

1-THE NEED FOR BOTH THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

-This course is about building a theology of ministry—that is essential to the practice of ministry

-there is a tendency to reserve theology for academics, intellectuals—and allow ministry to be driven by pragmatics—what works, what is effective, what is new

Illus-Catalyst One—a pastoral conference focused on pragmatics

-momentum is triggered by creating something new

-it must be noticeable improvement—new look, new season, etc—or momentum slows to a halt

But there is danger in focusing on ministry merely in terms of trend lines

-true ministry does not proceed out of impulsive, emotional hunches, simple intuition, what leads to success

-it must ultimately be built upon careful reflection, sound theology

Illus-apostolic leadership might be the key to effective leadership (ala Hirsch, Frost), but is there a biblical basis?

In my early training at seminary—the word of God was engrained in me—foundational doctrines

-that helped me see that ministry is fundamentally theological

-foundational writers—like Eugene Peterson, J.I. Packer, Thomas Oden—made great contributions

-Peterson's Working the Angles opened my eyes to the emptiness of ministry apart from theology

-note his powerful words—

“Pastors are abandoning their posts at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches. Congregations are paying their salaries. Their names remain on the stationary. But they are abandoning their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods”¹

¹ Working the Angles, 1

**Sorting out a theology will make us more effective in ministry
-that's what this course is about**

SOME DEFINITIONS--

BY THEOLOGY—we are talking about a “disciplined consideration and exploration of the content of divine revelation, as well as engagement in the critical reflection of the practices of the church”²
-the very nature of these words implies focus, sustained energy, careful ordered, critical thought as it relates to doing ministry

BY MINISTRY—we are talking about shepherding the body of Christ—carrying out the essential tasks, equipping the saints, fulfilling the duties that are normative in the course of a typical week

The aim in this course is *to bridge* these, lay a foundation and build on it
-think more critically about ministry—its purpose, nature, etc
-encourage students to flesh out the purpose of theology—which is to assist the community of Christ's followers in their missional vocation to live as the people of God in the context in which they are situated

A-WHY BUILD THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS?

-why does our ministry task needs to be provoked, critiqued by theological assumptions?
-three reasons—

1-THEOLOGY IS WHAT FORMS THE LINES, SHAPES THE ANGLES OF MINISTRY

-as mentioned—it provides the framework for ministry
-there is no dimension of ministry (counseling, preaching, leading, etc) that is not deeply, inherently, and inescapably theological³
-theology, by its very nature attempts to be systematic insofar as it looks for a cohesive, internally consistent grasp of the whole of Christian teaching—so as to view each part in relation to the whole

² The Character of Theology, Franke, 40ff

³ Al Mohler, Blog, Pastor As Theologian, Part One

-and such a discipline informs us as to how we should do ministry—asking how each part relates to the whole—making sure whatever we do is consistent with the other pieces—and fits under the broad piece—

**-is my leadership consistent with the leadership philosophy of Jesus?
-are my strategies in keeping with the mission of the church?
-is my counseling consistent with the place of authority I give to scripture?**

-is the energy by which I do ministry consistent with the energy of the Holy Spirit?

(a major cause of burnout in ministry-we blur the lines-lose sight of what can only be done in the energy of the Spirit)

-is the nature of my use of time for ministry consistent with my eschatology?

-are the contemporary directions of the church in keeping with God's design?

-is our practice of spirituality also guided by a theology of service—so that ministry reflects this necessary blend of prayer, study, and social justice

-theology helps bring clarity of convictions by which Christians can then engage in ministry⁴

-we see this in the gospels-Jesus presents a ministry based upon truth—that flies in the face of Pharisaic non-scriptural innovation (cf Mk 7:10-13)

-we see this in the epistles (which are pastoral theology)

-this is why Ephesians 1-3 come before 4-6, Colossians 1-2 before 3-4, Romans 1-11 before 12-16

-Paul begins with core belief, theological convictions, and then, like a surgeon setting a compound fracture—he sets his theology into our behavior “so that belief and behavior knit together and heal”⁵

-in Colossians-Paul gives practical exhortations for ministry

-defining a Christ follower in the most radical of language-chap 3

-exhorting Archippus to take heed to his ministry

⁴ Purvis, RPT, xiv

⁵ Peterson, Practice resurrection, 31

-but all of this comes only after he has laid out a clear Christology-1:15-20; clarified what has been accomplished on the Cross-2:13-15; described our current standing in heaven-3:1-4

-the epistles make it clear—

-Christology comes before mission

-Pneumatology comes before walking in the spirit

-Ecclesiology comes before structuring a church

-and Theology Proper precedes everything

-for ministry ORIGINATES and is SHAPED by God

-He created ministry, and He is the principal subject

In sum—those who do ministry must first be theologians—for theologians have the role of detecting and eliminating “pollutions” to insure God’s truth flows pure

-minister/theologians are the church’s “sewage specialists”⁶

Second reason for building theological foundations--

2-THEOLOGY IS WHAT GUIDED THE EARLY MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

