaknesses. So, what you said so far is a rejection of absolutes, accommodation of culture, overly-critical of the traditional church, and maybe even modernity. Generalizes, and is subjective.

[15:39] Are we getting at Carson’s criticisms?

Man: [15:42] Something that I saw in there. Was he’s mainly focusing on some of the outspoken leaders of it, such as McLaren. What he says is, they’re too busy telling people how things have changed, they’re neglecting to find a resolution to the problem.


Man: [16:00] They’re just busy saying how things are done wrong, and this is how culture is, [inaudible] [16:03]
Theology of Ministry

[16:05] It's easy to say, here's what's wrong with the traditional church. It's harder to say, here's what needs to change. Some might read, in Carson, that that's one of his criticisms of the emergent. Yes.

Man: [16:23] But McLaren has kinda turned the corner. Cause when he first gained popularity, he was very much deconstructionist, and now with his book A Generous Orthodoxy, he's reconstructive.

[16:32] Keep in mind, we're not here to try to debate whether Carson's right or wrong, as just to say, let's look at his method, what he's doing here. And what he's doing is, he's critiquing, and he's coming up with these criticisms. Whether they're legitimate or illegitimate.

Man: [16:55] What do they stand for. Because there's so many things that get grouped under this title of post-modern, that, and slash, thereby emergent, that you really can't even say that they stand for anything. Or identify by simply [inaudible][17:08], there's no distinction.

[17:10] Well, that puts Carson on kind of perilous ground, doesn't it. In a way, because he's trying to analyze something in that is diverse and is fluid, that makes it a challenge, doesn't it. It feels a little bit, sometimes, any of you that have done a sermon. If I look at my sermon on Tuesday, versus Saturday. Tuesday I'm putting rough ideas out, most of 'em are bad, but I'm testing 'em.

[17:40] Kinda throwing stuff out on paper, I'm thinking, I'm processing. And if somebody came along and pounced on my notes, and said, oh man look at this is really screwed up. I dunno if that's a very good analogy, here, because sometimes when I look at the emergent movement, that's kind of in process, and we're doing a lot of critiquing and assessing.

[18:05] There can be a little bit of danger in that. Now, that's not to say that the emergent, then, is completely innocent, because some of the criticisms starts with their approach to begin with. It would be like if I start my sermon prep with an assumption that the word of god is not this. Someone can fairly criticize.

Man: [18:27] One of the things that I thought was interesting was when we talked about how long has this movement been going on. And kind of where we are in the process. And there's a danger, even though as you're approaching this, of being negated, even writing this book. Because he gives this over two decades' worth of history behind even the concepts, right?

[18:48] And, so, at least he acknowledges, [inaudible][18:49] moving target there. That's when I hear some of the selections that don't directly deal with what he's written in the book that begins to deal with what McLaren stands now, not where he stood when he wrote the book. And how some of the churches don't want to use the term protest, or maybe reform. That even this concept of terminology, and how that's changing dialogue, even.

[19:15] Yes. What is this telling us about, i use this term, ministerial theologians, OK. We read Carson, we look at his positives, his critiques, his criticisms, his definitions. We step back, and he's looking at something that's contemporary and important. What did we learn from this, then?

Man: [19:35] One of the things it's about is. More of the argument, that one of his concerns about their belonging or believing.

[19:44] One of the real benefits, sometimes, about movements, is they emerge and often they emerge. And they, you know, emergent is one of thousands of movements right over the course of history, that have often emerged as correctives to a certain degree. What is a really valuable thing, at least I find, is they force you to re-think a lot of things.
Sometimes, things you just assumed. Let’s say, like Communion. I think when [phonetic]Michael Frost was here, he was talking about how he’s actually starting a church in an art gallery. That, almost all pagans. But they’re interested, and they actually are very intrigued with the Lord’s supper. I asked Frost, I said what’cha gonna do, and he said, well, he says, I’m gonna do it.

And I asked him why, and he said, because there’s the fascination in them, and it that one moment I have this powerful opportunity to declare what this remembrance is about. In other words, I have a clear entryway into the gospel. As opposed to saying, well no, that’s only for believers, so I can’t do it. Is he right? Is he wrong? Well, you stop, and you go, I’m not sure.

Right? I gotta think through my theology. Does first Corinthians 11 give room for that? I remember a guy from India that came to my church in Europe, that I met on a tennis court, invited him to church and to my surprise he came. And he started coming every week, and he’d take communion. And my elders would go ballistic.

First of all, I’d wonder, well how did you know. I mean, at that moment I’m pretty well, you know, I’m taking first Corinthians 10, this is the [inaudible][21:36] of the body and the blood. It’s, I understand communion to be in part, and truly a fellowship with god that’s unlike any other experience of fellowship.

At that moment I’m pretty oblivious to almost anybody else. I mean I think I should be, I’m not lookin’ around goin’, so, you know, did she drink it all in one gulp, or sip it, or, you know. This guy, of course then they quote first Corinthians 11. Well look at Paul, you know, he’s drinking to his judgment, right? But in the context, who’s Paul referring to? He’s referring to believers, right? And what were they doing?

They turned the lord’s supper into a party. It not only turned into a party, but they were completely heartless about those part of the fellowship who were really hurting, while they were eating all the food over here. I think that’s all part of it. The point is this, here, Paul wasn’t addressing the issue of a non-believer. And I remember when that discussion came up it was very hot at the elder meeting. They were ready to take me to task for not going right over to his house and dealing with him.

And I thought, are you kidding. I mean, if I go over and do something like that he’ll never come back to church again. Well, so what are we going to do, and I thought, well, what if he does. I mean, if it really is such a judgment of god, god can handle that. But theologically, scripturally, can I find anywhere where he’s drinking judgment to himself. Well I couldn’t, so I figured, you know what, if he’s here at that moment.

And I try to, in a sense, preach gospel when people are partaking of the bread. If he hears gospel every time that happens, and if he takes the elements, that’s great. Does my theology support that, I don’t know. Well, anyway, that’s just, I’m getting off on a tangent. But to make a point that these are the kind of things that force you to go back and rethink through, instead of just hiding behind tradition.

And that’s a good thing. Let’s see if we can sum it up in about two minutes, here. We look at a book that’s trying to assess something that’s sort of a moving target, in a way. That’s a little bit like Jello, but also nonetheless saying here’s some real concerns. And I think there’s some real concerns with this whole issue of foundationalism and I think there’s some real legitimate concern.
But, we also weighed that with a lot of really good things, that I think are being said. And you also weigh it, that it’s easy to make assumptions of where people are at. Like McLaren I’ve invited here, and he’s taught one of my doctor of ministry courses. And it made people nervous.

And some legitimate nervousness. But I see a guy that’s in process. And it is kinda hard to pin him down, in a way, because he’s ever-shifting and changeable. He’s like all the rest of us, he’s moving. And he doesn’t have it all together. Now I’m not saying that therefore he shouldn’t be criticized. I’m saying he should be, but I think sometimes we can be too quick to rush to judgment.

Instead of saying, well first of all this guy isn’t a theologian. And secondly, he’s actually just asking some really basic questions a lot of us never thought to ask. And that’s OK. The important thing that we all have to do, here, is make sure we keep growing deep. I’ll tell you what all this does, and I hope this does for you. You see all these movements, you see a lot, and you say, man, I have to just keep going deeper and deeper and deeper in my theology.

At the same time, I’m paying more and more attention to culture, I think emergent movement can teach us that. But what it teaches me is that at the same time, I gotta get deeper and deeper, and more and more grounded, and really know my convictions. I think if both those things are happening, don’t you agree. They’re both happening.

We’re more and more, understanding culture. We’re more and more, growing deeper in our theology. I think, hopefully, we’ll end somewhere at the right point at the end of all of it. I like how [phonetic]Os Guinness put it in one of his books, we can become so relevant, that we become irrelevant.

That’s a good warning. OK, so next week, you have one more week, and then the big week, right. So, next week we’ll talk about glory of ministry.
Chapter 13

Obviously, it starts with what? [crosstalk] Yes, there’s gotta be somewhere a decision that’s been made to give one’s life to God, though there are a lot of people who do ministry who haven’t made that decision. [00:30] We start with this as a prerequisite, and then we secondly talked about what? That there should be evidence of—[crosstalk] of calling.

Audience Member: [00:39] Calling.

[00:41] These are things that, at some point when you—some of you anyways who are thinking about ordination, these are the kinds of things you will have to defend, you will have to declare and state. People want to hear about your conversion. They’ll want to hear about your calling.

I hope I’ve [01:00] made it clear that calling, it gets a little bit more nebulous for some of us, maybe not be absolutely dramatic for some of us. It may be a whole different kind of description, and what I would say is not to feel pushed into any corner of having to say anything but what you have experienced in your own life, but make sure, again, that it is thought through theologically. So, calling to ministry, we discussed some about that, and then we went to character [01:30] only because when we think through scripture and ministry, scripture seems to go back often to talk about character, and we know that because so many people God uses, He put them through some significant refinement building character, and we talked about some of the issues of character, and we move today to what’s involved in developing character.

So, I think that brings us up to where we’re at today. [02:00] So, what’s involved in developing character? When you look at earlier theologians, and we’ve seen this in Purvis, a lot of what has been advocated is an adoption of at least some spiritual disciplines, aesthetical practices, realizing that apart from interior renewal, it’s gonna be hard to have much of an exterior ministry, and I think that’s probably a [02:30] pretty fair statement, that when it comes to developing character, a lot of it’s gonna depend upon our own personal disciplines, and what are some of those disciplines? When you think about your own disciplines for developing character for ministry, what are the essentials?

Audience Member: [02:47] Prayer.

[02:48] Yes, prayer is certainly one of the—the great essentials.

Audience Member: [02:53] Kinda [02:53] [phonetic] like a banquet [02:54] [phonetic] [02:54] [inaudible]

[02:56] Right, yeah, good way to put it, and that is a discipline, [03:00] and it is one of the hardest things we do, and it is a work, but that’s certainly one key discipline. What’s another?

Audience Member: [03:07] Meditating on scripture.

[03:09] Yes, reflection, not just reading scripture but dwelling thinking about it—as Peterson puts it, "Moving from the distancing eye to the listening ear," and there’s a pretty big step between the distancing eye and that listening ear. Other disciplines you think about?

Audience Member: [03:29] Silence and solitude.

[03:30] Yup, increasingly, as you’re deep steep in ministry, that will be things that you will almost have to just willfully put on schedules, and if you wait for it to come, it probably a lot of times won’t come, so, taking time out. What’s been helpful for me is to find two or three local retreat places. Wherever God puts
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you in ministry, as—as you get things settled and get a lay of the land, start [04:00] looking for those kind of places.

It could be a Catholic retreat center. Sometimes they have some opportunities for you to go. Sometimes it's pretty inexpensive, that will just give you a room and not much else—a bed and a desk and no TV and solitude. It's great for that. Mount Angel—I've gone there a couple times. It can be a real wonderful opportunity, or various camps, especially for people [04:30] in ministry, will have a place set aside. Just check with them.

Places like Cannon Beach—I don't know if they still do this, but for those in ministry will offer up to, I think, three days/three nights free a year to get away. They're out there, and they're designed just for your spiritual refreshment and health. I like to go sometimes up to what's called The Hideaway up at Camp Menucha [05:00] up the Columbia Gorge. It's just a little two-room house, but it provides just a time to—to just kinda get your bearings.

The temptation is to load up your backpack with all kinds of books that you gotta read for classes and other things or sermons, and sometimes, you just really have to force yourself to say, "No, I'm not taking those. I'm gonna take my Bible and maybe [05:30] one book that's devoted to just nurturing the soul," and just force yourself to do that and resist the temptations to take a lot of busy work up there because sometimes, it can end up you're doing the same thing that you'd be doing here. It's just in a different location, and you call it a retreat to silence and solitude, all kinds of subtle temptations. What else is critical too in terms of spiritual disciplines [06:00] to helping keep and build character?

Audience Member: [06:04] [inaudible]

[06:05] Yes, keep the tool sharpened, the saw sharpened—yeah, that's really critical. I mean, one of the things I hope you all do is just get it really planted in your mind when you graduate someday, it's just moving from one chapter to the next chapter. Some of you know I direct the Doctor of Ministry Program here, and one of the things [06:30] we created in our program I think is really a cool idea is that, for all of our graduates with a deman [06:36] [phonetic]—and I encourage all of you to think about a deman someday—that they can take up to one course free the rest of their lives while they're in ministry, and it's our commitment to say, you know, keep continuing with education.

Audience Member: [06:52] I was gonna say accountability.

[06:54] Yes, accountability is key, and one of those things in accountability is to look for someone [07:00] in a kind of parallel ministry, which might be another counselor, another pastor, another director of parachurch, whoever that might be and establishing accountability relationship of getting together once maybe every, something like, six weeks with a you're-welcome-to-ask anything-about-my-life kind of relationship, and just hold yourself accountable. Yes, those are all good. Anything else you think of [07:30] as disciplines? Word, prayer, solitude, study—Yes...

Audience Member: [07:34] [inaudible]

[07:40] Yes, those are the times that can help remind you what has a grip on you and what doesn’t—just watching what is starting to get a hold of your life and that can be a lot of things. It can be food. It can be materialism. It can be TV—lots of little things that are always trying to worm their way [08:00] and become addictions—just compulsive behavior—a lot of different things. So, yeah, someone else was gonna—Heather...
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Heather: [08:09] This is really [inaudible] developing a habit of being healthy and taking care of yourself, like, finding outlets like kind of the [08:19] [inaudible] of [08:23] [inaudible] 

[08:24] Yes. No, I think that’s excellent. I think probably not near enough people in ministry [08:30] give near as much weight as they should to that. I’ll tell you, for me, it’s what gets me through the week a lot of times—if I didn’t work out really hard about four or five times a week—and I stress this in other classes but in ministry, we put an undue stress on our physical lives.

I think you probably are getting a sense of that, or you will. Because of the kind of stresses that sometimes ministry brings, if you don’t have a pretty [09:00] good strong physical body to endure those things, it can mess you up, and yet, I see people in ministry who, for some reason—maybe it’s because they try to be disciplined in so other—so many other areas—they just let their body really go, and they pay for it. They really pay for it. Not to mention that it’s just staying in shape, it’s that sometimes it can just be a huge release, right?

Sometimes we just need that. [09:30] Last Tuesday, I got at the end of my day, and I just had this horrific headache, and I went out and just played a really hard two sets of tennis with a guy I meet with every Tuesday, and I was a new man. Okay, let’s talk about D. Can a minister be disqualified from ministry?

When we talk about qualifications for ministry, it’s fair to bring up the question. What about disqualification, and that’s not an easy question to answer. [10:00] You know, we just had, as I shared, one of the people on our staff that we’ve had to suspend because of moral failure, and the question comes up, "Is this person permanently disqualified, set aside for season? Do we have any theological guidelines?"

Well, let me give you a few things here. First of all, it’s pretty clear in scripture that the—that the only unpardonable sin, if we start with that tack, is rejecting [10:30] Jesus Christ. We see people who committed some pretty deep and dark sins and yet, survive ministry. Who would be some of those?

Who’s an obvious one? David would be one obvious person who committed both adultery and murder and yet, so to speak, retained a position of being God’s minister. Moses—I suppose you might use Moses [11:00] as an illustrate. I—I don’t know how good of an illustration but he murdered, yet was placed into ministry and Paul, but we can make a distinction between those who did some pretty bad things before they came into a relationship with God or [11:16] reused [11:16] of God, but it balances with, on the other side of the coin, First Corinthians 9, 24 to 27.

Paul feared disqualification, didn’t he? It talks about [11:30] running this race and, again, submitting himself to certain disciplines, lest he be disqualified at the end, and I’m not all Paul was referring to—what he was talking about there, but he had this potential. At least he understood this—that one could be disqualified.

James warns of a stricter judgement—James, Chapter 3, Verse 1. I’ve read arguments on both sides of the case of saying those who are in ministry, it’s a privilege. [12:00] It’s a high calling. If you commit severe sin, you should be disqualified to those who say there’s always room for redemption.

Here are a couple of guidelines I’ve written down. The first thing is when someone falls into moral failure. The first thing is there needs to be a restorative process established. So, make sure you think through what is a good restorative process, [12:30] and it’s gotta be prompted, first of all, by one’s willingness to repent and submit cuz otherwise, without that, it’s going to go nowhere.

So, a restorative process that is established, and when you think about that process, you should think about it in terms of who’s gonna be part of that and what are the steps, who’s going to be the
accountability person, [13:00] and here’s the second thing: Once a restorative process is established, here’s, I think, a second major rule, and that is—or guideline and that is going back into ministry should be at the church’s prerogative, not the sinner’s.

So, with this person on our staff, who we’ve established about a 12-month restorative process in which she has signed a written agreement to go through a process that will all be in the context [13:30] of a lot of love and affirmation but yet, will call for—it’s gonna call for some counseling—some professional counseling in some areas. It’s gonna call for accountability [13:40] [inaudible] a number of things, but at the end of it all, the prerogative for her to go back into ministry, we’ve also established, should be the church’s, not her own.

You know, I say that because it’s easy for a person to run from the situation. This then serves as a time to address, [14:00] in particular, especially in the restorative process, whatever character flaws are there cuz there are. If a person, for example, falls into moral failure that’s been ongoing while they were in ministry, there has been, obviously, a pattern of compartmentalizing things, and that’s gotta really kinda be undone and figured out how that happens.

[14:30] Some people may be sensitive enough with God that just to have a fight with a spouse almost paralyzes you to do ministry, right? Getting ready to preach, let’s say you have a—a tiff with a spouse and you just feel like, "Man, God, I c—I can’t go any further. I’ve gotta make sure things are right." Some people, on the other hand, who begin to fall into deeper and deeper temptation, start to figure out ways to compartmentalize.

It’s amazing to me sometimes to hear stories [15:00] of people who had these profound ministries at least on the surface and yet, had this ongoing, let’s say, affair or other things, and you ask the question how—how can you do that? How can have this world over here and this world over here? When I was just entering into ministry at Youth for Christ Days Campus Life Days, I held the director in the highest esteem because he was my spiritual godfather.

He was instrumental to me coming to Christ, and he was [15:30] the key to my calling into ministry, and he was a national known leader. He spoke all over the country all the time, and I became someone he mentored. He invested a lot of time in me. I’d pick him up at the airport. I’d take him off into places. We became very close. He was my mentor. I was his mentoree, and yet, all of this time, he had a deep homosexual lifestyle going on that none of us knew anything about, [16:00] and then it all came out when he came down with AIDS. I remember how devastating it was for me. I actually found out about it after I had come to seminary.

I got a call one day, and I was so disturbed, I really seriously contemplated quitting seminary that day, and my first thought was this is just all a bunch of junk. I’m giving my life to nothing. It shook me that much cuz I had put so much [16:30] of my—attached so much of my faith, but to this day, what I—it’s a mystery to me how that happens, how people can so compartmentalize.

Now, in a certain sense, I realize we all compartmentalize all the time in some ways, but at that level, the scary thing is that people can move to that level. Like, one of the ones that threw me the most was Gordon McDonald. Here I was reading his "Order in Your Private World" and his other book on the disciplines—I forget the title—but all [17:00] about the disciplines of the interior of the heart.

