



Philosophy of Ministry

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Jesus exercised a threefold ministry—*teaching* (education), *preaching* (evangelization), and *healing* (benevolence)—to help accomplish his goal of seeking and saving what was lost (see Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1-6). While Jesus walked on the earth he selected, instructed and empowered his Apostles to carry out similar ministries under his supervision (Matt. 10:1ff). After his resurrection he commissioned all disciples to continue his ministry (Matt. 28:16-20). In the Book of Acts we see the continuation of Christ's threefold ministry through the Apostles and early church empowered by the Holy Spirit. God gifted the church then, and I believe that he continues to do so today because we are not involved in a human venture but a Divine one. God will give us what we need to accomplish his will. In fact, Christ gives each member of his body certain gifts and functions so that "together" we continue his ministry on earth (1 Cor. 12:1ff; Eph. 4:7-16; Rom. 12:3-8). My philosophy of ministry is to follow Christ's example. Thus, my basic role as a minister is to help each member *discover*, *develop* and *deploy* his or her gifts so that the church grows to maturity and accomplishes God's will (Eph. 4:7-16).

Teaching (or education). First, Christianity is a "taught religion." God's Word provides us with the "healthy doctrines" that we need to produce healthy lives. It will transform and renew our minds so that we can do what is pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1-2). That is, he invites us to love him with all our being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Second, Christianity is also a "storied religion." We must learn more than just biblical facts. We must learn how to live within the *continuing* gospel story. We are part of the human drama but we must live as a counterculture—as *God's people*. Thus, as a minister, I hope to help the church to *know*, *interpret*, and *obey* the story of salvation that "Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Finally, Christianity is an "incarnational religion." God must live through our thoughts and actions. As a minister, I must set the example of a life transformed by grace and mercy—a life of love, peace and quietness. I must show what it means to live a godly life before men by consistently exercising the spiritual disciplines. I must not teach just a body of knowledge, but model an exemplary life in word and deed (1 Tim 4:16). And, I must help the church to *preserve*, *teach*, and *pass* on the deposit of "healthy teaching" to others who will do the same (2 Tim. 2:2).

Preaching (or evangelization). Preaching extends the grace of God to all who will listen. It calls the righteous to greater service, and it calls the wayward to repentance. It reveals the "good news" that God desires everyone to repent and not to perish with the wicked (2 Pet. 3:9). Of course, preaching is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the wisdom of God. Thus, as a minister, "I am not ashamed to preach the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). Yet preaching requires the dual tasks of interpreting the Word, and interpreting the world, in order to bridge the gap from where people live to where God calls them to live. After all, it is the understood Word that impacts lives. Thus, as a minister, I must take sufficient time to prepare lessons that will make sense to people living in our pluralistic, relativistic society. Preaching and teaching also helps the church to define her own story, identity and purpose in the context of worship. Both help us to focus our thoughts on the mighty deeds of God. It reminds us that we are not left to our own devices in this world of trouble, but that we depend on our loving and mighty God. Preaching can unify the people of God into one mind, one soul, and one purpose—to glorify God through Christ. Yet every congregation is unique and must face different challenges. Even so, preaching & teaching the gospel must play a major role in the balance of Christian ministries.

Healing (or benevolence). We live in a broken world. Most people suffer and struggle sometime in their lives in one form or another. Jesus recognized human suffering and he had compassion. He healed broken lives by blessing them with what they needed. Sometimes it involved a miracle, a sign or a wonder; and, sometimes it only involved a word of encouragement, or the sharing of possessions. In any case, the healing was a result of Divine intervention in human affairs. I believe that the church should be a healing community where lives are transformed and renewed. The church should be a "new humanity" reflecting the fruits of the Spirit rather than the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:16ff; Rom. 8:1ff; etc.) because every Christian has been bought with the price of Christ's sacrifice. A true healing ministry will help people put their ravaged lives back together. It may counsel those seeking wisdom. It may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the orphan, widow and those in prison, because we will be judged on how we respond to those in need (Matt. 25:31ff). It may involve divinely answered prayers, but in all cases, it will involve the loving, selfless, sacrificial giving of Christians sharing whatever God has blessed them with—that is a "true miracle," is it not? A true healing ministry flows from grateful hearts of Christians who have already received grace and mercy at the hand of God, and desire to extend their faith, hope and love to others in genuine need. A true healing ministry will bless the giver as well as the receiver.

My philosophy of ministry revolves around this threefold ministry model that Jesus passed on to us. I consider myself a "biblical conservative." I want to stay close to the text, yet make it relevant to our lives today. All ministry should be theologically grounded, prayerfully formulated, and effectively communicated. My vision for the church is to see her mature, and to accomplish Christ's mission of seeking and saving what is lost. I believe that we can, and we must, continue Christ's threefold ministry of teaching God's Word, preaching about the good news of the kingdom of heaven, and healing the broken lives of suffering people. We cannot accomplish this task alone. It will take the power of God working through us to do that. I believe that it can be so, don't you?

Until Christ comes again,

Jim Morris