-from its infancy-the church engaged in biblical and theological reflection

-there is much to gain from looking at early practice

-there is something called the Janus effect-the further we see into the past—the further we can see into the future as well as recover stability and a recognition of our parameters

-so it is vital we be interpreters of historic faith

-but the reality is—we do not give much priority to this—much more value is placed on trend lines than historic practice

-we need to listen to voices like Robert Webber—who has been a huge influence here—a corrective to those who have discounted the past, tended towards being anti-traditional

-Oden, likewise, serves as a needed voice—one who has come to value ministry in the classical tradition

⁶ Packer, Hot Tub Religion

- tradition here meaning the deeper ecumenical consensus, the shared rootage out of which each plant (Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox) has grown
- the earliest ecumenical councils—that came to represent the mind of the believing church
- the standard teachers of the early church-Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great

Oden sums up his approach this way—

- I am dedicated to unoriginality-as opposed to those who value only what is most recent—“*modern chauvinists*”
- I am pledged to irrelevance—if relevance means indebtedness to corrupt modernity
- I will resist the notion to quote modern writers less schooled in the whole counsel of God than the best ancient exegetes
- and if one should charge me as being antiquated—I can think of nothing more forward looking than taking the risk to be informed by Scripture and tradition⁷

- all of which has had the time to winnow out the less pertinent material

Unfortunately—we tend to jump from the 1st century to the 21st—leaping over centuries of ministry wisdom

- pragmatics in ministry threaten to swallow the necessity of reflective understanding⁸
- but when we slow down and look at what has happened—here is what we discover...

A-Between 100-600-the church’s central theologians were pastors, spiritual directors, bishops

- they referred to themselves as pastoral theologians (e.g. Chrysostom, Gregory)
- it was integrated into their identity

⁷ Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, ix

⁸ DH Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition*

**-they insisted the practice of ministry must be built upon a theological foundation—hence their ministry had a theological framing
-in other words—the controlling issues were not pragmatic—but theological**

-they respected the distinction between the study of God and the service of God

-but they allowed no gap between them—the first calls for the second—and the second is only possible on the basis of the first⁹

They had to—they faced huge debates

-the church was still in early childhood—vulnerable to one heresy after another

-Trinitarian debates, Christology, etc

Athanasius is a classic example—a man who stood against the world

-he lived at a time the gospel was at risk—early 300's

-and his efforts to help create a sound Christology were critical to the future of the church

-but at a price—he was exiled five times by three emperors

-the same could be said of the Three Cappadocians, Gregory, Basil, Gregory

-they were Athanasius's theological allies in the battle against Arianism (which taught that Jesus was a created being inferior to the Father)

-without them and their role as pastor and theologian, the heresy of Arius would have spread, wrecking the church—"similar" would have replaced "same substance"

Pt—that they were both pastors and theologians—and recognized the necessity of doing ministry in the context of sound theology saved the day¹⁰

-had they not done the hard work of Christology—they would have lost the day

-we must read their lives—lest the contemporary church slide into a new liberalism—social justice w/o theology, love w/o hell

⁹ Purvis, 23

¹⁰ See Getting to Know the Church Fathers, Litfin, 165ff

B-Even into the reformation—some of the more significant theologians were practitioners—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer

-nonetheless, historic practice reveals this changed—and we must also learn from this

-a gap between theology and practice began to take place

1-first of all—a gap began to be created between PRACTICUM AND REFLECTION

-some began to withdraw from ministry to contemplate—to be unbusy to know God

-between 600-1500—there was a shift to the monastery

2-a gap began to widen between THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

-with the influence of the Renaissance—which replaced God with man as the center of reality

-and with the advent of the Enlightenment—theology gravitated to the academy—to be one of the core disciplines

-and eventually one academic discipline among others

“Theology came to be thought of as the intellectual justification of the faith, *apart* from the practice of the Christian life”

-search for truth became a cognitive enterprise—dependent upon empirical evidence, limited to man’s reason

-truth relocated into facts, ideas

-and historical criticism, challenges to Christian claims took their toll

-it became more about “knowing” rather than “loving” truth—mastering truth rather than being transformed by truth

-knowledge for knowledge’s sake rather than wisdom that makes for an excellent life

-and the gap between ministry and theology widened

-the line between academic theology and practical theology was drawn by academic faculties in Europe

-some realized this—men like Karl Barth—who began his ministry in Geneva—but his ministry did not connect—his sermons sailed over their heads

“He realized how much theology had tailored itself to fit the demands of the academy rather than the church”¹¹

-looking back on his first 5 years, he was sorry for everything his congregation had to put up with

-this gap between theology and practice was imported by divinity schools in North America

-religious studies separated from ecclesiastical control, influence

-practical theology soon found that the bridge connecting practical theology to “pure” theology was constructed for one way traffic

-practical theologians did not have the necessary union cards and were not admitted to the theological gild¹²

Eventually—a legal separation of sorts occurred by the 19th century

-theology shoved ministry to the margins—pastoral theology all but disappeared from seminary curriculum and discourse--and ministry returned the favor—shoving theology to the margins