In other words, he’s writing about the things that are the deepest, deepest level of what a person in ministry needs to do, needs to be in their personal walk with God, and he’s writing this while he’s having
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an affair. How does that happen? The only thing I can figure out is you just build these huge compartments with these big walls in between them.

I’m not a psychologist, so [17:30] those of you that are there, I’m probably describing it all wrong. All I know is it makes no sense to me. What I’m underscoring is that when you potentially are involved in a restorative process with someone who’s been disqualified, I think those are the kind of things you gotta get to the root of.

It’s not just that there was sexual sin, for example. It’s that you were able somehow to go through life with these kind of compartments, and those [18:00] are the things that gotta get addressed and deeper issues. Proverbs 22:14 I think is one of the scariest proverbs in scripture.

"The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit. He who is cursed of the Lord will fall into it," which I perhaps have shared that with some of you before, but what scares me about that verse is—think about what he says. The mouth of an adulteress is a deep—what—[18:30] a deep pit, and he who is cursed of the Lord will fall into it. What's he saying?

He's saying that the judgment—we often, when someone falls into moral failure or sexual sin—is to say something like, "Well, I wonder what's gonna be the judgement for that," when, if you look at that verse, think about what that verse is saying. That is the judgment. He who's cursed of the [19:00] Lord will fall into it. You following what I'm saying?

So that if the judgment is, let's say, someone who enters into a sexual relationship that they have no business being in. The question, according to that proverb, would be what led to a person being given over in that sense. It's sort of like Romans 1, where God finally gives over to unnatural relationships.

Remember it talks about [19:30] that? In other words, there's something that proceeds the overt action, and you see where I'm going, I hope, with all of this, and that is when you talk about restoration, when you deal with disqualification and you're working on the restorative process, it's those things, I think, you've gotta be willing to penetrate and get to. It's not just the moral failure of falling into the wrong sexual relationship.

We need to figure out what led to that that [20:00] finally God gave you over to that. What are those issues, and work backwards from that. How did you—how were you able to compartmentalize that because if you don't really come to grips with that, you might end up repeating it again. Somewhere I find myself, like a lot of things I discover in life, between two, perhaps, extremes.

One extreme is to extend so much grace that a person does not work through the issues, and we’re so quick to want to get them back [20:30] in ministry and celebrate forgiveness that then they go out into ministry and they commit the same failure again. The other extreme I think is to say to someone, "You're disqualified forever. You can't be in ministry again. I mean, you can serve God. You can do a lot of things, but here's kinda what you can't do anymore," and I respect people on that position.

I just think maybe for me, it's a little bit too [21:00] extreme. The reason is—is because I look at someone, to me, that really is a good model, and that's—that is Gordon McDonald, who has worked through deep restoration, repentance, allowed himself to be accountable, submitted himself, his marriage stayed intact, and he's come out of it and written books again and served as a pastor again, and I think, at least from what I know and I know just a little bit, but I've spent time talking to him [21:30] personally, that he weathered through that and found grace to continue ministry again but not too quickly. Okay, questions on that—on disqualification? Yes...
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Audience Member: [21:44] Is there anything other than moral failure [21:47] [inaudible]

[21:48] Yes, I think it could be a number of things. It could be deceit, dishonesty. It could be embezzlement, someone who's discovered to have been maybe stealing [22:00] from the church, as an example. That's a good question. Those are some that come to my mind.

What else do you think would be a disqualifier? We often immediately think of sexual sin, right, as sort of like the one sin, and there is something about sexual sin that I think we do have to note. First Corinthian 6 —Paul seems to refer to it in a more distinctive way than other sins as he talks about sins of the body and he [22:30] talks about unfaithfulness. So, there is something about that, I think, we have to pay attention to. First Corinthian 6, about 18 to 20 would be a passage I might put here. Yes...

Audience Member: [22:41] What about spiritual abuse?


Audience Member: [22:53] [inaudible]

[22:56] What makes that a little bit harder as opposed to, say, [23:00] sexual failure here or embezzlement or something, some of these are pretty obvious. That one has a little bit more of a grayness. I mean, what might be spiritual abuse in one person's eyes might be just a strong dominant personality who—who's leading authoritatively, and well, I can think of, you know, different language to justify that.

It's a little grayer to an obvious extreme, where it's pretty much cleared [23:30] to—to everybody. That one can be a little bit more of a judgment call, can't it, because a number of us could look at different people in ministry and say, "Man, there's a person committing spiritual abuse," and yet, a number of other people might just say, "Well, no, I don't think so. You're just offended because he takes a hard position."

Audience Member: [23:49] That's why I'm asking [23:49] [inaudible]

[23:50] I've not faced that. I mean, I've seen it, but not to the degree that person was disqualified from ministry. Yes...

Audience Member: [24:00] The adultery and morality being in the judgement of God [24:04] [inaudible] the growing number of pastors [24:08] [inaudible] Are there some other [24:12] [inaudible]

[24:15] First of all, I'd say I don't know if there's a growing number. There's always been a number. I mean, ever since I started ministry, it's unfortunately a pretty prevalent, at least as far as those things that disqualify that's [24:30] out there. It seems like there used to be a time, when I'd get "Christianity Today," when I could almost count every time I got it and read the news section, there was one or two significant names.

So, I don't know if it's more prevalent today. I think it's always been there. I think proverbs 22:14 is a reminder of—is—is—that there are times God gives us over to our desires. Going back to Romans 1, there are times when God says, "Okay," [25:00] and maybe it's a long-term letting the mind be out of control.

It can be a lot of things that kind of are the hidden that God finally says, "Okay, I'm giving you over to your desire," and then when that happens, the restraints, whatever that means—something of the spirit of God that I think is God's grace that restrains us is lifted, and we go to our natural impulses. It's kind of
like [25:30] what does it mean in Second Thessalonians when it says, "Near the end of the age, the restrainer will be removed," and some people say that the restrainer is the church—the church being salt and light and culture.

The removal of that will just lead to complete godlessness. Is it the removal of the Holy Spirit? I don’t know what. I just know this—that there is, I think, a work of God’s grace, probably more than we realize, that acts as a restrainer in our [26:00] lives, that, every now and then, we get a brief glimpse that says, "Boy, God, thank you. You know, if you had let me go according to my own desires, I would have ended up way over here," and I think what happens—what proverb 22 suggests is that we may just keep testing, testing, testing God by knowing we should repent, or we repent, but we keep going back.

We keep going back, and then there comes a moment when God says, "Okay, [26:30] I’m giving you over," and that becomes the new judgment, and then it manifests itself in all kinds of things. The point I’m making here that I hope you don’t miss is that when you deal with sinful behavior, there’s always a story behind that. If I went back to Village today and found out one of my staff people was sleeping with another person’s wife, and that just happened over the weekend, [27:00] it didn’t just happen over the weekend.

Sin never happens. It’s a result of something that’s gone on long term for a long time. That’s what we have to—to get—come to grips with, which is, by the way, just on a personal note, is a really good thing for you and I to think about when maybe our thought life is a little bit out of control or some of these things—is to say, "You know, this is a real good time to catch that, think about that because [27:30] it could lead to a habit that could lead to a behavior. Yes...

Audience Member: [27:35] [inaudible] I ran into a situation this week with a woman that I work with. I knew that her husband had an affair and [27:42] [phonetic] she was in Arizona for about 20 years. I didn’t find out until this week that he was actually a minister.


Audience Member: [27:49] Apparently, everyone he worked with knew about it and did nothing the entire time. I think about what that says about the other people’s qualifications and [28:00] what should, you know—what actions should be taken with them if they did nothing to try and, you know, confront the guy or get him back on track or [crosstalk] you know...

[28:07] Yes, these were people in the church you mean?

Audience Member: [28:10] Yes.

[28:10] Yes, sometimes they want to become very quick to protect their pastor, and they’ll put up with a whole lot of stuff. Yup...

Audience Member: [28:23] [inaudible] list of guidelines had many things about several couples that I’m friends with [28:30] and they’ll have, in the last five years, prominent people in their denomination, ministers, very dynamic out front Evangelists, very well known, have gotten divorced, not because of any moral failing, but simply, part of it because due to pressures of ministry and things like that, and yet, because of—and I think of three off the top of my head who [29:00] their wives specifically left their and yet, even during that divorce time, the husbands never left the ministry, never stopped ministering at all, and a lot of it was due to the fact that they were so prominent in their denomination and have since remarried, and some of the same patterns are popping up.
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[29:22] Yes, that’s why when there is failure, there should be along [29:30] discipline process of restoration that says to everybody, “God takes sin really serious here.” Unfortunately, if we model that kind of thing, then how can we expect the people that we sheppard to take sin with much seriousness? The real tragedy in those situations is not that person and their wife. It’s the signals that they’re sending.

With what we just faced in our church, I realize we had to send two very important signals. [30:00] One signal is grace that this person is loved, and we’re gonna care for this person. We’re gonna walk with this person. We’re gonna encourage this person because we know the enemy is gonna do all he can to beat her down.

At the same time, we also want to send a strong signal of discipline that we take sin really serious, and if you’re gonna be in ministry, that, we believe calls you to a higher level, [30:30] not to perfection but, nonetheless, to a higher qualification. I mean, these qualifications I’m giving are qualifications that I think are there in scripture. All of here who are gonna be in ministry need to submit to them. We want to send a strong signal of really strong discipline and take that really serious.

Let’s talk a little bit about another qualification for ministry. There has to be character. There has to be calling. There has to be conversion. [31:00] There also has to be giftedness, and I know this is probably pretty obvious but you can have the first three, but if you don’t have the spiritual giftedness, then you really should question whether you or someone who aspires to ministry should be there.

What all of us need to be prepared for—and this happens at ordination or it happens in interviews and it should—is someone needs to ask you the question, "So, tell me about your giftedness. [31:30] What tells you you’re gifted to do this work," and that’s something you should be able to answer—you have to answer in fairness to you and the people you’re going to be leading in ministry. You know, it’s clear in scripture that God is gifted people and Ephesians 4:11 and following, again, would be probably as important a text as any, where God called gifted people to lead the church.

John Owen I think put it this way: [32:00] No—no one can be a minister who’s not gifted by Christ. The church has no right to call and send into the Lord’s vineyard those whose gifts do not warrant the confidence God has called them to. So, I don’t wanna pass too quickly over this, but when you think about qualifications, that’s an important one, and you should, at some point, where you’re sitting in a position to call someone to ministry that should be a question that’s fair to ask, just as it’s fair to ask [32:30] you.

There’s no nice, neat, easy formula, but I just go back always to these three things—is how do I know if I’m gifted for ministry? I go back to what my passion is. I go back to what I see God’s hand of blessing is, what God is blessing in my life and thirdly, what people are affirming in my life, and hopefully, what I see God blessing, what people are affirming, what I’m passionate about better be a gift mix that fits the particular [33:00] ministry God, I believe, is leading me to do, and if it doesn’t match up, I’m in the wrong place. I’m doing the wrong thing, and I’m gonna frustrate a lot of people.

I just have seem some people, as you have I’m sure, that are in ministry and have even been in ministry for years and have wonderful character, Godly, but they’re in the wrong place, and we’re too afraid to hurt feelings. So, we just let them keep doing that, and they do it badly. [33:30] So, hold that standard in your life, and then make sure you hold that over others.

Okay, there has to be fifth affirmation of the body. When we look in scripture, we see that again as our theology of qualifications. It’s important that the body of Christ is involved in affirming those chosen who
chose ministry. It's incorrect to say that one is properly called by God alone without the calling of
the body of Christ.

Here, the body needs to affirm the things we’ve talked about. The body needs to affirm the character of
the person. The body needs to affirm the giftedness, and I think the body needs to affirm the preparation
—the character, the giftedness, the preparation—and it should be done with great seriousness.

Those who recommend an unfit person for ministry bare responsibility for the consequences.

I just don’t think we take this probably near as serious as we should cuz we don’t want to hurt feelings.

We're too gracious. We keep saying to ourselves, "Well, this person can’t do it, but maybe one day they
can," and it’s not fair to the church.

So, affirmation of the body and then the last thing here, which just kinda brings all of you into this
picture here, is appropriate preparation, and let me just put it this way: The complexity of the problems,
not to mention the eternal significance of the task, means that we dare not be casual when it comes to this
whole aspect of preparation. A deep knowledge of God and a deep knowledge of people are
minimal requirements.

Thomas Oden puts it this way: "Ministry cannot proceed without the acquisition of hard won skills,
which cannot be substituted by the pretense of piety." Let me say that again. "Ministry cannot proceed
without the acquisition of hard won skills, which cannot be substituted by the pretense of piety." It
means a mastery of knowledge. It means mastering the kind of knowledge so that you’re not just winging
it or just relying on your own perceptions but realizing this—that ministry is a science and an art.

We’re, right now, working on the science part, but there also is an art side to it. There is an
intuition, a cast of mind, a gut level understanding of people. Some of that artistic side, it’s there or it’s
not. It’s gotta be matched with preparation.

There was a guy John Earl Anglican pastor who said this: He said, "The good minister is not too hasty to launch from port seminary." Did you hear that? "The good minister is not too hasty to launch from port seminary but awaits the ballast of learning and the wind of opportunity." “But
awaits the ballast of learning and the wind of opportunity.”

When I came to seminary, I raced through my M-Div I worked really hard. So, I came in '72. I was done in '75 with my M-Div. I was ready to launch out into ministry. I could hardly wait, and then, all of a sudden, I stopped everything. I slowed down for a minute, and I asked myself, 'Am I
really prepared,” and I realized I’m not prepared.

I'd come out of Secular University. I'd crammed, in three years, a whole bunch of knowledge. I really
didn't know really what my convictions were. So, I slowed down and spent two more years
working on a master of theology, and then I began to feel like, okay, I think I’m ready.

So, I got out for three years as an associate pastor and was reminded [inaudible] how little I knew
and then did my doctoral work at Dallas and systematic theology and began to think maybe I'm prepared
now. Then, you realize you never really feel prepared. I guess I'm giving you permission in a sense
—not that I have to do that—but I’m giving you encouragement anyway that if you get to a place where
you say, "I'm not sure I've got it all together as I need to to do this very serious task of ministry that's
gonna require great skills,” then don’t rush it.
If it takes another year for you to feel ready, do it. I may have shared this story, but one of the best things that happened to me when I went into the THM program, there was this guy named Dr. Kerr, who was teaching theology, and I was his teaching assistant.

I walked up to his office one day, and I introduced myself, and I said, "I'm your teaching assistant. How can I help you," and I thought he'd say things like, you know, "I might give a quiz every now and then. Maybe you could help me grade those," or—I didn't know what he was gonna say really.

I had no idea. Maybe type some things up for him. He opened up his drawer of his desk. He pulled out the grade book, and I was sitting there in front of his desk, and I remember he just—he flipped it to me—tossed it to me. It landed on my lap, and he said, "I just like to lecture. I don't like to do any of that other stuff. So, you come up with the tests and grade them. You grade them. I'll just lecture."

Well, I thought, "What did I get myself into?" So, all of sudden, here I was his assistant. He's lecturing. So, I had to come up with the tests. You can probably all kinda see where this is going. When you have to figure out how to test somebody and then you grade them—and these were classes at that time were like 40-50 students—you read 40 or 50 exams on systematic theology and you put the test together. What starts to happen?

What happened was I began to really learn theology. I mean, when you have to test something and grade something, you gotta know what you're talking about. It was one of the best things that ever happened for my life for ministry. When I see guys today who say, "Well, I—I don't know if you need seminary to do ministry," I have a real hard time with that—just a real hard time.

I'm not saying that you can't learn outside of seminary. That's for sure, but I think a lot of people today don't take serious the learning that really is required to be a physician of someone's soul, and I think that's an important requirement. What saddens me today is how few churches really, I think, when they're looking for someone to be a minister in their church, whatever position that might be, how few look at what someone has done in terms of preparation.

What if a church said, "Tell me what you did to prepare educationally?" Well, I went to Western, and I—I worked on an M-Div. "So, what was your GPA? What courses did you excel in? What courses did you struggle with?" You're all horrified already, right?

If you ask me how many churches do I know do something like that, I'd say I don't know one that's ever done that, and so what does that say? I think, again, we sometimes think, "Well, okay, that's really nice, but let's get to the real spiritual issues here," like, somehow it's separated. All right, I got off my soapbox. Any questions on qualifications before—requirements before we take a break? [inaudible] those things we've talked about—character, preparation, giftedness.

[Build your theology of what's required to be a minister. That's important. No questions? Okay, let's take a ten-minute break, and we'll come back.
Okay, [sigh] shouldn’t be surprised every time it seems like I talk about resistance or enemy or issues like that, there’s always technical difficulties. Have you discovered that when you preach [00:30] about Satan or hell in church, seems like that’s the weekend, you know, something happened with some equipment or some bizarre things happens.

As we build a theology of ministry it’s important that we deal with challenges because there will be, and the reason I decided to include this part in building a theology of ministry [coughing] is because since we’re in ministry and since we’re going to face challenges we need to think it through theologically. We need to realize, [01:00] okay, what are we up against and what is it that when we think about scripture and we think about what God has given us that we should be using in such cases.

We all know this; our theology tells us clearly we’re in this unseen war. In the last century alone, I was sharing with the church yesterday, more have lost their lives for the sake of the Kingdom than all of church history, which is an amazing statistic. So rather than the war subsiding, [01:30] actually it is becoming more intense and while we may not feel that so much here in our culture it’s certainly true if you get out and travel and read about the persecuted church for example.

So first of all, in your notes, let’s talk about resistance against ministry and I’ve got several rules here that are pretty obvious but might be worth exploring a little bit. And the first rule is that resistance will come to those who serve God. [02:00] We all know that, right? Scripture affirms this in lots of places.

Almost everywhere in fact, in scripture, it affirms it. If we go to the Old Testament we discover that God’s leaders, those who were in ministry, faced ongoing resistance from almost the beginning ’til the end. We see that in some classic cases. I think I saw this really clearly studying [02:30] the book of Numbers a couple years ago and studying really in- more intensely than ever, the life of Moses.

I discovered that Moses was resisted at almost every level. Who was Moses resisted by, just out of curiosity? Who?

Audience Member: Pharaoh.

Pharaoh, certainly, his own brother, sister.

Audience Member: [Inaudible][02:52]

Yes, sons of Korah and almost everybody else. [03:00] The whole Israelite nation at times. When we go to the kings we see kings who again, a number of examples of those who just faced the onslaught in different ways; subtle ways, overt ways. What kings stand out in your mind who faced resistance?

Audience Member: David

David obvi- [chuckle] is an obvious example who faced all kinds of challenges [coughing] from the world of darkness whether it was overt things like lust, [03:30] adultery, murder but certainly the Psalms tell us there were a lot of covert resistance that fleshed itself out in discouragement. What other kings?

Audience Member: [Inaudible][03:41]
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Yes, lots of resistance and Josiah himself [lip smacking] in the end made some real misjudgments. In fact it's interesting how many of the Godly kings in the end somewhere didn't quite make it to the finish line well; [04:00] thinking of Asa, Hosea, Josiah, each in their own way.

