

A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

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An Introduction.

Throughout my life, I have been blessed to have been surrounded and influenced by numerous men and women of faith. My father, father-in-law, and my grandfathers exhibited to me that a man truly only knows himself in humility at the foot of the cross. My wife, Casey, my mother, my sister, and two incredible co-workers in ministry—Becca and Kate—have depicted for me how one’s strength of faith influences the “everyday,” and how Christ bolsters us when others do not recognize what value we might bring to bear in their lives. My seminary professors—especially Dr. Robert Smith, Jr., and Dr. Paul House—displayed to me how love for the Scriptures and dependent prayer must precede all ministry endeavors, and one’s intellect need not be at odds with one’s faith. My spiritual mentors, Chuck, Jeff, and Wes, each showed me that ministry is unequivocally difficult but ultimately rewarding, and that nothing can sustain us like the love of Christ. Friends in ministry, Aaron, Drew, and Jerad, have demonstrated to me the truth that “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecc. 4:12) and that the Christian life, much less a life serving in ministry, requires a strong biblical community. And, of course, the college-aged brothers and sisters I have had the privilege to serve have all shown me that courage does indeed exist, and that faith in Jesus can and does sustain, even in the most difficult of cultural arenas. I share all of this to state that what follows is an exercise to communicate the foundational philosophies I hold regarding Christian ministry. What I have compiled is a distillation of experiences, education, mistakes, and, of course, relationships.

The Church Exists to Glorify God.

- Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. (Psalm 29:2)
- Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! (Psalm 95:6)
- Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy! (Psalm 99:9)
- Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

The Church gathers to glorify and worship God. It is responsible for promoting reverence among all believers for the person of God in Jesus Christ and the salvific activity of God on behalf of all men (evangelism).

The Church Exists to Proclaim and Receive the Word of God.

- And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)
- For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:15-17)

- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

A significant aspect of what defines the Church is the clear proclamation of God's Word (the Scriptures, its lessons, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ). The Church comprises those who teach the Word and receive it. Both teacher and hearer need to receive the Word over and over again for the purpose of sanctification, holy instruction, and holy living. The Word cannot be shared outside the Church unless it is faithfully taught and received within.

The Church is the Royal Priesthood of God and a Witness to All Surrounding Peoples.

- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
(1 Peter 2:9-10)
- Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." (Exodus 19:5-6)

The Scriptures clearly show that God has consistently worked through a people explicitly chosen for his purposes. Whether it be particular prophets, priests, or people groups, God has moved for the good of his creation through "set-apart" people. His people are continually meant to live intentionally different, holier lives to be a witness to those who have not come to know God through Jesus Christ—the ultimate incarnation of love, kindness, grace, and mercy. The Church's lifestyle is one of its most excellent ministerial tools. To live a life that is set apart without implying that others are less important or less worthy is genuinely one of the Church's most significant and necessary callings. Christ is preached most effectively by sharing life with others intentionally, using every opportunity to exhibit faith and a life transformed.

The Church Exists as the Body of Christ—a Functioning Family of Believers United in Christ Himself.

- For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12:3-5)
- Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13)
- For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. (1 Corinthians

12:12-18)

- If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

A significant aspect of the Church's function is to be the body of Christ on earth. Christ, having ascended to the right hand of the Father, is no longer visible to those who seek him today. As such, the Church is his physical representation on the earth, and the Scriptures describe the Church as the Body of Christ for good reason. As a functioning Body, like that described in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, the Church is a family of believers who all function differently to make the whole complete. God has gifted everyone differently, and each member of Christ's Body's gifts are particular and necessary. The Church is a choir of gifted individuals "singing" harmoniously the praises of God—through word and deed, service to one another and those outside the faith, and witnessing to the goodness of God as a family supporting and building one another up amid trials and seasons of blessing.