-methodology, separated from its theological home—went looking for shelter, finding a more receptive home in such disciplines as psychology

-which is why pastoral theology for much of the 20th century organized around a psychological, sociological center of interpretation (cf Hiltner)

-there would be a famine in pastoral theology until Oden, 1983

All of which led to some unfortunate RESULTS—

-without a home where theology and ministry cohabit, complement, and build off one another

a-ON THE MINISTRY SIDE—ministry begins to lose its center, has been evacuated of serious doctrinal content, theological reflection

-becoming understood largely in functional, therapeutic, efficiency terms

-concerned primarily with methods, techniques, strategies—apart from theological reflection

¹¹ Willimon, Barth, 10

¹² Anderson, 7

-courses taught in practical theology began to fill lectures with themes like “proper lighting in the church parking lot”
-books about ministry in the early 20th century spoke of ministry as therapy, administration

-and without the capacity to think theologically, ministers were easily reduced to—

a-therapists given to techniques in soul care, self realization rather than salvation (no wonder Niebuhr described Christian ministry as ‘the perplexed profession’ in 1956)

b-administrators, technicians dealing with organizational theory

c-social activists

d-marketers concerned with the market, pleasing the consumer

e-artists given to creating an ethos, an experience

--and sound theology is so “miniscule” as to be entirely unable to command our life, let alone our attention¹³

-“Biblical and theological perspectives no longer shape the practice of much pastoral work”¹⁴

-ministers have little connection to any sense of theological vocation

-and those in the congregation soon become indifferent to doctrine

-which can even seep into the seminary—where praxis of ministry eclipses theology of ministry¹⁵

Today we have become “doctrinal minimalists”, ecclesiastical free spirits, theological gadflies

-some in the recent emergent movement are examples, more into deconstruction than construction, hold to a studied uncertainty rather than certainty when it comes to truth¹⁶

b-ON THE THEOLOGY SIDE-separating ministry from theology has hence reduced theology to academics

“The transformation of theology into an academic discipline more associated with the university than the church has been one of the most lamentable developments of the last several centuries”¹⁷

¹³ Wells, The Courage to Be Protestant, 14

¹⁴ Purvis, 3

¹⁵ Stackhouse, 225

¹⁶ See Wells, Protestant, 15ff

¹⁷ Al Mohler, Blog, “The Pastor As Theologian, Part One”

-too much theology is written in theologies

-hence theologians have little connection to the church—maybe little connection with anything but themselves

-Charry puts it this way—“Theology today lives on the margins of the secular culture, the margins of the academy, and the margins of the church”¹⁸

(just attend a typical ETS meeting)

Hence—we need to go back to our historical roots—back to the unique relationship theology and ministry had with each other

-back to this commitment—that the church is the true location of theology

-third reason for building theological foundations--

3-A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY IS WHAT OUR PEOPLE NEED FROM US

-the health of the church depends upon its ministers functioning as faithful theologians

-grounding their pastoral work in God’s ministry

-so ministers must recover and reclaim theology, the classical tradition

-or settle to be nothing more than communicators, counselors, managers

-for theology becomes beneficial only when it synthesizes with ministerial practice

-and ministry becomes effective only when we allow God’s revealed truth to penetrate hearts and minds and the practice of ministry

-for we are dealing with huge issues

-how we cross from our church subcultures into the dominant cultures surrounding us

-it will require an ability to critique contemporary, influential voices—be it McLaren, Driscoll, Hybels, Frost, Wells, Jones, Bell, Piper, etc

What’s needed is to come back to where we were

-the bridge needs to allow for two way traffic

¹⁸ Charry, By the renewing, 245

-the line between theory and practice needs to no longer be drawn so sharply

-the breach must be repaired

-ministry must again be seen as a theological enterprise

-ministers must again become theologians—theologians thinking of themselves as ministers

– if we are to minister pastoral care, counsel, lead, speak--we must first see ourselves as theologians, for theologians deal with ultimate questions—which our people struggle with--is the universe a friendly place? Is God good? Why do things happen? Where am I going? Where is the universe going?

4-WITHOUT A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY-MINISTRY HAS GREAT POTENTIAL TO BE ABUSIVE—MORE HURTFUL THAN HELPFUL

*DMS 501
2011
JOHNSON*

2-THE FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING MINISTRY

A-THE MINISTRY OF GOD

Ministry first of all concerns itself with the practice of God—that is—with what God does as a result of who God is

-ministry does not begin with us—is not up to us

“Conceiving ministry as our ministry is the root problem is what ails us in ministry today”¹⁹

-nor is ministry derived from culture--begin with where culture is

-the only thing culture gives us is a context²⁰

-rather—ministry is derived from God’s ministry, and is only legitimate where it models His²¹

-we learn ministry by *first* looking at the ministry of God—who He is and what He is up to

¹⁹ Purves, Crucifixion, 11

²⁰ Wellsm Courage to be Protestant, 98

²¹ Tidball, 35

Unless we develop our understanding of ministry here, it will spin off controlled by someone, something else (e.g. therapeutic care, corporate business models, social concern, expectation of people)

-if we let it be determined by people's expectations—we will end up in vast confusion

-for expectations vary from person to person

-here are some expectations of ministers today: errand boy, referee, therapist, repairman, rabbit's foot, punching bag, a savior, keeper of tradition, justice of the peace, recruiter, gateway to the flock, employee, a healer, a priest, a CEO, a friend, spiritual cheerleader

-Conder puts it this way—"Pastors are expected to have the entrepreneurial skills of Bill Gates, the counseling skills of Dr Phil, the organizational abilities of Stephen Covey, the authenticity of Oprah, the compassion of Mother Teresa, and the humor of Jon Stewart".