Certainly another king that stands out is Solomon who really fell prey to narcissism itself. [Draw of breath] And right now, in a study I'm doing with our church in Nehemiah, Nehemiah faces one set of oppositions after another by the Sanballats and Tobiahs and others. And we think of the prophets [04:30] who came with a authoritative word and most the time they were not received with open arms.

Sometimes they were thrown into pits, thrown into jails, slain by adversaries. A good case in point is Jeremiah. Jesus refers back to the prophets as those who were killed for their message, Matthew 5, verse 12. We shift over [05:00] to the New Testament in terms of scripture affirming this resistance and obviously the classic illustration is Jesus, who right away faces resistance. If we take say, Mark as our working text, Mark chapter 1 and Mark chapter 2. What starts in Mark chapter 1 in the wilderness continues [coughs] wherever Jesus went, all the way to the cross. The early church faced [05:30] their own set of persecutions and displacement.

Again some passages to note here: 1st Thessalonians 1, 1st Peter 2:11, James chapter 1, verses 2-4 talks again about those who were scattered throughout all of what is presently eastern Turkey. [Draw of breath] Hebrews 11:23, [06:00] to 12 verse 2, gives the list of those who suffered for their faith. Revelations 6 verse 9. So we see then, just looking in the New Testament, we see that the churches faced their own resistance.

Paul was resisted at every level. He lived in three worlds. When I look at the three worlds he lived in, you know the three worlds Paul lived in, what world did he live in? What's one? [06:30] He lived in the world of Judaism. He also lived in the world of Hellenism. He lived in the world of Rome, Romanism. He lived in all three worlds and went back and forth and yet in each of those three he paid a stiff price.

So in Judaism he faced resistance with the Judaizers. Sometimes one of the benefits of when you do a study tour (and I've led three [07:00] study tours now to Turkey and Greece), this last trip in particular, we were in Lystra and Derbe. And to understand the magnitude of the hate against Paul, I nev- I didn't really understand it 'til I was at this city in Antioch and then measured the distance of, I think about 150 miles, a three or four day journey that the people took just for the express purpose of stoning Paul.

Imagine [07:30] that. And Paul left for dead, Paul and his own resilience (and this is an amazing thing) he, left for dead, would suggest that he was in horrible shape. In fact I believe probably it relates to 2nd Corinthians, what is it, 12 where Paul has his vision of heaven that probably Paul did die for a brief moment.

But out of that, the incredible thing is this man gets up and I think then goes to Derbe. [08:00] Which, you know how far Derbe is from Lystra? It's about 100 miles. And then Paul I think headed back to Poseidon, Antioch to the people that made his life hell. It's amazing. So Paul faces, faced his own persecution from Judaizers, from the Hellenistic culture, Acts 17 gives us a picture of that, by the Roman authorities.

Colossians chapter [08:30] 4, verse 3, Paul is writing from a place where he was imprisoned in Rome and so we see all kinds of resistance whether it is malicious attacks, whether it is church dissension, or angry mobs. Little wonder that what did Paul do when he got the elders together? He said to them, in Acts chapter 20, what did he say? "When I leave, wolves will come in [09:00] sheep's clothing." Remember?

And to the Corinthians he recounted the personal price of being a minister of God, 1st Corinthians 4:8-13, Paul says, "We have become the scum of the world, the refuse of all things," which is an amazing
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statement. 1st Corinthians 16:9, here's an interesting statement Paul makes, "God has opened a wide door of opportunity and," you know how he ends it, and there are what? God has opened this great door for ministry and...

Audience Member: Lot of resistance.

"and there are many adversaries." What's my point in sharing some of these passages? To make sure we understand when we sign up for this thing called ministry it's no different with us.

That, that is what we see looking back. [10:00] In the pastoral epistles Paul repeatedly warned that ministry will entail hardship. So he over and over reminds Timothy of this, that there are powers and principalities that will contend with Kingdom work and so he says to Timothy, fight what?

Fight the good fight, because it is a fight but it is a good fight. It is a good fight, 1st Timothy 1:18. If you go on a spiritual retreat sometime, [10:30] guy named J.C. Ryle, R-Y-L-E, who's written a lot from a devotional side, written a lot on prayer and J.I. Packer wrote a book about J.C. Ryle in which he brings together some of J.C. Ryle's greatest writings. And one of the chapters is titled, "The Fight," and it's just a great, great description of the fight we all face.

What J.C. Ryle does is he describes it as a good fight and explains why it is a good fight we're all in. So J.I. Packer, his book on J.C. Ryle. Scripture stories affirm this resistance. Here's the second thing on your notes, our identity invites this just because of who we are. And I go to a quote by Richard Baxter that we've looked at who said, quote, "If you will be leaders against Satan [11:30] he will not spare you."

I'm assuming here you've signed up to be leaders. "If you will be leaders against Satan he will not spare you, he bears the greatest malice against the one who is engaged in doing the greatest damage against him." I'm going to read that again. "If you will be leaders against Satan he will not spare you, he bears the greatest malice against the one [12:00] who is engaged in working the greatest damage against him."

Spurgeon in his lectures to his students gave this warning. It's, "Upon the whole, no place is so assailed with temptation as ministry." "No place is so assailed with temptation as ministry. [12:30] Our dangers are more insidious and numerous than those of ordinary Christians." So our identity invites this. Our mission leads to it. Number three, because our mission is to advance a Kingdom of God and our mission is to equip the church and our mission is to glorify the name of Jesus. These are all things the adversary hates the most. [13:00] Then number four, our union guarantees it. Jesus said, "If they hated me," what?

Audience Member: [Inaudible][13:10]

"If they hated me, they will hate you," John 15. In the vine and the branches in discussing the union, describing the union, this is how he, he comes to conclude; "If they hated me, they will hate you." 2nd Timothy 3:12 makes the same point. The whole point I'm making here is that ministries are marked endeavors and ministers are marked people. First rule is that resistance will come to those who serve God. Here's the second rule, the second rule is that resistance takes on many forms.

Sometimes the attacks on, on you, on me will be overt. Sometimes the attacks [14:00] will be overt just as they were for those in the early church. Sometimes it was dead on persecution and again, you go on a study tour and you go in some of the theaters and you stand there and you realize the small space. A lot of those theaters where the Christians were the prime entertainment and you see the places where the wild beasts were released. And Paul at times faced his own overt challenges [14:30] the mobs of Acts 19 as an example.
And that same violence is overt today, think of Bonnie Witherall in Saida, Lebanon two years ago who was shot and killed for the name of Christ. So we know that resistance comes in many ways. It will be overt. At other times the attacks will be far more subtle and those can be temptations that get us off the mark, they get us off [15:00] ministry. I want you to listen to the words of Eugene Peterson. In his book on "Necessary Pastor," he says, "Though it may not seem like it at face value, ministers are persecuted in North America, and I don’t believe I’m exaggerating when I say that it is far worse than in seemingly more hostile countries." He says, "Our culture doesn’t lock us up; it simply and nicely castrates us, neuters [15:30] us, and replaces our vital parts with a nice and smiling face." Something to think about. What he’s saying is something like this, in our culture we are not thrown into little prison cells, but we are imprisoned in a mesh of things that keep us from doing the task. That is we become, and he puts it this way, "bullied by well-meaning but ignorant demands." The point is, one of [16:00] our great temptations, one of our great challenges and one of our great persecutions so-to-speak, will be to get out in ministry and have a profound sense because of our theology of ministry what we need to do. What we must do, what we should do, but we will, so-to-speak, be persecuted by a thousand demands that want to imprison us from doing what we need to be doing, and in our culture that easily happens because we’re a culture of such distractions. [16:30]

So there will be the temptations, the subtle things to get us off ministry. The temptations that will lull us to sleep when it comes to the war we are in. He says later on in the same chapter, "We’ve been treated nicely for so long, we’ve forgotten we’re in enemy territory." That’s why it takes some time to talk about resistance because sometimes we forget that we are in this war and as ministers our theology [17:00] needs to inform us of that and remind us of that; and that temptations that are subtle are temptations that will deceive us, because sin is deceptive by nature. I put here in the margin a really important book you should have. I know you hear this from instructors all the time but one of the books you really need to have if you don’t have it, is Plantinga’s book, "Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be.”

It’s [17:30] a book really on sin. [Clicking sound] I think his subtitle is "A Breviary on Sin," and in it he exposes, tears apart sin in ways that I’ve never thought about. He makes some great statements such as this statement. "For sin to do its worst, it must look its best." "For sin to do its worst, it must look its best." Sin’s primary role is to masquerade. That’s why so many ministers fall in ministry, [18:00] because in particular for us in ministry sin has to become, will become more and more subtle and in its subtly it will look more and more appealing. It will look more and more, not only appealing, it will look more and more right. Like, "This is what I should do.”

The longer you and I are in ministry the more [coughing] perceptive we have to be, because the more subtle sin becomes. He [18:30] makes a really good point that sin is nothing more than hijacked goodness. What he means by that is simply this, that sin in and of itself has nothing to offer. You think about that. Sin as an entity, as something in and of itself, there is nothing to sin. It is like, just a hole; it’s like something -- a vacuum. What sin is, is taking something that’s good [19:00] and hijacking it, then turning it into something for its own [cough] devices.

Technology can be good but sin will take it and if we’re not careful, turn it into a dominating master. Or take it and turn us into more and more impersonal people who no longer interface with people because we sit in front of a screen all day. It’s very deceptive and [19:30] money it the same way; money is truly something neutral but we know it has the potential to become mammoth, to become a god. And that’s essentially what sin is.
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It's taking something, hijacking it and then transcending the boundaries because that's what sin always does. It transcends the boundaries. That's why the primary word for sin is "transgression," because that's the essence of sin. Sin is to go past the lines and you and I in ministry can go past the lines in what we do and what we say and in a broken world the problem is nothing stays within its functional limits. Everything tends to overstep its boundaries and that's when we start to make gods of things.

Because that's what sin is all driving us to do, to make things bigger than they are, so material things can turn into that. Cars, whatever you want to choose, and technology can. I don't think it was my wild imagination at work, I remember one time I wanted to set up something, so I wanted to network in the home with my computer --and this was a number of years ago. Wanted to do it with other computers and I decided to go down to Fry's. Never been down there and I asked somebody to help me with that and by the time they got done, I had this cart filled to the top. Cables, software, all of this equipment and I was you know, thinking, "Okay, I-I'm up to about $2-300 dollars. I just wanted to network a couple of computers."

And I had this almost powerful strange sense almost, I don't want to say demonic, but it was like something that was getting way out of control and yet I was feeling the power and the -- that I had to do this, and I remember at a certain point when the guy that was helping me left, I just took it all and I returned it back and left the place. You know, we all have those moments that, that things can do that. A powerful example for me is, if you've ever bought a new car and the guy says, "Well, take it around the block." Something happens that's hard to explain but there's something that by the time you get back says, "I own this." The reality is it is working subtly to own us. That's the nature of sin, always trying to go past the bounds.

[22:00] We need to realize that resistance can manifest itself in all kinds of ways. For us, I think the more subtle is what you and I are going to have to deal with, all the time. Our thought life, what goes on. Third rule, resistance often focuses on key areas. So as we understand what we're up against when we choose to do this thing called ministry we need to realize that this resistance often focuses on particular areas. When I say particular, they focus on the nature of ministry and the nature of ministers.

And so here are so many ways that over the years I've discovered that have been the reason a lot of ministers fail, fall, and you know most of these. The first one is pride. Some of the most arrogant people I know tragically are ministers. How does that happen? Someone put it this way, "Few tasks will expose the ego so relentlessly to the ruses of pride and vanity as ministry." "Few tasks, few fields will expose the ego so relentlessly to the ruses of pride and vanity as ministry." Now why is that so? Is that true? What is it about ministry and pride?

Audience Member: A lot of people look up to their Pastor, I think, as higher than they should have been. Yes. People immediately begin to assume that we are at a whole 'nother level. Heather?

Heather: [Inaudible]

Yes, we start putting a lot of confidence in ourself too, don't we? You ever think about from a pastoral side, how many professions speak every week and have a platform for 30 minutes? That's an amazing platform. Bill?

Bill: I agree in ministry you put yourself in a perceived position of power in that you are doing the very work of God. You are the hand of God and you do his work no matter where you end up down
Yes, I think you’re right. You know our church is starting a capital campaign. Not one of my favorite things to anticipate, though I’m really excited about the project we’re doing. One of the things I’m really internally working through, and I haven’t figured it out quite yet, is my role in asking people for money. Part of what I fear is that because of my role and how sometimes people can perceive me, it’s not realistic, but put me up here, to ask for money can put a lot of pressure on someone, that I don’t want to do. There’s a lot of things to, to pride. We’re up front as you mentioned, we’re in positions of authority whether it’s in a counseling office or whatever, wherever we go we are in positions that set us up as the one who has the answers.

As the one whose got life figured out. We can be tempted to seek applause. Ministry is the place where we can really be tempted for human approval and I think that’s a real huge temptation. We ask ourselves, "Did they like what I said? Do they like me? When sometimes we need to stop and go, "It’s not about whether they like me or like, even like what I said." There is in this pride, this subtle temptation to manipulate. To use God-language to get our way, ministers can become really good at that.

Scott: [Inaudible][26:10]

Sure. We equate ourself with God’s voice so we don’t take criticism very well. We just assume this is the adversary at work when maybe it’s just someone saying, "No, frankly I think there is an issue in your life, you need to work through." We can begin to believe in our own importance as Scott, you just mentioned. We can have difficulty acknowledging failure cuz we come to a place where we believe we have to maintain a certain status or a certain image, I guess is the word I’m looking for.

There’s this subtle temptation to, to rely on our power and that’s when pride really begins to take hold of us when we begin to start believing it’s because of us or it’s all about what we put together, what we say. We can become enslaved to the need to keep up, to ensure a congregation is growing and we can stop somewhere relying on God in the process. Luther put it this way, speaking of pride. He warned, "There’s no more harmful vice to ministry than pride," and he’s probably right. [27:30]

Heather I think you were going to say something?

Heather: [Inaudible][27:32]

Yes and they will say very flattering things. One of the things I’ve learned in ministry, is it’s not as great as they say you are, but it’s not as worse either. Somehow that kind of keeps me somewhere in the middle. I’m not as bad as people really actually tell me I am, but I’m not as great as people actually tell me I am either. [28:00] A second obvious key area; sexual temptation. Paul alerts Timothy to this in 2nd Timothy 2 when he [Inaudible][28:12] to run, to flee.

And obviously you have to mention this because in ministry so many, at least of my peers, have fallen to this particular sin, that we see it in the Catholic Church. I’ve shared the story of my spiritual godfather who influenced me powerfully in his life. We just have to be really careful. Here’s a third not so obvious one, but I think you will get out in ministry a number of you, maybe not, I don’t know. Some of you may not struggle with this maybe most of your ministry, some of you this will be almost a life-long struggle and it is a form of resistance, and that is restlessness. And part of the reason we’ll struggle with restlessness is because we believe this idea that the grass is greener on the other side and we will live with that.
Much of ministry is not glamorous. We thought it was going to be.

Audience Member: [Inaudible][29:18]

Yes, [snicker] yeah that’s a good statement. I think another one I’ve heard [29:30] is, "The reality is, it’s brown on both sides."

Audience Member: [Inaudible][29:33]

Yes, [snickering] I remember where I lived in the Netherlands, I would drive down this road and there was this cattle crossing and the farmers would let out their cows every morning on both sides, really nice lush, green fields on both sides. I remember driving down the road and I would see them almost every day. The cattle on this [30:00] side were at the cattle crossing staring at the field across and the cattle on this side were staring across there and it was just a funny sight. I wish I had taken a picture of it, but I thought, "Boy that, that's exactly us," you know?

Somehow have this idea that it’s really different on the other side but you know, like Eugene Peterson says, "You know, you romanticize congregations, you romanticize ministries and you get there and you realize, 'There they are. Sinners.'" [Laughter][30:30] They’re on both sides.” And, and you know he, he he puts it in a wonderful way and he says, "Most of us, we graduate from seminary, we go out, we had this you know, challenge, we're going to go out and we're going to change the world and we're going to ride on white stallions and we're going to make our mark in the world and suddenly we’re in ministry and we’re mucking out the stalls, and we’re going, 'How in the world did I end up here? This is not what I signed up for.'" [31:00]

I remember when I was going to go the Air Force Academy and I was weighing ministry, Air Force Academy and I was going back and forth and I remember thinking, you know, I just sensed God was calling me and I said, "no" at the last minute and I went to my spiritual godfather and I said, "Okay, you've invited me and here I am." And I remember about three months later I was working in campus ministry and my job was to put the folding chairs down and pick up [31:30] all the cups and stuff afterwards and I remember thinking, "So this is ministry, huh? This is what I gave all this up for?" We all can have our little pity parties and ministry is often not glamorous. We can become spiritual wanderlusts. You know what that means? Spiritual wanderlusts? Glamorize other ministries. We commit [32:00] what Peterson refers to as, "ecclesiastical pornography," he's so good with his words. Anyone who's been in ministry for any length of time will tell you that they've committed that sin somewhere. I've committed that sin often, lusts over other congregations. Not literally the people so don't read into it. [Laughter] We all at times seek passage to Tarshish. God [32:30] says, "I want you in Nineveh," and we go, "Well, I don’t think so. Tarshish looks a whole lot better, God. It's where I'm going."

We can become "ecclesiastical climbers," as Hughes puts it. This whole thing of restlessness is a serious temptation, for it ultimately distracts [coughing] us and it can rob us of the demands of our present ministry and the passions and all [33:00] that it wants of us because we're holding back. We're saving our best for somebody else and it can begin to generate a sense of anxiety [odd sound] and perhaps a better word here is ungratefulness for where we're at, and even maybe "yes" sometimes to an extreme, even to anger. That can be directed at those we minister to, "Why can't you be like, this other ministry?" [33:30]

So our voices can begin to take on a certain stridency as our anger and disappointment at being stuck in this place begins to leak into our discourse. That can be a real temptation. I would say in my own life at
times, looking back, I missed what God was doing in the present because I was looking too much into the future. It's this temptation of restlessness.

Certainly another aspect of [34:00] resistance, number four is to lose heart, which I think is a driving temptation of the evil one. I think he works really over-time in this area to get us to lose heart and this really comes on the heels of number three. Paul described it, I think well, in Galatians 6 when he talks about weariness and well-doing. "There will be weariness and well-doing," [34:30] make sure you note that down in your notes. There is weariness and well-doing, there is something that can really take a lot out of us by just doing something that's right.

When we become weary we can become demoralized, we can become discouraged and we must never forget that behind a lot of this is Satan doing everything he can to drive you out of ministry. And so he will try to con us into mistrusting [35:00] God, we will raise questions in our minds sometimes such as "Where is God?" He'll do everything to unhinge our spirits, paralyze our exertions, bring this dark cloud over us, and sometimes this is why I want to cover this in theology, because your theology needs to tell you this, inform you of this. Don't be surprised if sometimes that dark cloud will almost be literal. It will come [35:30] over you. I haven't had it very often but I've had some very real encounters such as this.

It's a very scary moment. As Calvin put it, "Ministry's not an easy and indulgent exercise but a hard and severe warfare where Satan is exerting all of his power and moving every stone for our disturbance."