Cultural Context and Implications:

The Church is the product of and a producer of relationships. It is defined by its relationship with the one true God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and set to task in building up those that surround them in the world. The cultural context of any Christian body is, and should be, a significant factor in developing its sense of ministry. Every culture is different, and the needs of its community vary as well. The Church is integral to whatever community or cultural context it exists in. The Body of Christ is meant to relate to those around them and meet the pressing needs to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this sense, a local church body's ministry will be necessarily influenced by its local cultural context. It must, however, be governed by the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How that is explicitly enacted within a given cultural context will vary from location to location (geographically) based on the community's needs. The Church must be culturally aware and seek to see Christ proclaimed authentically amid its context (cf. Acts 17).

Personal Giftedness:

I desire to see those around me enjoy life and feel at peace with their circumstances, and faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to experience actual, lasting peace. I long to point others to Jesus. I believe I am gifted in leading others—especially in helping them recognize how following Jesus influences everyday life. Scripture speaks of the believer's transformation once they have come to faith in Jesus. While Jesus and the Holy Spirit accomplish that transformation, each follower of Christ is responsible for pursuing Christ daily. I find great joy in walking beside others and discipling them along this journey.

I am gifted in preaching, teaching, administration, and shepherding. I find great joy in helping others grasp biblical topics or clarifying ideas that might be confusing and working to help them apply the

truths of Scripture in their walks of faith. I count it a privilege to hear others' problems and work with them to find constructive solutions. I find great satisfaction when I can aid others with whatever difficulty they face—educationally, spiritually, or emotionally.

Core Values of Leadership:

- ***Personal Spiritual Formation-*** A leader must see to his own heart as well as those he leads. Personal devotion to God is necessary—exemplified in time spent reading the Word of God, praying, and serving others. The best way to lead is by example; personal spiritual devotion is essential for every Christian. Thus, a Christian leader must set an example for personal spiritual formation.
- ***A Disciple-*** Christian leaders must be willing to submit to the teaching of another more mature in the faith. They must allow themselves to be held accountable for living a life that is pleasing to God and must be challenged in their faith by one who has “gone before.” A willingness to be led and “teachable-ness” are necessary traits in one who leads. They are signs of humility and an acceptance of grace.
- ***A “Discipler”-*** Christian leaders are to take the Great Commission seriously (Matthew 28:16-20), giving of themselves to raise up strong, faithful believers in Jesus Christ. Christians' responsibility is to help nurture other Christians' faith through accountability, teaching, and example. As a leader, the example of investing in other believers' lives must be shown as a priority for all those who follow.
- ***Servant Leader-*** Throughout Scripture, those set apart to lead others toward faithfulness are named servants of the Lord, or servants of Christ (see Acts 3:26; Colossians 4:12, for example). This title is appropriate as leaders should be the first to serve others. As in every area of leadership, sacrifice is necessary, but it is essential to sacrifice oneself for others as a servant to exhort them to stronger faith. Leaders should set the standard for such sacrificial behavior and serve those they lead with utter humility and strength of character.
- ***Have a Loving Heart / Open Door-*** Leadership is best expressed through time given to others. Often leaders need great patience and love for those they lead to see life-change or progress occur. Christian leaders are not to measure their success by lives changed but by hearts faithfully ministered to with unconditional love and patience. A leader needs to exemplify what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13—that love is patient, kind, not rude or arrogant, and continually seeks to rejoice with others in the truth of the Gospel. Loving others begins with availability and an open door and heart. People need to know they are worthy of attention and can recognize their importance in God's eyes reflected in their leader's own.
- ***Hold Fast to the Scriptures-*** The Word of God is fundamental for Christian leadership. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and what it shares is utterly indispensable for any person seeking to lead others faithfully. Any Christian leader must hold fast to the Scriptures allowing

them to shape him in principle and action through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God's Word is applicable, living, and active in today's world, and, as such, needs to be heeded as foundational for any form of ministry. It is the standard by which behavior, ideas, integrity, and actions are measured. To hold the Scriptures up as essential and foundational is to seek God's best. He speaks through his Scriptures; therefore, leaders must be in the Word, of the Word, and seek to share the Word with those they lead and influence.