All of these are a distortion—ministry as mere activism

What's needed is a clear theology of who a minister is

-and for those of us in ministry—a recognition that ministry does not begin with our practice—but with God's

-we must first ask—what is God up to?

Looking at Scripture, we discover that God's ministry is revealed through all three Persons of the Godhead--Father, Son, Spirit—all working together-John 5:23; 8:19; 10:30,38; 14:8-9, 16-20; 15:23

-all ministry must be grounded in this intratrinitarian ministry

-it is the "basic framework of meaning" within which we do ministry²²

-the "grammar" of all talk of ministry

Here's what we discover—

1-THE FATHER IS THE ORIGATION OF MINISTRY

-ministry can never be more than a "pale, partial reflection of divine ministry"²³

-ministry begins with understanding the ministry of the first Person of the Godhead, the Maker and Sustainer of all things, as well as the first Minister

²² Purves, 30

²³ Tidball, 33

-when we study His ministry, we discover—

a-Ministry is a lot like Parenting

-for He enters the story as Israel's Father

-who teaches (Law), instructs (Wisdom), and Warns/Corrects

(Prophets)

-His is a love that is neither sentimental nor indulgent love

-but a purposeful love—that disciplines those who go astray (Dt 28)

b-Ministry is much like Shepherding

-this is how Jacob describes the ministry of God, after walking with Him (see Gen 48:15; cf Eze 34:11-16)

-this is how the Psalmist described the ministry of God-Ps 23

-He is One who leads, pastures, carries, heals—as we go through this confusing wilderness

-no image has influenced the practice of ministry more than this formative metaphor²⁴

-it underscores that ministry is about companionship, patient guiding, and constant nourishing

-ministry is a radical responsibility for others

APP

-These initial texts begin to provide a foundation for understanding ministry

1-there is a paternal duty to ministry

-consequently, Paul likened himself as a father to those he ministered to (cf I Thess 2:11; I Cor 4:14-15)

-implying patience, pain, gentleness, discipline, authority, modeling (I Cor 4:16; I Thess 1:6; I Cor 11:1)

-emotional bond-(2 Cor 12:14-15; Phil 1:3-8; I Thess 2:19-20; 2 Cor 7:2ff)

-in 2 Cor 11, he portrayed himself to the congregation as the father of the bride—one who fathered them in Christ-I Cor 4:14

-whose role as minister is to prepare the Bride for her eventual union

-hopeful that he might one day present his “daughter” pure to her bride²⁵

²⁴ Oden Becoming a Minister, 41

²⁵ See Purves, 122

- this is our role as ministers
- jealously guarding, protecting, preparing—to one day present to God

2-there is a shepherd role and relationship-cf Num 27:16-17; I Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28

- feeding, drawing them to Christ, strengthening the weak
- giving oversight-cf Heb 13:17
- going after lost sheep

Tidball affirms this—

- “The image of the shepherd is the underlying paradigm of ministry. This single image contains within it references to the authority, tender care, specific tasks, courage and sacrifices required of a minister”²⁶
- not that we take the place of God—ministry has a more modest task—allowing God to mediate His ministry through us
- to do anymore is to spend most of ministry in fatigue

-the second model--

2-Jesus IS THE ESSENTIAL MODEL OF MINISTRY

- the importance of the model of Christ cannot be overemphasized
- we see what ministry is intended to be, learn the rudiments of ministry
- Jesus is the over arching analogy under which all descriptions and functions of ministry must be embraced

- “If we cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus’ own intention and practice, we lose ministry’s central theological premise”²⁷
- He is the minister par excellence

a-HIS MINISTRY WAS A CONTINUATION OF THE FATHER’S-
John 14:31; 17:18; 20:21

- Jesus also comes as shepherd-John 10
- to see the Son is to see the Father-Jn 14:9
- which required time with the Father
- he too epitomized shepherd—going after the lost, the wounded

b-HIS MINISTRY WAS INCARNATIONAL

²⁶ Tidball, 54

²⁷ Oden, BAM, 75

-Michael Frost refers to the Incarnation as the “theological prism” through which we view our entire missional task²⁸

-it is a work that implies the following—

1-IDENTIFICATION-Jesus took upon Himself all the conditions, struggles, limitations of humanity

2-LOCALITY-not come to me—but go to them-Mk 1:38

-the One who shared in the glory of the Godhead became enfleshed. Jesus entered into the depths of our world, moved into the neighborhood—experienced its life and rhythms-Jn 1:14; 6:62; 8:38; 10:36