Audience Member: You just mentioned a literal [Inaudible][35:56][Coughing]

Yes, [36:00] for me anyway, I can recall a moment in my study where it almost literally became dark. The lights were on and everything else was fine but such a spirit of depression and discouragement and darkness all descended, almost in such a way that I felt like I could touch it and I realized in that moment there was something very Satanic about it. I don't know necessarily [36:30] when those come. None of us know but I'm simply pointing out they can come and your theology needs to prepare you for the fact that they will and the aim of them again, the aim is what?

Audience Member: To get you out of ministry.

Is to get you out of ministry and you can't capitulate to that. You know Fisher put it this way, "We are in a high demand, low stroke environment," ministry is a lot of that. It is a high demand, low stroke environment. [37:00] So these clouds can come in the beginning, they can come in the middle, they can come at the end of ministry, where we lose heart, so just be prepared. Yes, Heather?

Heather: I think I almost feel like that the fact that Satan would find us that important that he would pay us that much attention to what we're doing, it seems...

Yes but he does. He does and he's got enough of an army out there that maybe he won't [37:30] personally pay attention to you or to me but he's got enough of a force that will. The point is we must not minimize our role in what we're doing. When you look at the population as a whole in the world and you scale it to how many are truly believers, then you scale back that, how many amongst believers are truly given their lives to ministry. It's a very, very small percentage, so if you're the adversary with [38:00] this vast army that you control, where are you going to send them?

It would seem a natural place, going back to Baxter's quote, you know, "He will send them against those who work the greatest malice against his efforts." I don't have any illusion that I'm so important Satan's going to be worried about me but I don't have the naiveness either to think that he's not interested or at least his army's not interested [38:30] in doing what it will and what it will take, to take me down. Just
that I've discovered is that the longer you're in ministry you can't fall into the illusion that, "Well you know, I've gotten older and wiser and he's realized that and he's moved on to more vulnerable fields." The reality is that each year I'm in ministry, each year the attacks become more subtle, more beneath the surface, sin masquerades itself in more subtle ways.

I gave you one that's a very subtle one and that's restlessness. That I think kills a lot of ministry cuz we have this sense that there's always something better out there for us. That goes back maybe sometimes subtly to our pride that thinks we deserve more than what we are and you know, my first church was not a glamour church by any means. My first church was an old traditional, stuck-in-the-mud, battleship, that anchor rotting, rusting. That first five years I connived every way I could to get out of it. No, actually that's not true, for the first eight years. Okay, ten years. [Laughter]

Audience Member: I don't know if we mentioned this under pride, but just being easily offended by people and by his flock. That was probably the most dangerous thing for him, as a minister.

You mean because he took the ministry so personally or...?

Audience member: Yes and because I think he called Simon, it was more of a personal attack than a [Inaudible][40:07]

Mhm. Well, whatever ministry God calls you to, the danger is that you will find because ministry is so absorbing and so demanding in the sense that it wants all of you that you will start to give a lot of yourself to it and you will want to, because you'll want to do it well, but what happens is the more you give yourself to ministry the more your identity begins to become lined up with that ministry so when people attack the ministry what will you do? You will take it very personally. If somebody comes along and says, "You know, yeah, you know Village stinks." I don't go, "Well, you know, I'm not Village I'm just the Pastor," I get really offended because a lot of me is there. Same thing with Western, it's a natural thing.

And we have to make sure at times we disassociate ourselves in a healthy sense that may have nothing to do with us, may have everything to do with the church or the practice or whatever you're going to do as a ministry. Let's shift gears then and talk about -- and here's the second thing we really need to think about and that is the authority we have for ministry. I think most of us understand the resistance and our theology is pretty clear on that maybe already but what I want to talk about is the authority we have for ministry. [41:00] A long with the theological assessment of our resistance, there must be a corresponding theology that defines our authority, our power that makes us able to deal with the demands and the pressures.

Back to really the question, "How do we fight the good fight? How should we fight the good fight in ministry?" And what I want to say right at the beginning is we need to take the offensive and run towards righteousness and run against evil. Which, I'll take and define in some particular ways with some rules after the break. [Murmuring of crowd]

Okay, rule number one, rule number one is, we need to take hold of the authority we have. Several passages suggest an authority that is ours in Christ and again as we're out there in ministry and we face this intense war at times, we just need to realize we have an authority that comes from Chris. Mark chapter 3, verse 15, where Jesus gave his disciples authority I assume that's still true today. Matthew 3:15, in authority that he expected them to use and exercise and he rebuked them when they did not. [43:00]
Something else I think is worth noting is Matthew 5:14. Matthew 5:14, where the light of the world and I take it that part of the purpose of light is to diffuse the darkness to eliminate the darkness. Maybe you could add there salt or the salt of the world and part of the role of salt is to take on the decay. In Ephesians 6:10-20, our weapons are not merely defensive but offensive. You put all these passages together and what do they say? That, they say that we should not be intimidated by these attacks and this resistance but rather to take it on and in an offensive way.

Realizing that behind this authority again, let's make sure we understand our theology beyond this authority, Mark 3:15 is Colossians 2:15. Colossians 2:15, Jesus at the cross, what does this say? He disarmed the rulers of darkness. The enemy has been disarmed. Ephesians 4, tells us, has been displayed as defeated and their final end foreshadowed, so there is an authority that God expects us to wield from time-to-time and we need to do that. Mark 4:39, Jesus rebukes the disciples in the face of the storm. I think maybe in part because he expected them to rebuke the storm and they did not because they didn't get it, Mark 3:15.

What does that mean? That means that there are prayers. God expects us to pray. When we minister to people who are facing evil in very powerful ways we need to help them take the offensive. I think fundamentally what a lot of Christians don't understand today is the authority they have in Christ and so we have the authority to withstand and resist and unmask and move forward. I really love the passage I was preaching this weekend, Nehemiah 4:1-6. Nehemiah’s resisted and what does he do? He comes to God in prayer and he takes it to God and he resists and he calls for God’s justice.

He didn't mince words and he didn't ask forgiveness for being so angry because with sin we need to be angry. Bill?

Bill: If there’s so much authority, why is there so much failure? Is it because we don’t understand the authority? We don’t take the authority?

Yes, well I don’t want to pretend to have all the answers but I think what you just said is part of it. Back to theology of ministry, we don't understand theologically the authority we have and so we don't exercise it and so we're often defeated. If James says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," there's something about that imperative that implies we have an authority, correct? That we either exercise or we don't. If we don't exercise it, I'm going to assume if we don't exercise it, evil will have its way. If we do exercise it, it just may mean that things will be different.

"Resist the devil and he will flee," what does that say? It says that he doesn’t have a choice. If Colossians 2:15 is true, he's been disarmed. If Colossians 1:13 is true, we have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the Kingdom of Light. We are in a kingdom now and we, in the authority of that Kingdom have the ability to resist in powerful ways, the evil one. So, we put the two together, our theology of ministry tells us we will face at times, furious, fierce resistance, but our theology of resistance authority tells us that we can take that and respond.

If you want to write this down, if you haven't, a great working model is Nehemiah. More I study Nehemiah the more I go, "You know, that's what we need today. We need Nehemiah's that are not intimidated at all by evil, but they stand up and they're willing to curse it and they're willing to say something like this, 'God don't blot out their sins.'" We get nervous with that kind of prayer but frankly sometimes I think we need to. What did Paul say? Galatians 1, "If someone preaches a different gospel, let them," what? [48:00] "Let them be accursed," which is another way of saying, let 'em go to hell.
When's the last time we've prayed something like that? Probably it's been awhile but I wonder sometimes, honestly, I wonder if sometimes the church is a bit in paralysis today [coughing] because we are not exercising our authority? Why is it again when [coughing] the disciples were bailing and Jesus was sleeping and they woke him up to still the storm that he rebuked them? What was he expecting them to do? And the only thing I can figure in that passage is he was expecting them to take the authority he gave them and do something with it, because in that, Jesus used the same word for rebuking, or I should say for exercising demons.

We have in all of this, this task of reminding the body of Christ that the sovereignty of the powers has been broken [49:00] and a limit has been set as to their work. Satan can do nothing without the permission of God, so take hold of our authority. What's the key text in terms of taking on the authority we have? Mark 3:15. Where he called them to the mountain and he gave them these three things; be with me, exercise the authority I'm giving you, [49:30] and preach the Kingdom.

And I take it that's the same three full things we're called to do. Be with God every day as a minister, that's the first thing. We got to spend time with him, be with him. Secondly, exercise his authority. Thirdly, preach Kingdom. Maybe a lot of ministries messed up because we just don't do the three basic things. If ministers primarily spend time with God, exercise [50:00] God-given authority, and preach the Kingdom, we'd probably be a lot further down the road.

Second rule is lay hold of the spirit. We need to lay hold of the spirit so we have this authority. We also have the spirit of God and we look back again and building a bit of a theology around that we discovered that the power of Jesus’ earthly ministry was attributed to the work of the spirit, [50:30] Acts 10:38 and the early church was commanded to wait for the power of the spirit before it dared try attempt anything. Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, and we look and study the book of Acts and we discover each time the spirit of God was poured out the church received what? Great power, Acts 4:31-33. [51:00]

So any power that we have in ministry is the power of the spirit of God. You know Paul said it well didn't he, when he said, "Now to him was able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all we ask or think according to the power of," what? "Working in us." A lot of people forget the last line of that. You know, they go, "Now to him was able to do exceeding, abundantly beyond on all we ask or think," isn't that great? No [51:30] you, you got to finish the rest of the sentence. God's not going to just do something out there mighty and beyond our imagination, he's going to do it, how? He's going to do it according to the power that what? Is, what's that word? [Inaudible][51:48], is working? Is that work inside of us. God does not choose to work outside of us which is an amazing thing, but chooses to work through us and through his power working through us. [52:00]

Now what this means is that our theology of God’s power must work side-by-side with our theology of our weakness, this is part of Marva Dawn’s point in her book on weaknesses, "Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God." Have you seen that book? It's an interesting book and the point she makes in that, is that if we're going to be effective as ministers we need to have a very clear theology of power, [52:30] power of the spirit of God, theology of our authority in Christ, but we also need to keep that really parallel with a theology with our weakness. See and that's really a good point, isn't it because if we start becoming focused on the power we have in Christ we can start if we're not careful assuming it's what? It's our power.

So we have to keep in front of us to always a theology of weakness and [53:00] when you look at that, think about that. Isn't that something Paul [sneeze] really modeled? Paul was constantly aware of his
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weakness but he was also constantly aware of his power. He understood that we operate out of weakness. Galatians 2:20, "I've been crucified with Christ, not me, but it's God that's working through me." Galatians 6:14 [Coughing] [53:30] "Our weapons are his weapons and unless we are equipped, we will fall." That's why then, when we do battle, when we do this work of resistance, largely it's not us aligned against people; it is us coming to God and letting God work through us. When we are resisted [54:00] our flesh will tend to want to fight back but our theology of ministry tells us that's a bad road to take.

I go back to, as a working model is Nehemiah who when he was maligned he didn't lash out at the enemies. What did he do? He came to God because God's the power. [54:30] Make sure you understand this. In this theology of ministry we build, our battle is not with people; our battle is against the powers. [Clearing throat] Correct? That's largely what we face. For the most part, it's something far deeper that we need to remember that we're dealing with.

Therefore in our own weakness we come to God and say, "God, this is - you have to deal with this." Paul attributed all the power he had [55:00] for ministry to the work of the spirit, Romans 15. Romans 15:18-19, "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God. So that from Jerusalem and all the way around, I have fulfilled [55:30] the ministry of the gospel of Christ."

And so he admonishes Timothy to take hold of the same power, 2nd Timothy 1:7, so that Timothy could fight the good fight. Realizing that a lot of what releases this power of the spirit is prayer and Jesus again models that. Jesus began his ministry praying and the more popular he became the more fervent he was to escape the masses [56:00] and go to the desert. Rule three is, now that we understand this authority and we understand this power that we have, we need to then have to confront sin with wisdom. So let me just hit a few of them real quickly. For sexual sin we need to make sure we're looking at it spiritually and understand the subtleties and the war that's going on for our soul.

Understand theologically that if we fall into this sin that is the judgment, [56:30] that is something that really scares me, but my theology informs me that way, that if I fall into sexual sin it's not, "How will God judge me for that sin," that is the judgment of God.

Proverbs 22:14, is just an example of that. A lot of our manifestations of our sins are the judgments themselves. Romans chapter 1, I think would be another where God gives over to the [57:00] lust. Proverbs 22:14, "The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit. He who is cursed of the Lord will fall in to it." "He who is cursed of the Lord will fall in to it." Now there's some theology of sin. What does that mean? "He who is cursed of the Lord will fall into it." It means something like this, if a man for example continues to allow fantasies in his mind to persist [57:30] and maybe in ministry you begin to become focused more and more on someone that you should not be focused on, there can be a moment when God says, "Okay. I'm giving you over to your desires."

Rather than to repent of them, rather than to deal with them, you continue to fantasize and maybe there comes a moment God says, "Okay." Do we have any theology that confirms that, well Proverbs 22:14, Romans chapter [58:00] 1, which therefore says to us in ministry that the battle starts where? The battle starts with our affections, our desires, our heart. Therefore we've got to really watch our hearts in ministry. If I find out that a peer of mine in ministry has fallen into moral failure, I want to know something and not that I in a way I want to know it, but it's, it's a natural question. My theology asks this question, "What did they do that [58:30] set up this judgment?" Where as we tend to think more like this,
"I wonder what the judgment of God will be for that action," forgetting that it's the action that's the judgment, because it is, isn't it?

When a person falls into moral failure it is a tremendous judgment because of all the consequences that follow itself. So for sexual sin, you know [59:00] build fences. Build fences around your heart, around your mind, build fences around your pace for example. Stress in ministry out of control can lead to some bizarre things, cuz I've seen it. Guys doing crazy things, you know, rewarding feeling like I deserve -- "I put out so much for God that well, I deserve at least this little fantasy over here." [59:30] You might be sitting here going, "Well that sounds absurd," of course. Sin is absurd.

If you say, "Well that makes no sense," well understanding your Hamartiology, sin never makes sense. Sin never makes any sense. So in ministry at times you will be confronted with possibilities that make no sense and you will do them and you will do them if you don't build fences around your heart, around your life, around your marriage if you're married. [60:00] Speaking to men, I would say every now and then you need to your wife, "Look it, it's really important to me that you remain as attractive as you can be for me, because I don't want to be attracted to someone else," and it goes both ways because it's very subtle.

It means bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2nd Corinthians 10:5. Now let's talk about restlessness for a moment. Let, let me just say this that in dealing [60:30] with this particular potential sin, it is okay, I think it's in fact, it can be good to aspire [coughing] to being where God wants you to be. There's nothing wrong with that. I really love this word, I probably shared perhaps, convergence [sounds of writing with chalk] where your passions link up with the opportunity, the very best opportunity and I would think [61:00] that for a number of you that is your hope in your life. That one day you can look and say, "You know what I really love doing and where I'm at have converged." You all want that, don't you? I mean I hope you do. I don't want to have my very best passions for what I want to do stuck in a place I don't want to be. Nor do I want to be in the very best place I could imagine but it doesn't mix with who I am, but [61:30] when you get convergence it's just the greatest thing.

So, there's nothing wrong, I think with aspiring for that, but here's what we have to do. We have to, in dealing with this sin of restlessness, number one, be content where we are. Learn to be content, learn to dig in and say, "God, you know what? I'll trust you. If this is where you want me right now, I'll give my whole heart, I'll give my full passion, I can trust you for [62:00] when the time is right and you want to move me somewhere else."

I think along with that is be careful not to glamorize and romanticize because it's not all glamour and it's not all romance wherever we go to minister. I've learned sometimes the same people emerge in every ministry I go to, they just have different names. For dealing [62:30] with depression, the dark night of the soul, here are a few things I just give you. Take care of your soul because ministry's not easy. As Luther said, "Household sweat is great, political sweat is greater, church sweat is the greatest," so take care of your soul.

Here would be another key thing. Keep going over and over your theology, proper. Think one of the best [63:00] things we, we can do for our ministry is keep reminding ourself who God is, keep learning about who God is. We can't just remind ourself who God is because it's a life-long venture of knowing who God is [metallic knock] and we never exhaust that. Have that one person who so believes in you that they will be there when you enter the dark night of the soul and you need to get on the phone and call somebody.
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who will rescue you, because you will probably need to do that and it needs to be that person that will talk sense back in your heart.

Remember that you’re not alone. That’s a good thing. When you go through that dark night, just remember all of us do. The enemy will have you to think it’s you and you alone but you’re along with everyone else. Paul dealt with such despair. Think the book of 2nd Corinthians is Paul’s journal talking about his dark night of the soul. Spurgeon for all of his greatness fought deep bouts of depression; Catherine of Siena, Patron Saint spoke often of her overwhelming sense of failure; Luther despaired over ministry, and they all concluded that it was the adversary ultimately trying to drive them out of ministry.

Okay for dealing with pride, number four. Always tell yourself, that I am totally saint and totally sinner, and tell yourself that while we have great worth, none of us are indispensable. While we have great worth, none of us are indispensable. Can you say that? I am not indispensable. Now see, none of you said that. You believe you’re dispensable, indispensable, don’t you? We have important work but if we don’t do it God will find somebody else. Book of Esther is a good reminder of that. Yes, I’d say one of the best thing to deal with pride is just to be in the word of God every day. I find that I’m brought up short almost every day I’m in God’s word.

For dealing with material things, aim to desacralize them, desacralize. Things will always try to be more than they are whether it’s clothes, or houses, or cars, or things. They will always try to become gods. So keep desacralizing all the time, just learn to say “no,” course most of you probably in seminary are saying, "Well, I don’t have a choice." But just, the point is, remember this, things can carry a spiritual force. Things always have the potential to be idols. Just knowing that is a huge first step. Questions?
A quick review to make sure that we are all kind of thinking together. The underlying assumption of this class is that effective ministry is rooted in theology. Making the point again that the two really have to go together. Being in the ETS meetings in Philadelphia last week, reminded me again how sometimes separated they are, papers that I can’t find any ministry with them.

And sometimes coming across ministry that doesn’t seem to have any theology in it. So saying that the two have to be together, we moved from there to talk about the fact that our ministry is a continuation of the ministry of the Godhead that in a theology of ministry, we are not here to invent something, just like we are not here to invent the mission of the Church. It’s already declared.

So ministry we are seen is something that originated not with us, but it originated with the Father. It’s when Jesus came to carry and fulfil and it’s what the Spirit empowers. So from the Trinity, so to speak, the Trinitarian centre, we get our focus for the ministry. We then said that ministry requires obviously a minister.

And again developing our theology, we have tried to make the point that it’s really critical to know our identity. When we say minister, what does that mean? We are not here to invent that, but to go back and ask the question, what does our theology tell us? And remember, I took you through several models. Looking at the model of Christ as part of our identity.

Pauline metaphors, because Paul uses a number of metaphors to describe the minister, and then took back to a model that I’ve more embraced and developed and that’s Old Testament offices. And then we said, let’s look at ministry in its very essence theologically. Discovered that at its very essence, ‘diakonia’, it is service.

And then we move from there, and use Pervis [phonetics] in his pastoral theology book to talk about the essence of ministry, is also participation. Participation in these four. It is participation in word, in grace, in presence, in reign [phonetics]. Hopefully, you got all these down pretty well by now. This is the essence of what we’ve been doing. We then talked about the fact that at its very heart, ministry is also missional.

Something that I think the emerging church in particular, is wanting to remind the Church that it is intentional. Ministry must be intentional, must be missional. And when we looked at this, we discovered again that ministry is a matter of perpetuation. It’s about continuing what’s already began. It’s a mission of redemption and edification. We then moved from there to talk about a theology of context.

Where do you do ministry? I started off by making the point that years ago, it was questioning whether the para-Chuch [phonetics] is legitimate. And today it seems like we’ve reversed. We often ask the question, is the traditional church legitimate? But I conclude by saying that in a theology of ministry, we do discover in scripture that ministry takes place in a localised community.

It then is called to go out and be incarnational and it is a community that has an environment that reflects some structure, where structure can go to seed is when the structure is more important than the ministry, or the form is more important than the function. That’s when ministry gets off track. And that’s where a lot of churches have got off track. When it comes to context, they don’t understand the theology of context, that things have gotten reversed.
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[04:23] Number eight, talked about the fact that ministry has certain requirements, that is, conversion, has to be, should be some sense of calling, whatever that means. And we tried to assess that a bit theologically. And certainly our theology tells us that character is a key part of what is required of a minister, as well as giftedness, and affirmation by the Body of Christ. We see that with Paul and Timothy.

[04:53] And then certainly a place for preparation, and the place of seminary. And then we talked about the fact that ministry leads to resistance. This is just again, when we think about the theology of ministry, the nature of ministry, is that when we attempt to do something for God, there will be resistance because we live in a fallen world. Our theology informs us.

[05:21] Why is that good to know? Because you will be facing resistance. And when you do, don’t be surprised. Don’t get your feelings hurt if somebody hates you. I think it was Ben [phonetics] Patterson once said, well you know, when you are in a foxhole and the bullets are flying, you don’t stand up and go hey, you hurt my feelings. No, you are in a war. Bullets come. Still hurts but that’s the nature. So ministry leads to resistance.

[05:46] And a good book that I was just reading last week by a guy named Wright [phonetics], titled “A theology of the darkness”. It’s well worth reading with respect to this particular issue because a lot of us do not have a well crafted theology of darkness, of sin and this resistance. And the sooner we get a hold of that, the better we’ll be able to deal with resistance when we face it.

[06:16] And then we said that ministry must be carried out with God’s authority. And that really is the flip side of number nine. And that is because there is resistance, we’re going to have to have a certain authority to deal with it. And the reality is our theology tells us, we what? We do have what? We do have authority. Right, God has given us authority.

[06:44] Mark 3:15. That comes to today. We are going to talk about measurement of ministry, cause I think part of putting together a good theology of ministry is how do we measure this thing? And that’s a good question theologically because if we measured in wrong ways, that can really mess us up.

[07:07] If we measure our ministry, let’s say, largely by numbers or the financial picture of our ministry, or the popularity of our ministry, not that those things are not indicators, but we got to go back and say, okay, what have we learned theologically? How do we measure ministry? That’s a question I want to raise here and have us think about. You’re all doing ministry, or you’ll be doing ministry.

[07:35] And from time to time, you’re going to stop and ask yourself the question, is this working? Is this a success? Is this a failure? That doesn’t have necessarily easy answers to it. If I work for Frito-Lay and I’m a route salesman, at the end of the day, at the end of the month, I can point to some pretty clear indicators. Sales are up. I’m getting more shelf space.

[08:04] Managers are liking me. The boss is happy. I got a raise. Those are good indicators. They are clear indicators. In ministry, they are not that clear, are they? Sometimes growth doesn’t necessarily mean a success. And sometimes diminishing numbers doesn’t necessarily equate to failure. So that’s what we want to talk about.

[08:31] Last night as I was drifting off, I caught one of my favourite pastors on television, Joel Osteen, just to get some scriptural insight before I went to sleep. And there he was, not that I’ve seen him very much, maybe two or three times. And it just happened as I was in my kind of vegetative status I am generally on Sunday nights after preaching five times.
I came across him, and I thought, you know, now there is the absolute epitome of American success. Nicely dressed. Great hair, great teeth. Not that those things are bad. Some of us would like some of those things. But here was this, just this, huge, immense, how many thousands? How many thousands fit in there?

100,000? It’s huge. At certain point, who cares anymore, right I mean? But I thought, you know, someone could probably turn and then go, there is a successful pastor. Why can’t my pastor be like him? You know, I supposed. I don’t know if that happens, maybe.

But in terms of how America, a lot of Americans measure success, it has all of it, doesn’t it? Numbers, wealth, I mean, every now and then, they pan across the audience. And they seem, for the most part, to be a successful type anyway. Is that how we measure success? Is it okay to strive for success? Here are just some questions I raised by way of introduction. How do I measure ministry? Have I been successful?

Is it okay to strive for success? What is success? These are questions that come up. You go to your first ministerial conference. And you are feeling pretty good, well, sort of. You’re feeling pretty good when you got off the plane, until you get into the conference. Something inside begins to work on you, right?

You start finding yourself and you didn’t mean to, you didn’t intend to, and you didn’t prepared to, but you start measuring others, measuring yourself. I always remember, Fred [phonetics] Smith, who’s written a lot on leadership. I remember he said in one pastoral conference, and he was speaking. And I remember he got up and we were all sitting there. And he said well, I supposed you guys have probably enough time to sniff each other.

It was sort of his Texas crude way of saying what we all knew was true. Because you tend to do that. You’re in an elevator. And how many are in your church? How many baptisms? What’s your church budget? These things come up. And if you are really small, you just don’t want to talk about it. And if you are really large, you want to ask the question?

So here are some questions. I’ve got 4 questions I think I gave you and that is, first of all, is it biblical to pursue success? As we think about ministry and our theology, is ambition wrong? So I’ve just worked through some things I’ve listed here. First of all, I discovered this in scripture in a way, it’s biblical to dream. It’s okay to dream.

One of my favourite passages is Ecclesiastes 11. verses 1 - 6. You know where that passage, you’re familiar with that. Koheleth says, cast your bread on the waters. And it’s a great imagery that it’s a metaphor of, so to speak, of taking your ships and taking the risks and go out to see, and go for it.

And by the way, Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 is a great passage when you are preaching one of those vision sermons, you know. Get everybody excited. Dream great dreams, cause it is a great passage, until somebody gets mad at you for preaching Ecclesiastes or something like that. [giggles] But it is important in ministry to dream. I think it is important to be future oriented always. And it is important to hope.

I mean, ministry ought to have a lot of hope attached to it. If your ministry doesn’t have a hope attached to it, then you probably need to move on somewhere. Because your people need you to resonate with hope. They need to see in you, whatever ministry you do, that even if everyone else feels a bit hopeless, they see in you hope. And that’s really important, and that’s really good.
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[13:25] But here is something that probably our theology tells us is that we need to hold on to our dreams a little bit loosely, not too tight. Cause God may turn things sideways because this is God’s ministry. And what we dream and what we conceive in our minds are verb [phonetics]. It’s all going. At best, we step out in faith, believing but God may have other plans.

[13:54] That just is the case, right? March 3rd and 4th, I will stand in front of my congregation and ask our people to commit to 16 million dollars. But they might commit to 10,000 dollars. I don’t know. I hope and I dream, but, you know, God is going to be the one to determine that. I might be surprised. They might commit 30 million dollars.

[14:24] It’s a rich church, right Paul? So who knows what will happen. So it’s okay. Is it okay to pursue? Well, it’s certainly biblical to dream. And secondly, it’s biblical to see God’s blessing. That’s a good thing in ministry to do.

[14:41] For all the negatives about Jabez’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 4 verses 9 and 10, I come across a prayer like that, and I say to myself, if it’s good enough for Jabez, it’s good enough for me. You know, to say, Lord, and I love how the Hebrew language puts it, bless, to bless. The verb in the infinitive, next to each other.

[15:05] Bless to bless which is I think in Hebraic form, a way of saying, pour it on, God. Bless indeed is how one translation puts it, but it really misses it. Jabez said, Lord, bless to bless, just bless abundantly. And I think therein is a statement in scripture that it is not out of place to say, God, I want your blessing.

[15:34] It’s okay. I think sometimes we are afraid to pray for that. And I just say, why not? Why not ask God to bless? God, from everything I can tell in scriptures, is a God who loves to bless. In fact, I wonder sometimes if He does not bless as much as He does, because He waits for us to ask. So I think this is a good prayer. Not in a prayer that demands it. That’s where people get off base.

[16:02] It’s not demanding, because we don’t demand anything from God. But it is okay to request it and realise God delights in it. It may shock some of the people in my church right now but, because we really believe that this is the direction we are going with our church right now, I have committed myself for a hundred days to pray this prayer. God, I want you to enrich and bless.

[16:26] And I am just going each day in praying over every person and asking God to bless them in ways they never realise God will bless them. Now is that bad? Well, if I don’t add the other part of my prayer and that is, and God, at the same time in my prayer, You put the most sacrificial heart they never experienced in their lives for the kingdom of God. Does God do that kind of thing? Well yeah, I think sometimes He does.

[16:54] I’ve shared this story with some that when I went to Dallas seminary to do my doctor work, and maybe I shared that here, did I? That my father couldn’t afford to help me with my education through my years at San Diego State or through my years at Westgen [phonetics]. So I had to pay my way through, like probably a number of you, which wasn’t easy, although I know you are going to hate to hear this. When I started at Westgen [phonetics] it was 14 dollars a credit unit.

[17:21] But I was living on $250 a month too, that include rent and everything else, so it all equals out, right? Where I am going with all of this is, the year I was doing my doctor work in Dallas, it meant being separated for a year with my wife. I went down there, did this work. My dad had just gone into business and it was really tough. And we just prayed about it and my dad said, look, let’s really trust God.
And that year, my dad had the most amazing year in his business that he ever had, for that one year. It just went off the charts. Of course, it didn’t hurt that he had a western store and the Olympic team that year all wore cowboy hats. It sort of started off a craze, but I give God the credit for all of that. So does God do things like that? I think he does. So it’s okay. Is it okay to pursue dreams? Yes.

Is it okay to pursue God’s blessings? I think so, I think we should. It’s also biblical, thirdly, to let God do the promoting. God, I believe, does love to promote. As long as we let him do it, because it’s under His jurisdiction. And we see that in various places in scripture. All of a sudden, Joshua is going along and then there’s this clear statement in Joshua 3:7 where God declares, you know, that I demote and I promote. This is God’s domain.

So we realise that God elevates, God, is this a word, de-elevates? Does it work? So that’s God’s prerogative. We see that in 1 Samuel 2:7. Hannah, as she reflects back on what she has been through. She really was down in the valley and now she’s up on the mountain. And she reflects back and says that it’s God who lifts up some and puts down others.

Ezekiel 17:24 where God says through the prophet, I make high the low tree, and I make low the high tree. 1 Chronicles 29:12 where David says it’s in Your Hand to make great. So as we are assessing ministry, we, first of all, try to build a little bit of a theology of ambition, success.

How does that all stand with Scripture? We also discovered in 1 Peter 5 verse 6. Peter says that promotion comes in God’s way. And God’s way is to posture and position us in what position, if we are to have success. It’s humility. That’s how it works. Someone put it, it’s not stepping down, it’s standing next to God.

It’s realising our true stature. There again is coming to grips with our humility. So we discovered in scripture that God loves to make high at times, but He makes high those who are willing to, first of all, be made low. That’s pretty much how it works, right? That’s what scripture tends to tell us. So Hannah goes through the valley.

David goes through the wilderness. This is God’s way of working because He knows that that needs to happen or we won’t know how to handle success. We also discover that promotion comes in God’s time. Back to 1 Peter 5:6. Peter talks about God elevating at the proper time. God knows when is the right time.

Promotion comes for God’s purposes, not our purposes. Our theology needs to make sure it understands that. That if there is any success, there is any promotion, it’s not for our purposes, it’s for God’s purposes. He never brings us success to stroke our egos. He brings us success to further His kingdom.

Okay, so, a) is it biblical to pursue success? Is ambition wrong? There is an article years ago on leadership. I think it was title this, something like this, ‘Holy ambitious or wholly ambitious?’ There’s a difference between those two, a vast difference, huge difference.

Is there place for holy, h-o-l-y ambition? I think so. And I think God honours that. Now the second question then is, how does one then measure this blessing of success? What are the measuring sticks? Is it a church with so many number of people, or proficiency in one’s ability to speak?

Is it an advanced degree? Is it that you published a book? That seems to be a lot of measurement today, isn’t it? Now if you can just author a book, then you’ve made it. Is it the amount of money we earn?
from our practice, or from the number of clients? Does scripture give us any help? Well, here are few things I’ve listed. One is they can’t be measured with the same precision as business.

[23:19] Let me just say this that it’s not to say numbers don’t have a place. Sometimes I think we can, and are always our tendency to react to one extreme, to go over to the other extreme. So we say numbers aren’t important to God. Numbers don’t matter. I don’t think I’ll go quite that far. Numbers always tells us some things. They are indicators.

[23:43] It’s not that we don’t pay attention to them, cause sometimes we can use that kind of argument to justify that we are doing a lot of things wrong, or we are not giving our best efforts. But numbers miss things. They don’t measure a lot of things in ministry, and that’s the point. In business, numbers don’t measure everything either. That’s for sure.

[24:10] But for in ministry, numbers miss a lot of things. In fact, Luke 16:15, Jesus warned of measuring as the world measures. And Jesus doesn’t just do it here, I believe, I think He does it in other places but He makes the point. Luke 16:15 is a warning that don’t take the way that the world measures things and measure ministry the same way.

[24:38] If we don’t understand this, we will get messed up. You’ll end up measuring in wrong ways that will confuse and frustrate, not only you but the people you’ve lead to measure that way. Stores can count customers. Factories can count orders. Farmers can measure crops. But it’s not so easy to measure followers.

[25:05] Now in this, secondly, it cannot be measured merely by outward growth. How do we know that’s true? Anything in scripture indicate that, Heather? Be at the same place they were a year ago? Five years ago?

[25:35] What else in scripture informs us that you can’t measure merely by outward growth. Let me put it in another way. If you measure simply by outward growth, what kind of question mark would that put on what people in scripture, for example?


[25:53] Jesus. Jeremiah would be another failure, wouldn’t he? Who was that? Isaiah, was it Isaiah 6 where he said you will speak and no one will respond. I often thought, you know, what if God met me in a vision like Isaiah’s and said, now John, I’m glad you are willing to say send me and so I am going to send you.

[26:18] I am going to take you by what you’ve said and just want you to know, you’re going to preach and nobody will respond. Still want to go? He was given a ministry of unresponsiveness, Isaiah 6:9-11. And he was successful. That’s the point, he was successful. Jeremiah was a successful prophet. One of the great prophets and nobody listened to him.

[26:48] Israel still went to Babylon, and those that stayed behind went to Egypt. Think I left a quote there by Oden [phonetics], effectiveness in a church is not measured by the size of the congregation but by the depth of genuine hearing of the word of God. Just a lot of other indicators. Sometimes, number three, success is measured by loss. Sometimes success is measured by loss.

[27:15] Now again, I think Rick Warren has a fair point, when he in his book he wrote several years ago, ‘Purpose Driven Church’, he said that’s healthy, it tends to grow. And he is right. If you have healthy
plants, they grow. If you have unhealthy plants, they don’t grow. As he puts it in his book, the important thing is not to figure out how to make things grow.

27:42] The important thing is to figure out what’s keeping things from growing, if things are not growing. Because he says, by their nature, the church is a body. It is organic. It’s supposed to grow, is the point. In our ministries, they are supposed to grow. They are formed of organic units. So if they are not growing to a certain extent, you stop and you should ask the question, what’s keeping this from growing. Makes sense, right?

28:11] I had never thought of that right till I read his books some years ago, cause we are all focused on, we got to find things to make this thing grow. Well he say, no, it will grow. Ministry will grow by its very nature. So if it’s not growing, what are the things that are killing growth? What are the diseases like you know, if you got a tree, or if you got a plant somewhere in the garden, and there’s just there it is. Three years later and it’s still the same size. You ask yourself.

28:38] I have a plant in my office I’ve had since I came five years ago. It’s still the same size. Still looks almost exactly the same. But of course it’s by design. I don’t feed it. I water it sparingly. I give it just enough so that it will stay right where it is. I don’t want it to get any bigger. I know there’s probably something wrong with that form of thinking. But it’s not a matter of, I got to figure out how to make this thing grow.

29:08] It’s a matter of, if somebody really want to see it grow, figure out what are the things that are keeping it from growing. Like never feeding it.

29:19] We live in a culture that is so permeated with growth and with that kind of culture, we almost need to air them on the side. Not of what can we do to make this thing grow. I mean, that’s not the question. What can we do to find out what’s keeping it from growing?

29:38] Why I’ve said just what I’ve said is to counterbalance our tendency over here to go too far over here and say, you know, numbers don’t mean anything, and say, what a minute, there is something to that. Even Jesus you’ve seen, what you just refer to the kingdom, said it will grow. In fact, He suggests it will grow unbelievably so. Though how we might measure may not be the same way.

30:08] So making the point I’ve just made, for example, with [inaudible 30:12] want to, kind of, go from the other side. That while numerical increases can serve to validate some success, and to validate health and growth, yet sometimes, and that’s the point here under three, success is sometimes measured by loss, sometimes loss on the other hand is also a measure of success.

30:35] And I think a classic casing [phonetics] point is back to Jesus. And in particular, what I think of is John 6. If success is measured by numbers, then John 6 would be, at least at the beginning point, the affirmation of Jesus’ ministry, right? He feeds the five thousand, and they all want to follow him, and they all what? They want to make him. They want to make him king.

31:02] And so here they are and you know, they’re seeing this, you know, meal ticket and they’re all ready to follow him until he turns around and says, what does he say? He says, I know what this is about. You’re looking for bread. I’m the bread, okay. You want to partake of me? And of course they began to scratch their heads and go, I just wanted a happy meal. What’s this got to do with anything?

31:31] Of course they had everything to do with it. Because he was saying that you know, following me means you are going to partake of me. That means that you’re going to have to go deep with me. That means you’re going to have to go to the cross. I think they didn’t quite understand that. But they
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understood enough to say, I don’t think I want to follow anymore. And John 6 is one of those, from the evangelistic side, is one of the great failures, you could almost say.

[31:57] Cause by the time you get to the end of John chapter 6, everybody’s gone but the disciples. What does that tell us? It just tells us that numbers can indicate health and they can indicate some pretty good things happening. But just to go by numbers alone is really dangerous because numbers didn’t always mean things in scripture, or in Jesus’s ministry.

[32:23] A point that was made a moment ago, I think by Heather is that, we can have a lot of consumers and no disciples. And I think that’s one of the most dangerous things today in our culture. And hence we miss the purpose of ministry. The nature of ministry is not to acquire consumers. It’s to produce disciples. That’s what our theology tells us. That’s what success is.

[32:51] That was Christ’s goal. Matthew 28:19-20, people transformed into radical Christ likeness. That’s the measure of success in a powerful sense. I’m not sure we’re measuring success in ministry that way today. And I think, well I have problems with Barnes’ [phonetics] newest book. I think part of what Barne [phonetics] is after is to say we’ve been measuring the wrong thing.