-a halfway house would not do—he came not half way—but the whole way

3-INTO LIVES-Jesus came into direct contact—eating with sinners, going to our weddings, our funerals--He is one of us-John 2; Mark 4

c-HIS MINISTRY WAS INCLUSIVE

-as opposed to exclusivistic

-Jesus identified with the poor, the oppressed, the outsiders of society-Mark 2,5,7

-Lk 4:14-30-God’s grace reaches across lines

-He never identified with one class

-He cared about people—He ate with Pharisees also, and cured the daughters of Roman centurions

-no one is too small-Mark 10:46f

-no one is too lost-Mark 2, 5; John 8

-no one is too outside-Mark 7:24f; John 4

d-HIS MINISTRY WAS KINGDOM FOCUSED

-this was the substance of His message, the center of His preaching-Mk 1:38f;

-new kingdom rules—greatest are the least, smallest is most significant, when it seems most absent it is most present, etc-4:26f

-preaching the kingdom dictates the ministry

-it must not be co-opted by healing ministry—or other things-Mk 1:35f

²⁸ Frost, Shaping, 35

- Jesus does the summoning—sets the agenda
- if they succeeded—their mission would have defined Jesus
- Jesus came to increase God's kingdom
- He came to preach the kingdom
- He came to invite people into His kingdom
- He came to lay out what life looks like in God's kingdom-Mt 5-7

e-HIS MINISTRY WAS SUBVERSIVE

- Christ came and infiltrated the culture
- using the subversive tools of Word and prayer, parables
 - cf Matt 9:37-38; Mark 4:26
 - words that appeared harmless on the surface—but exploded in the hearts of listeners
 - the stuff of cloth patches and wine and wineskins
- though visible, His work was mainly underneath
- He did not propose a violent revolution—He did not identify with the zealots and their desire to call on fire from heaven
- but He was a revolutionary, speaking of a radically different society-Matt 5-7
- calling the religious to be reborn-John 3!

f-HIS MINISTRY WAS REDEMPTIVE

- Christ came to restore us to union and communion with the Father
- each act of ministry was a ministry of reconciliation-saving religious people (Jn 3); saving those stuck in the physical world (Jn 6)

APP

- 1-ministers do what they do because of who Christ is and what Christ does²⁹
- Mark 6:7-the disciples were charged with continuity
- ministry comes at His initiative—it is His idea-John 15:16
- we don't come up with a sermon—we bear witness to what He is saying
- “If ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus' own intention and practice, we lose its central theological premise”

²⁹ Purvis, RPT, 3

-this will require lots of time with Him

2-we are to be incarnational-we too are to enter into the depths of our world

-identifying in all ways without compromising the truth of the gospel

-entering into the locality—living where they live-hanging out where they hang out-Mark 5

-taking on their limitations and struggles

Not flying sorties—dropping occasional tracts (less so today)

-not aiming merely to be attractional (building bigger buildings, programs for the sake of attracting crowds)

-Mark 1:38—not come to Me—but let's go to them

-He was one of us—we must become one of them

-He entered into our language forms--He called them to become fishers of men

-a reminder that we must not use code language

-commit cultural imperialism-the gospel synonymous with western culture (India)

He did not come declaring the innate cultural frameworks must change to accommodate Him—He accommodated to us—our language, our ways

-yet without compromising truth

3-our ministry is to be inclusive—not chaplains to religious clubs

-we too must reach the outsider-cross cultural generations

-though our message is exclusive-Jesus declared that He alone discloses the only path to God-Jn 14:6

-He alone is mediator between Creator and creation

-all other paths—no matter how pious—are inadequate

4-our ministry is to be kingdom centered

-Mk 1 warns us not to get off center

-we are to preach the kingdom, be the presence of the kingdom

-be a foretaste of the kingdom to come

-pray for God's kingdom to come-advance

-teach people to pray that something of God's future kingdom would take form in the present

-encourage the community (of which I am a part) to mirror God's kingdom by the way we live

5-ours is also a ministry of subversion--infiltrating the culture to represent Christ in the world

-salt and light (Matt 5)

-imperceptible yet life changing

-like seed working underneath the soil—the nature of kingdom work

-what appears small, marginal is just the opposite

Requirements of Subversives—

a-Prayer-pray down the walls-Col 4:2-4

b-An orientation towards-Col 4:5

-living, eating, working-making the most of opportunities

c-Godly lives-lives that reflect Jesus, attract lost people-Col 4:5

d-Seizing the moment—when the doors have opened-Col 4:5

e-Seasoned speech-that gives gracious answers to unbelievers' questions-Col 4:6

6-our ministry is to be redemptive

Christology, then, is the critical reference point—Christ is the starting point

-Christology informs Missiology which determines Ecclesiology

-it does no good to revamp missional strategies, ecclesiastical decisions—unless they are related to a sound Christology