[33:20] And he found himself even maybe measuring some of the wrong things, and became some what frustrated with it. So number four, success is measured by what God sees. And what God sees is far more than external. It’s what He sees internally. You know, couple passages here.

[33:45] 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 where Paul says my message was what? My message was marked by something simple, not necessarily profound. My message was marked not by what the world measures messages, but it was marked by the Spirit of God and His power. And therein in effect, Paul says, here’s, you want to measure success? That’s success.

[34:15] Or another passage that’s maybe appropriate here is 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. If I do all of these things, but I don’t have what? If I don’t have, you know, something of the internal, then it’s all worthless. It doesn’t really matter.

[34:36] Leaves the third question, what must one be alert for, if there is blessing, if we do see success in our ministries? And hopefully we will all see success. If we begin to realise what success is and we experience success, what should be careful of for? And here are couple of things. Number one, praise is one of life’s greatest test.

[35:03] The point I want to make here is that tough times can do us well. And good times can do us sin. And we see this in scripture, Hezekiah I think is one good illustration. A man who depended upon God, 2 Chronicles 32. And he took courage. He faced challenges. And he did all of these great things but when God blessed him, he choked, verses 22 to 24.

[35:33] Here’s another passage, one I’ve thought a lot about, Proverbs 27:21. Let me read you that verse. The crucible is for silver, the furnace is for gold and a man is tested by his praise. Ever thought about that proverb?

[35:55] The crucible is for silver, the furnace is for gold and a man is tested by his praise. What’s his point? What is he saying?

Audience 2: [36:10] I think praise reveals a lot of the character of a person.

[36:12] Yes, just like a furnace reveals what’s in a metal, so praise reveals what’s in a person. It will expose our innermost being.
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[36:30] An old saint by the name Ironside, Henry Ironside, put it this, or Harry Ironside, put it this way, there is no hotter crucible to test a man than when he is put through a fire of praise and popularity. It is his most searing furnace. Cause the question is will we give God the credit?

[36:53] There’s no hotter crucible to test a man than when he is put through a fire of praise and popularity. It is the most searing furnace. We try to measure this thing about ministry. We try to think through success. And what we need to think through here is the dangers of success.

[37:23] Success is one of life’s great dangers. There was this guy some years ago. His name is Steven Berglas, B-e-r-g-l-a-s, Steven Berglas. He’s a Harvard psychologist. His work was around people who suffer from success. People who made it to the top, who had enormous accomplishments.

[37:53] And this is what he observed. He observed that for many who made it to the top, whose work is a success, he describes that this is generally what happens. And you are familiar with this word. He says they, for all to many, they, they implode. In their enlargement, they blow up from the inside.

[38:20] They burst apart within and everything crashes. They are like submarines that get too deep. In his work, he discovered four common results of success. Here they are, arrogance. First result of success for all to many, is arrogance. Number 2, aloneness.

[38:48] Number 3, boredom, a need for adventure. And for all to many, number 4, adultery. So we hope for success. We try to keep in mind what success is measured by and what it should not be measured by. But we hope our ministries will be a success, but it’s really important in our theology of ministry, that we always keep in front of us, the dangers that come with success. That we haven’t arrived in a certain sense is when we need to be most aware and most alert.

[39:28] Last question is, so what is success then? How do we measure success? What is success in ministry? There’s couple passages that stand out here. One is 1 Corinthians 4 verses 1 and 2, where Paul says these words. 1 Corinthians 4, this is how one should regard us, measure us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it’s required of stewards that one be found trustworthy or faithful. I see in that passage a great statement by Paul. If you’re going to measure my ministry, measure it by this, that I was a steward and I was a servant. And in that responsibility, I was faithful.

[40:20] The other passage that I think is really helpful in measuring success, measuring ministry is Acts chapter 20, where Paul calls the elders of Ephesus together, you remember? And he basically reflects on his ministry. And I think Paul is, in a sense, putting the measurement of ministry together. And here are the things that I wrote down from that passage. Let me invite you to think with me about this for a moment.

[40:48] Turn in your Bibles to Acts 20. Let’s just read this slow for a moment. And I want you just to mention, okay, here’s how Paul’s measuring ministry.

[41:01] Verse 18: when they came to him, he said you know how I lived among you the whole time, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility, with tears, with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

[41:21] How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public, and from house to house. So Paul is reflecting back on his ministry. What’s the success of his
ministry here? What is he measuring? His faithfulness to declare in anything that God intended for him to declare.

[41:51] His humility. So did I served with humility? Did I declare anything? Verse 21: testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there. What else do we see? Paul is rehearsing his life.

[42:20] Here’s my ministry, guys. I tried to reflect a humble spirit. I was faithful to present what God called me to present. What else? I was faithful the Spirit’s leading, yeah. That’s what stands out here. Except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

[42:46] But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. What else stands out? It’s his measuring his ministry. Yes, did I get to the finish line? This is really a great statement by Paul.

[43:14] And I really think he gives us how you assess your ministry. Did I serve with humility? Did I declare everything God called me to declare? When we think about that statement, did I declare everything God called me to declare? Did I avoid saying what God told me to say? Did follow the Spirit’s leading? Did I complete? Did I get to the finish line?

[43:42] Paul says I have gotten to the end. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you. What is he saying there? Well, maybe the next verse helps us here.

[44:09] For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Because I think their blood would be on Paul’s hands, if he did not.

Justin: [44:19] Do you relate that to how Ezekiel [inaudible 44:23-44:24]

[44:25] In what sense?

Justin: [44:28] Just that giving an account for their souls.

[44:32] Oh yeah. I think so, Justin. I think that’s kind of what Paul’s saying. Which I think again goes back to Old Testament prophets. That so to speak, the blood of the people would be on their hands, if they are not faithful to say what God called them to say. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

[45:00] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. What is Paul keep going back to? You want to measure my ministry, measure this, I did what? I never stopped. And I never stopped what?

Audience 4: [45:30] It sounds like he had compassion of heart here.

[45:34] Yes, and he cared enough for their souls to tell them what their should needed to hear, whether the liked to hear it or not. That’s what stands out. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his
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grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I
coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.

[46:01] If you want to measure me, measure what? Measure this that I did this ministry with the right
motives. I didn’t do this for financial gain. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my
necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this
way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more
blessed to give than to receive.’

[46:31] Which in effect is another way of saying, if you want to measure my ministry, measure this that
my ministry was marked more by what I gave than what I got. It’s good stuff, ah? It’s good stuff. How do
you measure ministry? Paul would say, measure by my faithfulness. And I think to these elders, he says,
okay guys, look back over the last three years, what did you see? How do you assess me?

[47:00] And I think in this, he gives us a grid through how to measure success, how to measure ministry.
Let me give you a few more things and then I’ll stop here. There’s a guy named David Fitch. You heard of
this guy, Fitch, F-i-t-c-h? Just written a pretty interesting book entitled, ‘The Great Giveaway’. Might be a
book worth noting. He’s pretty strong indictment of a lot of ministry today in America.

[47:29] That’s why he titles it, ‘The Great Giveaway’. He starts off by talking about how you measure your
success. How the church should be measuring success. And he basically makes the point that we tend to
measure by numbers, money, lots of things. But he said this is how we should measure it. And here are
some statements he made, I thought these were good statements. In whatever ministry you do, I think
these apply.

[47:59] Is this a community where I can confess sin and feel safe? Don’t tell me how big your church is.
Let me ask you this. Can I find community in where I can be me and I can share failure and I’ll still be
embraced?

[48:26] Is this a place where prayer is taken with a high degree of seriousness? Is this a place where prayer
is taken with a high degree of seriousness? Is this a place where someone will care for me if I am sick? Do
people notice that? Here is the fourth thing. Is this a place where an outsider is welcomed, even
embraced?

[48:54] Is this a place where marriages are being saved? That’s a good question, hah? Is this a place where
marriages are being saved? Think about that. In the ministry you’re in, how many stories are you, or
coming out of that, or someone’s marriage was about to fall apart, but came back together because of this
ministry. Are people financially helping others? Is this a place where that happens?

[49:30] That when someone is really hurting, someone steps up and says I can help that brother, I can help
that sister. Are people financially helping others? Here’s a real good one today. Are people welcoming
others into their homes? We’ve become so private today. Are people welcoming others into their homes?

[49:59] Are people more about making their homes a place of hospitality or a museum? Are people being
restored? Is this a place where people are being restored from addictions? Be it pornography, alcoholism.
Is this a place where people are recovering, being restored from addictions? Here’s the last one. If we are
talking about measuring success, here’s a good one.

[50:28] Is this a place that is statistically different than the culture? When it comes to divorce, abuse,
gambling addictions. Is this a place that is statistically different in a huge way than the culture at large?
Maybe it is initially so because maybe a lot of the people that make up your ministry, or on church people. People who are just discovering Christ, and knows statistics aren’t too different. But the question is, is it moving to that direction? So good questions, hah? So how do we measure success? Well, those are some ways to measure success.

I think Barne [phonetics], maybe going back to Barne [phonetics] would say, in your ministry, here is how you measure success, in terms of, what are your core competencies are? What a person should eventually become in Christ? Are they getting there? And are you measuring that? I just can’t get that out of my brain. I think that’s a great question. Churches measure tons of things but very few, and that’s his point.

Hardly any measure that question. Have we, first of all, determined these core competencies? What we want to see people competent in, as radical followers of Jesus. And are we measuring that? So we can say, you know, here are the amount of people, or here is the percentage that seems to be really getting there. Okay. Take a 10 minute break.
Today we’ll focus on wrapping up some things that I wanted to say about ministry. So the first hour I’m going to talk about the inglorious and glorious sides of ministry because that’s part of our theology of ministry and then wrap up with some things in the second hour and if we have time just to kind of open it up. I’d kind of like to do that if we can just to anything regarding theology of ministry you’d like to talk about. I’ve chosen some of the themes that I think are relevant to ministry and certainly do not want to suggest that I’ve been exhaustive here even though it might seem like that, but.

When I look at ministry and scripture I see that there’s a lot of inglorious sides to it and glorious sides to it. And I think it’s really good that we go into ministry as much as we can with our eyes wide open to both of those. One of the complaints at times level that seminaries is that they don’t really tell people what it’s really like and so they get out there and then they are surprised. Not that this is going to take away any element of surprise because you’re all going to face surprises out there that if you went to seminary for 20 years, it’s not going to somehow alleviate, just like all of the premarital counseling in the world doesn’t mean that there won’t be any surprises on the other side of the honeymoon.

There will always be surprises. And probably just like marriage, there are inglorious aspects and glorious aspects. So, here are some inglorious aspects that I’ve over time thought about. And the first one is this, and maybe you’ve already experienced an element of it already with whatever ministry you do and that is an involvement with the menial and the mundane. That’s how I put it. Involvement with the menial and the mundane.

What I mean by this is that despite sometimes what the brochures say or the conferences suggest, and even sometimes what professors will say, there is a certain part of ministry that’s not very glamorous and not very attractive. I have found myself over the years resonating so much with Eugene Peterson because he talks a lot about this. I’ll give you a couple of quotes. He says, ‘Ministry by and large consists of modest daily assigned work. Routines similar to mucking out the stalls, spreading manure, pulling weeds. If we expected to ride a glistening stallion in parades and return to the barn where a lackey grooms our steed, our stead, we will be severely disappointed.’ He’s exactly right. That was his experience and that I think is true for just about all of us. We get out in ministry and we’re expecting big things and attractive things and suddenly we’re face-to-face with someone who is, I think I’ve probably used the illustration once, is to pick up Pepto-Bismol for her or figure out a pecan pie recipe. We’re just not quite ready for those kind of questions. As Peterson puts it, ’This is not what most of us had in mind when we signed on. We had not counted on anything so benign or so marginal. Our images of ministry had a great deal more fierceness to them. Jeremiah with fire in his mouth, Paul careening through prison and shipwrecked. The language we learned was one of battle but sometimes it’s like learning high school Spanish. It is soon non-functional from disuse. Did we learn the wrong language?’ That’s vintage Peterson.

But we didn’t learn the wrong language. It’s actually if we look in our theology, it’s part of the language. It’s part of ministry. It goes back to what we said definitionally with the [phonetic] deacanea. It is waiting on tables and that’s not always glamorous stuff. It is a bit of the menial and the mundane. That’s where a lot of ministry starts. My guess is that for most of you here, as you begin ministry if you haven’t already begun ministry, that’s where it really starts.
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It has to start. We have to learn it. When I entered into ministry in college, my first assignment was picking up all of the paper cups after Campus Life meetings. I was actually thinking it would be much more glamorous than that but that’s what it felt like the first year. But actually that was some of the best training for me for ministry. It just prepares you in many [05:17] ways because a lot of what we’re dealing with is the mess out there of lives and a lot of it is mucking out the stalls.

It serves to prepare us to willingly do it as a servant. Here’s a second inglorious part of ministry that some of us will face maybe more than others, but it’s there none the less. I don’t know how else to put it but here’s the second one, [05:47] nice but insignificant. We go out into the world as ministers, our theology and everything set to do ministry. Then we suddenly face a world that minister sounds so quaint, and harmless, and nice, bland, a leader of the bland.

[06:17] And we will feel at times like people view us as nice but not really important. When we become important is when someone needs a prayer at a dinner. Suddenly we’re asked to fulfill our part. They might want to hear that but there may not be much interested in the rest of conversation. I remember sort of a personal crisis for me early on in ministry when it came to Thanksgiving, for example.

[06:46] At Thanksgiving we’d all get together with all of the relative and I was the one that was in ministry. No one really wanted to talk about that. They wanted to talk about everything else under the sun that everybody was doing but it was like, ‘We don’t want to go there.’ You know? Who knows what John might start talking about that would actually ruin the conversation around the table. So, sometimes it can feel that way and parishioners will sometimes treat us [07:16] more so that way than we would like.

You know, it comes for those of us in pastoral ministry with the bland statement, ‘That was a nice sermon,’ when as I’ve mentioned, you never intended to be nice. And people will give courteous smiles but sometimes you will feel as significant as an exit sign, there in case of an emergency but otherwise overlooked. Sometimes that’s what ministry feels like, right? [07:46] I never notice exit signs unless there’s an emergency. Sometimes in ministry, it can feel a little bit that way too.

Martin Thornton calls it the ambulance syndrome, just there to pick up the pieces after an accident but barring any accidents, he’s out of a job.

Audience: [08:13] Who is that?

[08:13] Martin Thornton, T-H-O-R-N-T-O-N, he’s a guy that a person like Eugene Peterson often quotes from, Wendell Berry, Martin Thornton, kind of earthy guys that really look at [08:30] life as it is. A third inglorious side is sometimes a feeling of limited competence. There was a day in ministry when the minister was the most respected person in the community. What ministers shared was assumed as authoritative. And certainly from a pastoral side, it’s viewed just in the titles that once predominated the landscape [09:00] like Reverend, which by the way, I’m so thankful 99.9 percent of the people never use that of me.

But, you know, Parson. Do you ever think of the word, Parson? Where did Parson come from? It’s not that far away from what other word that sounds sort of close to it. Parson, person. Parson was a word used to [09:30] refer to the person. In other words, there was a day the minister was the person. I think in our vernacular today would be sort of, you know, you’re the man. You know, but that was how it was viewed at one time.

Well, most ministers aren’t viewed as you’re the man today, certainly not the parson. In fact, today ministers are not the most educated and even [10:00] while a lot of us will have a certain amount of
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education, it will be held up with some suspicion. And part of this feeling of limited competence comes with sometimes a feeling that we only can do so much then it needs to be transferred to the professionals. Now, it can happen on the pastoral side sometimes when, okay, we can only go so far with people who really have significant needs. Now we need to call a professional psychologist.

[10:30] Not that there’s anything wrong with that, but what can be wrong is a sense of moving from the non-professional to the professional, at least that feeling. Much like a hospital visit that can be, ‘Well, it’s nice you’re here but we need to let the professionals take over.’ And sometimes you struggle with that. That’s a little bit of that inglorious side. Leonard Sweet put it this way, ‘We may sometimes feel [11:00] like a typewriter repairman in an age of computers, made to feel like an amateur among others with little to contribute to the real problems of life.’

And behind it all, what is our theology telling us? Well, it’s telling us that well, we were called to be servants. We are called to be servants. The greatest shall be the servants, Mathew 23:11. Paul reminds us that we, we were called by the way, [11:30] to be under-rowers, Corinthians I 4:1-5.

A fourth inglorious side of ministry can sometimes by suspicion and mistrust. Why do I mention that one? Where does that come from?

Audience: [11:52] I think there’s so many people that have been hurt or disappointed.

[11:55] Yes, and sometimes because maybe people put us too high on a pedestal to begin with and we allowed that. What else does it come from?


[12:07] Yes, a lot of becomes by the public perception as portrayed by the media and not just a portrayal of it but the actual allody of it when you do get on cable sometimes and watch guys and you go, ‘God, I hope nobody is watching this,’ realizing that [12:30] all too many are.

It can create a culture of disrespect, mistrust, clergy abuse, Catholic priests, etc, all enter into that. Yes, Mark?

Mark: [12:44] They had us a read a book, the book by the guy that was a commentator up in Seattle on the radio. The guy made the quote in it though, ‘A lot of the suspicion and mistrust of us as Christians is that our friendships are only as deep, they’re very superficial in certain ways.’ I remember there was an example of a guy playing racquetball and he was doing it as an evangelistic outreach. Somebody asked him, ‘Now, if you can guarantee that Collin here, this guy that’s unsaved [13:14], if he was never going to accept Christ, would you continue to play racquetball with him?’ He said, ‘No.’ And unfortunately a lot of the times we as Christians, or even Pastors, show an interest in somebody. It’s not a genuine interest.


[13:32] Yes. [inaudible][13:34]

Mark: [13:34] Right.


Mark: [13:36] And so I think a lot of the suspicion and mistrust has some very valid reasons for it.
Yes, well, and I think part of it again coming from a church end is that just way too many stories out there when you come in to a ministry that you find out your predecessor really left a pretty damaging trail when it comes to authenticity or integrity. And so it takes sometimes years. In fact maybe all of the time in the world won’t get you there. I mean if sometimes I found in ministry that it takes some people six, seven years before they’ll finally trust you. I mean not six or seven months or six or seven weeks, six or seven years. Just prepare yourself for that. Some will need a long, long time of a track record of consistency and authenticity for that.

It’s part of the inglorious side. Part of the inglorious side is you elevate this task in our minds because it is an elevated task by the way. I mean don’t diminish who you are as minister and we’ll talk about that in a moment but that sets, sets it up for this. A fifth one is on realistic expectations. This is certainly an inglorious side to ministry.

That is the people we minister to, we obviously realize they all have an expectation of us and they’re all different expectations. Some are obviously very unreal. Others may not expect hardly anything from us maybe because they’ve been so disappointed. And of course the worse is the expectations we’ll put on ourselves. Part of what’s difficult in that is that there’s no end to it so you have to set your own limitations because otherwise, it’s just an inexhaustible route and if your expectations are not properly set, you can burn out really easily.

Some will expect you to be a scholar. Some will expect you to be a chief executive officer. Some will expect you to be a therapist. Some will expect you to be a father. Some will expect you to be a friend. Some will expect you to be an innovator that with every new idea coming down the road, you should be at the front end of that. Going back to expectations that you put on yourself, the expectations sometimes to see a life change in every person you minister to or to see your ministry double every two to three years. Or certainly for those of us who are in communication, the expectation you can put on yourself that you’ve got to nail it every week.

That’s a heavy expectation and yet we naturally put that on ourselves because I mean who wants to say, 'Well this week I think I’m not going to hit a homerun. I think I’m just going to hit a foul, you know. Who is going to bunt this week?' So in all of this, we’ll need to remember again who we work for. We don’t work for the people and we don’t work for ourselves. We work for Jesus.

I like David Fisher who put it this way, 'After about three years of ministry, you will have failed to meet all of the impossible and unspoken expectations. Then you can begin to minister. For it is then you will have decided to just simply love people and believe the Gospel.'

Number six, part of the inglorious side of ministry sometimes will be disappointment and hurt because it’s a profession in which you care deeply about people and so you will at times get hurt deeply. Being visible, you can often be misunderstood or misquoted. Sometimes what will hurt is that you will pour yourself into people’s lives and then they’ll leave and that’s a great hurt and a great disappointment but sometimes they almost have to leave, at least in their minds because maybe the relationship has become so one-sided.

You know everything about them and they know very little about you and you know all too much about them. And sometimes you just have to gracefully let go. I remember when I first started ministry, this was really a troublesome thing for me. I’d find that I’d pour my life into people in very, very deep ways and then they’d leave and it’s not because they got mad at me or got upset. They just suddenly realized one
day that they couldn’t sit [18:30] in church and face the possibility they might be one of my sermon
illustrations.

And then certainly the hurt that will come with the tact from those you least expect. That often happens. I
love the council of Ben Paterson who said, ’Don’t ever take it personally. Soldiers don’t take shots
personally. It’s part of a war.’ Just remember you are in a war. You’re in a good fight as we talked about
earlier, Timothy I 1:12.

[19:00] Sometimes this hurt comes too because you’re dealing with people who a lot of times are going
through deep hurt and in kind of a strange way they feel like with you they can just release a lot of things
inside of them that maybe they can’t release to anybody else, not realizing that sometimes that can be
pretty raw for you. Do you know what I’m saying? A man came up to me after I preached yesterday and I
was pretty raw because I’d just got back from [19:30] the memorial service in which I lost one of my
closest friends, just proceeded to just blast with all kinds of rage inside because his needs were not being
met.

So sometimes it really comes at the worst moments too. What I’ve learned over the years is that God gives
you a lot of grace and over time you just begin to realize it’s nothing personal. You just minister grace and
it’s amazing how grace turns things around. [20:00] Whereas in my younger, more impetuous days, I
might’ve said something I would’ve regretted. You can’t ever really prepare for them and sometimes will
come in some of your worst moments, some of your most vulnerable moments. And maybe sometimes
that happens because the more transparent you are and open, that sort of says to people, ’Well, maybe I
can be that too,’ but it works [20:30] in sort of a strange way because then it opens them up to be that with
you when maybe you least are emotionally prepared for it. Does that make sense?

I think that’s what happens. I find that when I’m more transparent, when people see that I’m going down
this road, sometimes it kind of gives permission for people to do the same thing but then sometimes it can
then stir up to the surface things people have been feeling that suddenly I don’t even know if [21:00] this
man was prepared for what came out, but then pretty soon it was like, well, the lid was now open. So
now it just, it just came out in waves, and waves, and waves. And that’s sort of an inglorious part of
ministry but it comes because you’re dealing with the soul. You’re dealing with people at the base level
issues, hurts of their life. I mean it’s not people saying, ’You know, I’m really upset with you because, you
know, your product wasn’t delivered on time.’ [21:30] That’s not the stuff we deal with. We deal more
with somebody who says, ’You know, I was really hurting and I was in a tragedy and you weren’t there
for me.’

So we’re dealing with really deep-level stuff. Why do I share this with you? Because part of your theology
of ministry is just understanding that’s part of what ministry is and when I go back to my theology, when
I go back to people in scripture, when I go back to people like the Apostle Paul, I realize that comes with
it. That’s kind of what [22:00] you signed up for. Another one here, seven, is loneliness. That can be a bit
of an inglorious side of ministry because you can minister to a lot of people and people are afraid to get
too close a lot of times or assume you’re too busy, or feel awkward to invite you over.

[22:30] I always remember this funny story. When I first came into ministry, my wife called a family in our
church and as she picked up the phone, my wife said, ’Hi, this is Heather Johnson.’ Mary, Heather, and
Mary put her, her hand over the, the phone although my wife could here and she said, ’Mike, turn down
the music. It’s the pastor’s wife.’ I’m like, what does that mean?

[audience] [laughter]
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[22:58] You know, people can probably get this, you know, stereotype [23:00] of minister and it creates its own kind of loneliness again because a lot of people are not quite sure what to do with you and not that this is all sounding like self-pity, it’s not. It’s just simply stating a fact that every minister in scripture you look at is sort of a strange combination of being loved and despised. Paul was loved and Paul was despised in just about every minister. Jesus was loved and Jesus was despised, [23:30] affirmed, and criticized, followed, and manipulated.

And a lot of this I think is also God just always drawing us back to him. I think one of the things you learn increasingly in ministry that is so key to never forget is I think there in 2 Corinthians 12:11, when we are weak he is strong. And a lot of times we go through weakness in ministry just so that God can be strong [24:00] because unfortunately a lot of times when we’re really strong, God isn’t so strong.

One other one that I’ve listed here is I don’t know how else to say this, is seeing behind the screen, seeing the inglorious sides of lives. I thought most people had their lives pretty well together until I got into ministry then I realized what a mess. And ministry unfortunately, and maybe fortunately, places [24:30] you behind the screen where you see the stuff of people’s lives you wish you’d never seen, incest, adultery, cursing, the deep stuff of sin.

Well, we saw it earlier with looking at some of our earlier models of ministry, some of these early guys, how they fled from ministry. Some of it was flamed from some of this inglorious side whether it’s Moses, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah, [25:00] or Peter, there’s a certain resistance in a lot of people in terms of the call. A few of these I quoted down Luther where in his table talk he writes these words, 'Under this pear tree I advance more than 15 arguments with them and I decline my call.'

My favorite is perhaps I’ve shared with you is Ammonias who asked to be Bishop in 365 and seeing that he was trapped, he pleaded. He swore he would [25:30] not accept the election, that he would not leave the desert. They did not give in. Then while they were looking on, he took a pair of shears and cut off his left ear right back to the head and said, 'Now, it’s impossible for Old Testament tradition makes clear that the body of a priest must be unblemished.'

Hopefully none of us will go to that extreme. I love that. I like to share that by the way when I do [26:00] ordination services but as Baxter put it, 'It’s no safe course to imitate Jonah in turning our back upon God’s call. If we neglect our work, he has a spur to quicken us. If want run away, he has messengers enough to overtake us and bring us back.’ Okay, so enough of the inglorious. Let’s think about the glorious side of ministry and the good news is there’s really a glorious side, a great glorious side, which [26:30] I think you need to make sure you underline in your notes overshadows the dark side by a longshot.

Paul often referred to the glories of ministry. It was just woven in this theology of ministry, 2 Timothy 20:21, when you think about it, there’s no other professional that comes close to the glory reserved for ministry. So, what are some glorious sides?

[27:00] First of all, there’s great glory. There’s great glory in bringing good news. That really is great glory, isn’t it? I mean not that-that you have to go into ministry to do that, but a big part of what all of us in our ministries, no matter what our ministries are here, that will be a big part of what we do. It-it should be, and there’s great glory in bringing good news, Romans 10:1. There’s great glory in being a conduit for God [27:30] of administering needed words, life changing words, words that bring healing.

You know, all part of this first glory is this glory of handling the most awesome power and that’s the word of God. As Paul told Timothy to guard this treasure entrusted to us, 2 Timothy 1:14. [28:00] I think
in this great glory in bringing good news is this glory that comes with that bringing the good news and that is just the experience of God’s presence. That helps explain why Paul, with all of the trials and travails he went through and despair could write of the glory of being involved in ministry, 2 Corinthians 3:7-8.

It’s interesting that in Paul’s letters, in the letters that he was hurt the most is where he [28:30] also talks about the glories of ministry the most. I always like this quite, Doctor Martin Lloyd Jones, who left a promising medical career to enter into ministry, and people would admire his self-denial but he would respond, ‘I gave up nothing. I received everything. I count it the highest privilege and honor that God can confer on any person to call that one to be a herald of the gospel.

[29:00] So there’s great glory in bringing good news. Here’s the second one, there’s great glory in doing what God calls good because God calls the work of ministry good, 1 Timothy 5:17. It is a good [phonetic] call-us, a good work worthy of double honor. Thirdly, this is going to sound a little strange but maybe not, [29:30] there’s a glory in the hiddenness, in the silence. You know, a lot of the ministry that you will be involved in in people’s lives, people will not see.

What won’t they see?

Audience: [29:46] Prayer.

[29:46] They certainly won’t see prayer, yeah. What else won’t they see?

Audience: [29:55] [inaudible][29:55]

[29:56] Yes, they won’t see a lot of times the hours of labor and hard work to just [30:00] try to get the word right. They may not see us deeply investing our lives in a counseling office. I remember once when God really showed me this in a powerful way. I was in Manilla, my first overseas experience. I was teaching in a seminary and one night they brought in a bunch of missionaries from different parts of the Philippines for this conference and they asked me if I’d come and be a [30:30] part of it.

And I was sitting there and I was watching these guys. Some of them were seminary grads, others weren’t, but here they were, a collection of them and they each got up because they were asked to share a brief report. And it-it was a report that went something like this, ‘Well, you know, ministry is pretty tough. There’s some insurgents that killed a couple pastors last week but, you know, we’re seeking to really try to reach them with the gospel and,’ I mean they just story after story I was just sitting [31:00] spellbound at was just common every day stuff.

And it suddenly struck me. As I was listening to these guys I thought, you know, nobody back home, well, I shouldn’t say nobody, but very, very few in the church know anything about these guys. They won’t be in Time magazine. They won’t be in the newspaper. You know, they’re just kind of the hidden saints out there in the trenches doing the work.

[31:30] And then I realized that’s true of us. Most all of us are just in the trenches, doing our labor with very little fanfare, little recognition, little notice and you know, at times, you’ll realize, you know, there’s a certain glory in that, right? And just a glory in the hiddenness of it all, that you know, it doesn’t really matter. Every now and then you’ll just be reminded that before you speak that what really matters is [32:00] as you look out there, the only audience you care about is Jesus. It’s not that you don’t care about the people, but what you really care about is Him and His words well done. And there’s glory in that.
They won't see you at times wrestling maybe in the night over the accuracy of one word in a text that could turn everything around and you just realize how a lot of ministry takes place [32:30] in obscurity. And it's work that needs to be left in the obscurity for to reveal it would be to rob us of maybe the glory has for us in eternity. Now that's important theology. Sometimes when you get discouraged, you just need to hang on to that and realize that's true. Sometimes you're going to feel like does anyone really notice and [33:00] it really in a lot of ways doesn't matter I mean what matters is that God notices and he does. So there's a glory in the hiddenness, in the silence of it all.

I was coming back from this memorial service Saturday, drove up there, got up really early in the morning, drove up just in time to be part of the memorial service, get in the car and drive back. By the time I got back, it was time for [33:30] the service and the whole way back I was wrestling, as I had most of the week, with this text. I couldn't figure out really what God was saying through it and I was just agonizing. You know, have you ever had those moments? You just can't quite see what God is saying but you know he's saying something? And you agonize and you agonize and you work like crazy.

In fact, I had my wife drive back and I just sat in the backseat with my laptop and just pondered and [34:00] thought and worked like a desperate man because I was, absolutely desperate. Most people don't see that part but that's part of it. And there's a certain glory in that. There's glory number four, in watching over souls. There are few things in life that have such ultimate responsibility as ministry. Isn't that true?

[34:30] I don't know of hardly a more ultimate task than that, than to have the task of watching over souls, of which we'll be accountable for in judgement, which scares me to death. Do you ever think about this? In ministry, we will be involved with people in their most profound moments of life. Generally in ministry, we will be involved with people in their darkest moment and in their brightest moment.

[35:00] In fact, do you ever think about this? In the darkest moment, you'll have the front row seat and in the brightest moment, you'll have the front row seat. So, I go to memorial service and hardly anyone is closer to all the center of what's happening in that than me. It just comes with the task and so what a grieving wife is going through, I'm probably more acquainted than just about [35:30] everybody else because I have a front row seat in that. That's the place God has me. Not that in a way we want to be in that place sometimes, but you're there none the less.

And then I come home and last night I'm doing premarital counseling with a couple who are on the other side of all of that spectrum, excited, full of hope, and guess where I'm going to be in all of that? I'll have the front row seat.

[36:00] I always tell people one of the things I love about weddings is I get the best seat in the house. I get to stand there when the groom turns and looks down the aisle to the bride and I'm right there and I'm watching sort of what's going on in his eyes and her eyes and they just meet and they're oblivious to anybody else at that moment and I get to see it right up front, you know? A dedication of a child, you know, I get the front row seat for that.

[36:30] The great moments of life, a baby is born in a hospital and you stop by in that early moment. That's the glory in watching over souls. There's a tremendous trust that's been given to us and we will also be in this front row seat to view the spiritual contest for the soul in ways that other people won't see. There's a certain glory in that but [37:00] we are in that front row seat a lot of times working with somebody going through deep depression, or a battle with a sin, an addiction and you're right there in the midst of the battle and you're right there in the midst of it all.
London wrote these words, 'I love the privilege of living at the frontlines of life where grace works and where the peace treaties of reconciliation are cosigned by God and broken people. [37:30] As flawed and frail as I know myself to be, I’m privileged to represent Christ at the main events of people’s lives.' Pretty cool, huh? As flawed as we are, we get this assignment from God. We will be invited into the intimate part of people’s lives, what they’ll share with us that they’d share with no one else. We’re standing there baptizing someone. What a moment?

[38:00] And we will have the privilege of being the life raft when the ship’s gone down and in a lot of those, there is a bond that’s forged unlike any other one. Number five, there’s also glory in the great challenge. There’s great glory in the great challenge and I say that because at times, no other work, I think, will test your stamina, or your will, or your emotions, [38:30] or your intellect, or your creativity, your patience, your tact, your authenticity, your perseverance. Can you think of anything that would test those things like ministry more? I don’t know what else tests those things like ministry.

And you know what? That’s really a good thing, isn’t it? What do you think? [39:00] What’s a great glory about that?

Audience: [39:04] When perseverance develops, then Christ likeness right then.

[39:09] Yes, well it’s not only what it develops in us, that’s true. What else do you think is the great glory behind that? Nothing else will test our intellect, our creativity, our will, our emotions. What’s the glory in that?

Audience: [39:29] [inaudible][39:29]

[39:30] Yes, our need of dependency, experiencing Christ maybe at levels we never would. That’s certainly part of it too. Here’s what I’m thinking, the glory in it is that I meet so many people in life that aren’t challenged, that are doing a work that is no challenge to them. There’s a certain irony to it. There are times we’ll go, ‘I don’t want this test,’ but yet in you think about what’s the, what’s the alternative?

[40:00] It’s a life that’s not tested. Number six, there’s glory in entering the same profession Jesus chose, to shepherd souls. So, we enter into a fellowship of his sufferings. There’s a certain glory in all of that. And then I think number seven, there will be certainly hopefully glory, great glory [40:30] in judgment because there’s the promise of reward. It’s what encouraged Paul to press on, 2 Timothy 4:8.

A guy by the name of Jowett, J-O-W-E-T-T, he summarized it this way, 'If we lose the sense of wonder of our commission, we shall become like common traders in a common market babbling about [41:00] common wares. If we lose the sense of wonder of our commission, we shall become like common traders in a common market babbling about common wares.' You know, no wonder Paul said, ‘I thank Jesus Christ, my Lord, who has strengthened because he considered me faithful putting me into service,’ 1 Timothy 1:12.

Good, okay, questions before we take a break, [41:30] thoughts? No? Still want to keep doing it? I hope so. Okay, let’s take a 10 minute break. We’ll come back at 4:20.
Chapter 17

Okay, what I’m going to do here is wrap up with a few thoughts in this course and then maybe we’ll have some time to just talk about ministry, theologically. Things maybe we have left out or need clarification. What I’ve tried to say especially in this class is: That when it comes to doing ministry we think critically, carefully and we always think theologically about ministry. Again what I, I want to start off by saying and I want to end saying that the theology ministry are like two people walking. They must walk arm in arm down the same road.

What that means is then that our methodology is constantly under the light, the discerning penetrating lamp of theology. And conversely, that the theology is constantly asking itself, “Okay, so what will this look like flashed out in ministry?” If we can’t answer that question, then what’s the point of that theology. Theology eventually has to find its way out into ministry and ministry must find its way always back to theology. They should never be separated.

Part of what we did is we went back to… intentionally, we went back to some early pastors. Why don’t we go back to them again? As our working examples. Yes?

Male Speaker 2: Most of the theologians are ministers.

Yes, they were ministers and they were theologians. So we went back to them because it never entered into their minds to separate the two but eventually, as I’ve mentioned I think in one of the early lectures, the two were separated into academic theology and practical theology. Something that happened somewhere in Europe around the Enlightenment and the draw… the lines were drawn between the academic institution and ministry. What happened in Europe was imported to America and into the curriculum of Divinity Schools and seminaries but I think that’s changing. I think there’s a new breed and I like to think that you are part of that breed. I hope anyway of pastoral theologians, ministerial theologians who refused to draw the lines between theory and practice, who in doing ministry constantly reflect on Word, reflect on theology, reflect on Church History so that whether we’re preaching, or counseling or leading, we’re filtering it all through theology.

Now as I’ve mentioned, we went back to some of these earlier guys because they didn’t draw those lines and we went to several… and I want to go back just for a moment to review one of them and that was Gregory of Nazianzus. Remember him? He was one of those chapters in Pegasus book and I was reading about his life from another theologian. He gave me another slam on his ministry. I’m using him again as, as we kind of wrap up just to say, “Okay.” Because Gregory thought about ministry theologically, it defined therefore his ministry and described it in these three ways. Because of what Gregory understood Scripture to teach, he went out in ministry. First of all, defining ministry as leadership. That is, ministry is a form of rule that is, ... were, taking on the leadership of souls which is using again a work example instead of drawing the lines, you bring the two together. He saw the minister as one that is called to bring order into the community. His theology drove his practice and so his practice was: this is my role. I need to bring order into the community. A community that is disordered because of sin. A community that is messed up because of pride and self-centeredness and individualism. Because it is, right?

You get upfront and you, you speak to the congregation and you want it to see themselves as the Body of Christ but a lot of them look at you with a blank face cause they, especially in our culture, are so
steep in individualism that they don’t see themselves as a community; as a Body of Christ. So, Gregory, thinking through his theology, says “Who am I?” What is this task, this role of ministry? Well he said, well first of all, it’s leadership and what it is: It’s bringing order into this disorder. As he put it in another way is, my task is to domesticate this ‘wild beast’ and bring it back to some conformity; to be the image of God; to be the Body of Christ. So that defined his ministry. Defined his ministry because his theology drove him to that.