-the Person of Christ defines our mission in the world

-the mission determines what the church should be, should do

-in actual practice, there is a tendency to get this REVERSED

-over time, we allow ecclesiology (and all of our traditions) to guide our purpose and mission—which then re-defines who Jesus is

Finally, gaining a Trinitarian foundation includes understanding the ministry of the Spirit--

3-THE SPIRIT IS THE POWER FOR MINISTRY

a-He empowers

-Jesus' ministry began only after He was empowered by the Spirit-Lk 4:18

-by the power of the Spirit-He demonstrated the kingdom of God-Matt 12:28

-he is the power behind the church-Acts 2; 6:8

b-He comforts

c-He takes sin seriously, grieving over it-Eph 4:30

d-He MEDIATES CHRIST'S PRESENCE-JN 16:13

-THIS IS HIS primary work-to give such a knowledge of Christ's presence that three things happen—personal fellowship with Jesus; personal transformation into His likeness, certainty of being loved³⁰

e-He determines and regulates the parameters of ministry

-where we are sent

APP

1-as He indwells us and fills us, we too have a ministry of comfort (2 Cor 1)

-in 2 Cor 1:3-7, Paul spoke of God's presence in his life—ministering comfort to him—and out of this-he was given the same ministry

-to minister God's comfort, God's presence

2-we too are called to grieve over sin

-we see this in Paul's language, his letters

3-we too seek to make people aware of Christ's presence

-bring honor and glory to Jesus—make Him known

-a minister is a "parable of Jesus"³¹

³⁰ See Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 47f

³¹ See *The Art of Pastoring*, Hansen, 24ff

-allowing God to come to people when we preach, pray, visit

4-we too must reflect power—His resurrection power-I Cor 2:4-5

-as Jesus was empowered—launched to do ministry (Mk 4:1)—so are we

-the Spirit's role is to empower us for ministry—to do the same things Christ did—and even greater things-John 14:12

-the empowering Spirit is critical for the fashioning of a community that stands in radical contradistinction to the world

-this is what His coming at Pentecost was all about

-Pentecost is the indwelling power of the Spirit of Christ—who empowers us to be His witnesses

-Acts 1:8;2:4,11; 4:7-8;10:38; Eph 3:16;Rom 15:19;2 Cor 12:9;2 Tim 1:7

5-we must pay attention to what the Spirit is doing

-where He is working (Sidon?)

-“God has been working diligently, redemptively, and strategically before I appeared on the scene, before I was aware there was something here for me to do”³²

-so ministry is less about innovation—more about attentiveness

Here is a second major part of the foundation—

B-THE MINISTRY OF BIBLICAL MINISTERS

-while ministry is an act of God—it originates in Him and is shaped by His revelation

- **it 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**
- **God is the starting point—He invented it—it is “God actualized”**
- **We don't introduce our ministry anymore than Jesus introduced His**

-and while the ministry of God is “the proper foundation for the understanding and practice of pastoral ministry” (Purves)

³² Peterson, Contemplative Pastor, 60

-and so our ministry must be measured against this Trinitarian center

-there is also this—that God has called certain ones to be His ministers—conduits through whom He does ministry

-and they give us a foundation for ministry as well—

1-MINISTERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

-there are three offices in the OT who model ministry for us

-they became the central organizing principal of early Protestant Christological teaching

- **Prophet – who brought a message from God--as lived out by Isaiah and others**
- **Priest – who represented the needs of the people before God--as carried out by Aaron and others**
- **King –imposed the rule of God, administered the resources--as manifested by David**

-to these, some have added a fourth—Sage—who took truth and brought it down to the level of life—Solomon

Christ embodied each of these offices, integrating all into a functioning whole, into His identity

-Prophet – Matt 7:29, Luke 4:21; Jn 1

-Priest – Heb 7:25

-Sage – Matt 12:42

-King – John 18:37

(see my two articles on this subject in Bibliotheca Sacra, April 95, Trinity Journal Spring 2000)

Application for us in ministry. As we model Christ, a case can be made these are the central roles, that integrated into our own lives defines us and our ministry—

1-we too are to be prophetic—speaking the language of “thus saith the Lord” in whatever ministry we are given to do

2-we too are to be priestly—standing in the middle, representing people before God in prayer—and out of our time with God-representing God to His people

-priests “contend on behalf of God and lead people back to God”

(Gregory of Nazianzus)

- 3-we are called to be a sage—applying the Word of God to life**
- 4-we too have the leadership role similar to a king-to steward resources, give vision, provide leadership**

2-MINISTERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A-Ephesians 4 identifies five gifted leaders-apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers

-see Frost, Hirsch for a fuller description of these ministry roles and there relationship to leading the missional church today³³ the Apostles serve as the principle models—for they often gave definition to who we are as ministers

B-Paul built a theology of ministerial identity using metaphors to describe the role of a minister

-the benefit of metaphors is that they open up our understanding of ministry without the rigid boundaries of literal language

-here are some—

a-Shepherd – Eph 4:11 (cf I Peter 5:2)

-though not used often in Paul, it remains the “metaphorical cast” that has shaped much of ministry

b-Servant – diakonos, doulos (slave) was Paul’s most frequent metaphor and description of himself