[06:34] Here was a second, he saw ministry as largely about therapy. He studied, he looked at theology and he said. “What is ministry? What is a minister?” And then he centered... he circled it around first of all, leader; secondly,... and that was all about bringing order and then second key word that defined his ministry was therapy: To bring healing. He looked at his theology, he looked at the nature of ministry and he realized his fundamental task is to be a ‘physician’ of the soul, doing interior operational work. Largely, dealing with two primary issues: People centrality out of control and alienation from God. And he saw this as a skill that must be carefully, carefully developed more so than an ordinary doctor because a ‘physician’ of the soul is dealing with the care of something that is immortal, eternal versus the body that is not. So he saw in his ministry this high calling of being a therapist, if you will, to bring healing to the soul and he was profoundly moved by the high task of that because of the immortality.

The third piece that defined his ministry and defined him was a mediator: To bring reconciliation. That is, he saw in this task that he was called to; that he stands between the dazzling brilliance of the heavenly realm and the darkness of the earth. And his first ministry in this realm, in this role is to bring Word, proclamation, to speak about God. Now I’m just giving this again as just an example of what we’ve tried to do in this course and to say, “Okay what is this task of ministry? I think through my theology, I come up with an understanding of what my identity is, what my task is.” So this is what Gregory did. He looked at his whole theology and ministry and said, “Well, here’s what my task is. I’m here to bring order. I’m here to bring healing. I’m here to bring reconciliation.” So everything defined him that way. Defined his ministry that way. Just as I think I gave you early on in my own experience of wrestling through this question that came up with, in the pastoral anyway, pastors, prophet, priest, sage, king and that has really given me a theology of ministry that flows out of theology of identity.

I think more and more... hopefully more and more of us are going come to the place of owning a theology in ministry that defines our practice but we still have ways to go because our tendency is to still let the practical dominate ministry. It’s going to be a pull. Ray Anderson from Fuller put it this way. Most theology as well as the tools of critical biblical study are thrown out when the student returns to take up their post on the front lines of ministry. They’re under pressure to be successful leaders of their organizational church. They are easily attracted to pragmatic strategies for church growth, conflict management, pastoral counsel and he’s right. It’ll be easy to be attracted to just what works and become pragmatic in orientation because our culture values that which is pragmatic.

In this class, I hope anyway we got a little bit more understanding of the importance of theology, its place in defining ministry that what we do methodologically, just need always through that filter. We looked a little bit at Carson’s book as just one working example of someone trying to look at a ministry that maybe sometimes doesn’t take the care it needs to, to think theologically whether you agree with Carson or not, at least he gives us a picture of what it means to do theology and evaluate ministry in light... in light of theology which I think he especially does in the last chapter. I got to thinking about this,
just interesting thought throughout all these as I close here. You know, I think about the Emerging Church, the traditional church today and I was reading something by Ray Anderson that made me think about and say and thought about... in a certain sense, there has always been a sort of, a feud between these two kinds of groups. Let me tell you what I mean. This is how he puts it: “There is always tension between ecclesial theology and mission theology. There's always been a tension between ecclesial theology and mission theology.” What do you think he means by that?

Male Speaker 3: [12:15] How we do church when we’re in the church and then the other is that how does a church reach out to those who are not yet have that.


Male Speaker 3: [12:22] There is always that aspect that, hey we’re believers, we’re here. How do we relate with God within that community? The other one is how do we go out and reach out to those who are not yet in that community.

[12:32] Yes. What I think Anderson is saying, I don’t think he would draw that tension quite that way. Let me explain a little bit how he puts it. Let’s see if this makes sense. He says, “There is always been a tension between the ecclesial and mission theology”. Then he says, “Think of it another way. There’s always been a tension between Jerusalem and Pentecost.” I got to think about this a little bit. “There’s always been a tension between Jerusalem and Pentecost.” Between say, Peter and James who Paul has to rebuked who more of a traditionalist (Acts 15, Galatians 2:12) and Paul, the more missional, driven more by Pentecost (Acts 2). Here we got to think about it a little bit. Do you see what he’s saying? That there’s always been this sort of one intention. Paul’s out there. It seems like James [13:32] and Peter are more in there and sometimes I think I’ve... the traditional over here, the emergent over here and what’s happening: What is it about that tension? Could it be that every now and then, God raises an emergent movement, let’s say, to kind of help correct the course of the ecclesial or the traditional that starts to become a little bit too in-grown, that starts to let [14:02] institutions and things get it off from mission.

And the reality is, both need each other. It’s not either or. Ecclesial and missional really should always work together in a certain sense. So let me develop a little bit more and then tell me what you think. All ministry is practiced in some context of tradition. Another words, all ministry should have anyway, some continuity with the past. I mean somebody said, “We’re starting whole new ministry, unlike anything that’s ever been done.” It has no relationship with anything except starting today. You play god. I don’t think I want to be part of that. So all ministry [15:02] has lines that go back that has some continuity with the past but the danger of tradition is that the tradition can become closed and turn in on itself, like that phrase, cause I think that’s true. Tradition can begin to close. It can begin to turn in on itself.

The emergent churches of today will be the traditional churches of tomorrow, some anyway. And by turning in [15:32] on itself, comes to a place where it says, “We don’t need to change anything.” And in fact look at change with suspicion. Now, on the other side, is this missional theology that if it’s not careful can lose its center by being so reactive to the traditional that it finds itself too far over here, away from the center where it needs to get to. Anderson [16:02] sort of puts it this way: “What’s needed are churches driven by a mission theology, guided by a foundation of systematic and historical theology. Churches ministries driven by a mission theology guided by a foundation of systematic and historical theology such that [16:32] the church will not be held captive to the structures of its own creation because if its
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paying attention to theology, it will continue to revision like old wineskins that never really become old, they just keep giving way to new and creative forms of ministry.”

So you see, that’s what happens with institutionalism. It’s you create the necessary structures, but then you become held captive to those structures. Instead of always freshly reading theology, always seeing what God is doing, how the Spirit of God is moving, so that ministry continues to revision, and wineskins never in a certain sense have a chance to harden because they almost always are becoming new which is necessary to hold this fermenting Jesus inside who will not stay inside of old wineskins.

How does theology and ministry help us? We look at say, this Emergent movement today. We look at traditional church. What does their theology tell us? Who’s right? Well, my theology says they are both right. Their both necessary; they both need each other; need to pay attention to each other and find both maybe at the center point here where ecclesial and missional theology work really together in a strong way. Does that make sense?

Male Speaker 4: Okay, you’re saying that you know, the traditional church, emergent church then there are also kind of like the ‘seeker’ church that doesn’t really fit either category.

Yes, I mean I just put a... I put ‘seeker’ probably as another category like Emergent Church that’s reacting to that inner sense, sometimes it can be movement from God to wake up, you know, “Hey, don’t forget we’re here to reach lost people but don’t forget we’re here to be incarnational, to get out of the walls” But rather than alienate one another to see that these become the necessary correctives but they can only go so far. Some of these correctives can sometimes get off course themselves by not paying attention to the theology that the traditional church also stop paying attention to cause if it was paying attention to theology, it would not have lead the structures begin to define itself. So when I look at traditional churches, institutionalize churches, they also lost their theology cause my argument is that theology keeps us back centered, always changing, always growing, always balanced.

I love a lot of what I see some of my Emergent brothers doing in ministry and I’m also a bit fearful of some of the theology that they may not be paying attention to, that could take them off course but then I’m also mindful of the theology that the traditional churches missing too, to gets it off-course. [21:53]

What else? Free fall or anything that you want to talk about ministry, theology of ministry. Anything we’ve not really addressed that you feel we should? Yes.

Male Speaker 5: I think any ministry just has its pros and cons. You will eventually find within it and the different movements that we see are sort of one group just reacting with the other because they don’t like the things their cons and so they will try to form their own remedy to that which ends up having it’s own cause of agenda, you know. Spotting enough screw pin. It seems to me that a lot of it is reciprocal to its own history. That you end up with a lot of people making the same sorts of new break-aways, new break-aways and I’m just wondering if there’s really anyway to try to create a church or movement that will ... that can really appeal to across the border that will successful instead of having this sort of new break away.

I don’t know how to answer that to well. I mean maybe in a certain sense, you can’t. We all face reality so when we get older, we may not as we want to make a meat generations, meet the needs of the rich or which maybe next generations but I also go back to this that I find at the end of the day, still nonetheless, what everybody, no matter what regeneration or time period wants ultimately whether they realized it or not, a sound theology that flows out of solid ministry.
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I mean at the end of the day, what I’ve find people hunger for no matter who they are, is that they just want to know that God has spoke and they’ve heard His Voice and their lives are radically changed and different because of that and I think whatever we do, if we can be that voice, we’ll always have ministry.

Male Speaker 5: [21:56] God make ministry where there is context of border in existing position where with those things come new situation and they are maybe discrepancy and you’ve lost the ministry in the churches and you talk about some of the rule. Is there a rule in forming and growing in churches last few ministry or is it a matter of finding the best fit or…? [crosstalk]

[22:21] Or for yourself before you enter in?

Male Speaker 5: [22:23] Yes, seeing that there is a dual process of understanding you philosophy and understanding that the churches also are informing and growing in churches, so it’s more theologically true.

[22:36] Yes. Right. I think a lot of that… that’s have to be discerned right at the beginning by the kind of questions that you’ve asked that says, How willing are you to grow and change? And not just ask that simple question but have some things behind that you specifically you want to know and if they flinch or if they are unwilling then that probably is a signal from God, maybe that’s not the road to go because you might get very frustrated but if you find the people that say you know, we have gotten a little bit ingrown. We’ve started to [23:06] let these structures eclipse truth and we need someone to help us through the wilderness. We’re not saying that it’s going to be easy but we’re willing to come to Scripture together and we need someone help guide us there. Would you be willing? That might be God saying, go for it.

I think the mistake today is of us to too quickly dismiss maybe a traditional church over here, a traditional ministry that needs a fresh voice [23:36] and there’s also a great place for going fresh and starting something new. It’s not that one is better than the other. Both are necessary but what I would say from my personal experience is anyone who goes this traditional side over here, better ask some real hard questions at the beginning to make sure that you don’t get into as situation where you find yourself five years later so frustrated and beating your head against the wall and you’re not going anywhere and they are only getting more alienated towards you. [24:06] But a lot of it could be just also you know how the Spirit of God leads. Not everybody in Scripture goes to ministries they wanted to go to. You know, Jonah will probably say something about that. So God may call some of us to Nineveh. That’s where again our theology of ministry will inform in ways like that. And some of us may need to… It maybe necessary for us to go through Nineveh before we get to Shangri-La, [24:36] if there is such a place on earth. So yeah.

Male Speaker 6: [24:43] How early would you say is too early to change something if you’re new to ministry?

[24:49] A lot of that is just going to be gaged people how ready they are. If they are like from there from day one and say, “Help, please. Let’s go. We want to get through the wilderness but on the other hand and if you find the place that’s pretty entrenched and not ready to make much change, it would be really foolish to change too much. But almost either way I think in any ministry, we need to… and this is part of our humility, I think is to come in and say “You know, I have a lot to learn from you” [25:19] too.” I want to learn this first year. I want to just listen. And then probably you will make a lot better choices. The thing… I think we need to guard from… because sometimes I see a little bit in some of my emergent brothers is, and I’m not saying that it’s just them, I mean there’s… it’s true across the board but there can be an arrogance that sometimes says “We’ve come now with the answers that you’ve all been waiting for. We are the corrective voice.” [25:49] We are the…” And in a certain sense, that says everything up to now
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has been bad. Modernity wasn’t necessarily bad, I mean there are a lot of good things about modernity. We just need to be careful that we don’t come across as arrogant while I’m a sinner but I’m glad I got the answer or I’ve got the theology so you know, for ministry. Let me know… okay you guys, sit-down please. [26:19] We need to come as humble servants no matter what ministry we do cause that’s our theology of ministry. That’s a big part of our theology in ministry. So.

Male Speaker 6: [26:31] I see new pastors coming in functionally and act as if nothing had ever gone wrong before them. They basically trashed everything and the staff what is not going good with the last pastor. All the things that they build and invest and you hear them out and it’s gone and disregarded. It’s crushing. I’ve seen that really hurt…

[26:54] Yes, and it’s the arrogance of youth and the reality all of us either out there or were there, I mean it’s almost a passage we all go through. I looked at some of the more deep constructionist types out there, ready to change everything and I kind of go, boy, you know, you’re rather arrogant and then I go Jeez, I remember when I was 22, I was in San Diego State University where we were throwing chairs through the windows of the administration buildings because [27:24] you know, everything was bad, everything that was corporate was bad, you know, during that great Vietnam era when… so it worked enough rebellion in me that now I still have ac certain amount of it to this day.

I hope there is a certain rebellious streak in all of us that kind of stays there. There is a certain part of our rebellious streak that we need to just give to God and repent of but there is a certain rebelliousness that in effect comes in, all reasons says, [27:54] “I’m not sure if this is the way we should be doing this”. There is a certain rebellious streak in us I think we need to have that when some people traditionalist or others who are holding onto things they shouldn’t hold onto that you’re just rebellious enough to say, “Okay, I’m going to change this, you know.” Cause it needs to change.

I don’t think Scripture in terms theology in ministry has caused any of us to be conformists. I mean we’re called to change the world, [28:24] turn the world upside down and that takes a certain amount of rebellion but rebellion to… not against God but against the things that are not of God. Anything else that you want to ask about?

Male Speaker 7: [28:40] May I ask one thing?


Male Speaker 7: [28:42] Okay, so we talked a lot about pastoral theology in here and so we go to Scripture and find out what pastors is, what pastors should be…

[28:52] And I try to use more the broader term of minister here, realizing not all of us here are going to be pastors. Yes.

Male Speaker 7: [28:58] Yes, you go to Scriptures and find out what pastor is. I know a list of you know, apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, teachers all the term shepherd yo know, on different passages and most things but Ephesians 4 really specifically stands out to me. I kind of see those and I just… really makes me wonder… well, can you just give me your view on today’s church and the function of [29:28] apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher in relationship to the local church today cause God provided each of those people but basically your view on those roles in the church of today.

[29:44] Yes. See and that’s a really good theological question I think today. I’m not sure if I have any real defined answer. I mean I grew up more in the tradition that said “Okay, there were these rules for these seasons and so they are gone now, okay. They are like the foundation stones.” I think going back over to
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Ephesians 2, Ephesians 1 and they serve their purpose and they were foundational to the church and there’s part of me that still believes that that the role of the prophet, the role of the apostle [30:14] had their particular place for this particular period and yet I also find myself more and more realizing that there’s something of this apostolic church we need to be in. There’s something of this prophetic function that we still need to hang onto. In fact we need to sort of draw it back out of the cupboard where it’s disappeared. I’m finding more and more for example that I think a pastor need to more and more to grab hold of being a prophet. [30:44] [crosstalk] Yes, well, I think they were assigned roles in a certain sense historically. I think the nature of that ministry goes on. I’m not saying well, that the day of the prophets is over. I think there’s still the prophetic task. In fact… then I go to Acts 2 where it seems like when the Spirit came at Pentecost, He in effect called the whole community of Christ to be a prophetic community which I think is the point of Joel chapter 2. [31:14] We all are now the prophets.

So, if you try and take Ephesians 4, lined it up with Acts 2, it’s going to sound like I’m weaseling a little bit but I just find… there’s a lot of things that have a certain mystery to them. They are not just clear cut and dry issues. So I see so to speak those function’s still alive somehow in the church [31:44] except… [crosstalk] yeah. A person who is the prophet who has the gift of… [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [31:42] Also a local congregation or…

[31:45] That’s probably where I’m not quite there. I’m not sure I see that exactly. I see the function more than a person as that defined role. [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:56] Do you remember the conversation you had down in … [crosstalk]

[32:02] Oh yeah, with… for us… [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:04] At the end of the day, you sort of really going down that they had role of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher. You talked about that. You remember that?

[32:15] I do but I can’t’ … [crosstalk]

Male Speaker 7: [32:16] That’s what I was talking about.

[32:17] Yes. It’s been awhile since I’ve read that. Well, I’m not sure if I can really come in on that. Obviously I don’t have as clear thought on that as I should. I think a lot of literature we’re reading today about the church seems to be resurrecting those roles and raising the question: What is their place today? Is there a place of them? And if so, what would they look like? I think the best answer I can give is sort to speak and say that’s exactly what a class like this is about. Thinking [32:47] through questions like that and try to think them through theologically. That one there I don’t think it’s going to be an easy answer. What do you guys think?

Male Speaker 7: [33:00] Definitely we are moving in that direction. The reason that I came to the question was I… well, first of all started looking at what we want pastor to be and I start moving to Ephesians 4 and started to think that through and been thinking basically the assumptions is that the church maybe a pastor and but I haven’t really seen paid elders either and begin to discover. Wow this seems like my understanding has been backwards too [33:30] and okay so, there seems to be more leadership roles in a church than a pastor. There is just one place in Scripture where the word ‘pastor’ is mentioned and yet there’s so much emphasis on that instead of this list of other people and I always thought pastor was supposed to be all five of these people and then I felt like we are all that kind of evangelistic that we kind of work harder that discipline or even frankly, pastoral [34:00] the shepherding has been more of a discipline than working attribute but the role of an apostle and that of a teacher ones that are more of
who I am. So I started looking at it and began to see other things. There is five different people who are
groups of people working together and teaching, instructing and working in kind of side by side to equip
the church. Picture someone like Troy being trained by all these different people within you know,
the church and equipped for the ministry from all those different perspectives being sent out rather than
each trying to throw about you know somebody else… [crosstalk]

[34:46] Or you might come to a place like this sort of like I did with the Old Testament offices is to say that
a dimension of all of those needs is defined as pastor. My gifting will determine which is predominant.
While I don’t need to be all of those things in one sense to everybody. I may no have the luxury to be one
of those. It’s just by the nature of my calling. There needs to be an evangelistic side to [35:16] my ministry
though I’m not gifted that way and I don’t seem that it’s a strong suit. Nonetheless, I don’t get a pass from
that. I have a prophetic side to my ministry. I have a shepherding side to my ministry.

Male Speaker 7: [35:28] That aspect of all of the qualities of Christ was commanded to each of those
areas… [crosstalk]

[35:35] In a sense but then you go back and realize that God didn’t put those in. He does call and I’ll go
back again and use that as a passage that there is a calling on some nonetheless that is different. That their
task in those functions is to equip saints to the ministry. [crosstalk] In that passage but I go to other
passages that would bring in other words like authority. Those who will give account for those we’ve
[36:05] shepherded, we’ve taught.

Male Speaker 7: [36:08] I’m just trying to match elders with prophets, apostles, evangelist, pastors and
teachers and how they work together seen in Acts 15 said that the apostles and the elders come together
to make a decision between the two… [crosstalk]

[36:22] Well, you can see because there is so many different voices that approach those all differently. I
don’t know if anyone is going to say that here’s the definite answer. You all must come and say as I’ve
worked out my theology, this is kind of where I’ve land but it’s a really good question. Probably worthy
of a really good paper at some point but it’s not been done. Well, thanks everybody. We’ll see you next
week.