- Col 1:25-28 of this church I was made a minister**
- I Cor 4:1 – let a man regard us as under rowers, assistants**
- I Cor 3:5 – servants of a new covenant**

Ministry is rooted in the notion of service

c-Steward-I Cor 4:1 let a man regard us as stewards of God’s mysteries

-it was a technical term for those managing, ordering, regulating estates, households – cf. Rom 16:23 (steward of the city – city treasurer)

-ministry is serving one another by our gifts, hence properly managing God’s grace

³³ Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways; Frost, The Shaping of Things to Come

-stewarding the various roles of ministry—preaching, sacraments, prayer

-stewarding this ministry—that people once alienated can come together in Christ (Eph 3)

-this may be one of our greatest tasks (illus-Lebanon)

d-Other Metaphors

1-Ambassador – 2 Cor 5:20 – tells me that part of my identity is found in being God’s representative

-aiming to build relationships—like ambassadors

-I am a reconciler--laboring with all diligence to effect peace between people and God, people & people

2-Builder – 1 Cor 3:10; 1 Cor 5:9

-I am part of building God’s church—ministry that can at times be hard and painful labor, requiring care and exactness – making sure I am building on the right foundation

-a work that will eventually be tested

3-Gardener – 1 Cor 3:9

-I am a person given to sowing and reaping, planting and watering and cultivating – not taking credit for the crops

4-Nursing mother – 1 Thess 2:7

-I am a nurturer—implying that my essential identity demands I love people

5-Priest-offering the Gentiles as a sacrifice-Rom 15:15-17

-doing the work of intercession-representing others—the church and the world

(one could make a case perhaps that Paul’s metaphors underscore the four offices—

1-prophetic (herald, ambassador-1 Cor 1:17; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Cor 5:2)

2-priest (priest, offering-Rom 15:16; Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6)

3-sage (steward of wisdom-I Cor 2:6-16; wise builder-I Cor 3:6-10)

4-king (father, servant, steward-I Thess 2:16; Col 1:25-28; 1 Cor 4:1)

Summary

Some would say the essential question of pastoral theology is this—who are we as ministers? The person of God, and those He has chosen to minister through provide the answer.

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3-THE PARTNERSHIP TO DO MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of God—as well as the biblical models—serve as the proper foundation for understanding who we are—how we do ministry -we are not here to invent ministry—but imitate ministry

But ministry is more than imitating models from a distance, “a slavish repetition of Jesus’ deeds”

-ministry is an intimate PARTNERSHIP we enter into—less IMITATE AND more PARTICIPATE

-participation that comes out of our actual union with Christ

-“in Christ”—164 times in Paul (hence—not achieved by effort—but done by faith)

-a union, joined through the work of the Holy Spirit, in which we are not merely imitating Christ—

-we are actually participating with Him—He in us and we in Him--a mystery captured in the words of John 14:20; 15:1-8; Gal 2:20 (the radical center of ministry); Eph 2:4-6; Col 3:3; cf Acts 17:28; Phil 1:21

-He goes before us—and when we are sent to minister—He precedes us

-when we reach out to the hurting-He is there incognito

-when we preach—He is disclosing Himself

Pt-all ministry is derivative –“hitching a ride”

-we do all we do because of God and what He does

-our only ministry is one of manifesting, embodying, and pointing to the living Jesus in whom we are in union³⁴

³⁴ Oden, BAM, 77

If we don't understand imitation and participation—ministry is reduced to programs, strategies, techniques
-it is up to us—all of which is a recipe for disaster

There are seven core areas we participate in—

A-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF SERVICE

1-ministry, by its very nature, is an act of service

-Jesus came not to be served—but to serve-Mk 10:45; John 13:4-11

-this service really begins to the Father—"It is not the ministry of Jesus to the world on behalf of God that made Him a servant—but His ministry to the Father on behalf of the world"³⁵

-cf Jn 11-the plea of two sisters did not set Jesus' agenda—but the will of the Father

-in our union, our ministry must be defined in the same way—servanthood to the Father, willing to do His will

-this is how Paul saw himself-let as man regard us as under rowers--under the deck-following the cadence of Another-I Cor 4:1

2-but what does this actually mean?

-first we look at the term for ministry—*diakonia*

-a word rooted in the idea of service-used to describe the menial and the mundane—"waiting on tables"—which immediately implies things will get messy

-over time-the term was employed as the central term to describe the chief activity of the church

-hence Paul tells Timothy-"fulfill your ministry", i.e. your *diakonia*-2 Tim 4:5; cf Col 4:17

-it is what we are called to equip the saints to do-Eph 4:12-the *ergon* of *diakonia*—that they might eventually become like Christ (Eph 4:16)

Oden, speaking to service as the essence of ministry, writes-- "*diakonia* is an essential layer of every theory, grade, or proper definition of ministry"

– no ministry can properly abandon the role of *diakonia*.

³⁵ Anderson, Shape, 41

3-what does Service imply?

a-Ministry is about Submission

-a diakonos is one who, by choice and position, has come to be under the authority of His Master—just as Jesus was-Gal 1:10

-a minister's goal is not to achieve his/her personal goals

-rather—it is taking whatever “piece” God gives, respecting and caring for the flock, submitting to what God calls us to as an artist submits to his/her materials

-we are in ministry to be useful for God in such a way that His glory is increased

-the task is not to get God to do something I think need to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so I can respond and take delight” – Peterson

Note Jn 12:24-26 – an essential feature of a servant – he follows his master – in union together, doing service

-subversive work, planting seed, carrying secret messages, spreading in codes (parables), planting suspicion that there is something beyond what the culture says is final – it is nothing flashy – subversiveness doesn't win battles – they prepare the ground, change the mood

-cf Col 1:25-28-Paul's ministry is essentially a submission to God's calling

-cf I Cor 4:2-a servant's task is to steward the mystery of God

b-Ministry is about Humility

-just as the Head of the church established the pattern of humility for all time-Phil 2:6-8; Lk 22:27

-so we must come to grips with this—that ministry is not about rank-something Jesus both modeled and taught-cf Mk 9:33-35

-a minister's goal is not to enlarge his sphere of influence—but magnify God's

-it repudiates any notion of self-exaltation, self-centeredness-cf Mt 23:6-12

-Paul downplayed any self importance-1 Cor 3:5; 4:9-13; 2 Cor 10-12

-after all-our work is about shaping “cruciform” communities—lives that reflect the crucified Christ

-a priestly work of offering ministry as a sacrifice-Rom 15:16

-ministry is not about dominance, lordship, authoritarianism, status seeking

-domination, power wielding, coercion, are inappropriate; cf. Mk 10:34-45; Mt 20:25-6

-using position to appear busy, important

-authority thus flows from service

-key words: participate, persuasive, empathize

-“Ministry is paradoxically a leadership role, yet serves by patiently facilitating the nurture and growth of the soul”³⁶

Conclusion

To share in the ministry of Christ begins here—but it is largely missing.

Torrence-“The church today needs a massive recovery of authentic diakonia if it is to hold forth the image of Christ before mankind and is to Minister the mercy of God to the needs of men in the root of their evil and in the real sting of their misery.”

B-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF WORD

1-Christ’s ministry is a ministry of the Word of God

-of being Word-Jn 1:1 and revealing Word-“thus saith the Lord”

2-in our union—we share in the speaking forth of that same word, sharing the same prophetic role

-He speaks through us—His Word traveling into territory where psychology and any other discipline cannot go (Heb 4:12)

-into the mystery of the human condition—beyond the mask, into the deepest recesses of the human personality

-confronting it ultimately with the Person of Christ³⁷

a-it begins with our willingness to receive—Mk 4:3-25

-our desire to let Him penetrate the ear, the heart (cf Ps 40:6)

b-that moves to a willingness to search-Pro 2:15; 25:2

-for the word has a hidden dimension to it

³⁶ Oden, BAM, 54

³⁷ Purves, RPT, 165-6

**-a concealment that calls for disclosure—that leaves us in utter desperation as we pursue, search
-but in this union—we rest in this—He too is pursuing us—cf Pro 2**

c-that moves to speaking—wherein God speaks through us—shaping the consciousness of a people

Application—several points need to be made—

1-it is a Word entirely of its own order, and it is never in our power to speak it. It is a Word which in its own power and majesty stands against all other words³⁸ (note Ps 29)

-it is the antithesis of human capacity—there is not a word lying latently w/i a person, to be drawn out

2-we have no right to alter its message; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:5; Rev 22:18

-adapt the message to the desires and ambitions of the world

-ours is the task as ministers to rightly divide it-2 Tim 2:15

3-we have no right to determine whether we want to declare it

-a minister, servant of the gospel is willing to face resistance, persecution-Jn 21:15-17

-as Jesus did, our task is to move the conversation unto the ground of the Word of God

-ministry involves ministering Word-no matter how difficult it might be to hear-2 Tim 4-in season, out

-it cannot be grounded in 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

4-in all of this--ministry is an act whereby we ask—is there a word from God here?

-it is an act whereby, through union with Him, we believe God speaks through our voice--transcending human causation

-true ministry is His word—not our word—God's free and gracious address coming forth in power and authority

³⁸ Thurneysen, Theology of Pastoral Care, 106

**The crisis today—ministers—be it in the pulpit or the counseling room—are enamored with their own words—which comes out of a sense of one’s self importance—or lack of confidence in the efficacy of God’s Word (hence a famine of Word in the land-Amos 8:11-12))
-or assume all we share is an interpretation—and hence we cannot really hope to speak the Word of God
-and that leads to something else besides ministry--**

C-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF GRACE

-to partner with Christ is to enter into a union of grace—grace from God to us-through us

1-the first movement of the ministry of grace is to see people as God sees people

-as loved people-Jn 3:16

-as lost sheep-Lk 15 (that the religious leaders were confused as to why Jesus hung out with sinners revealed their own failed theology of ministry)

-see the poor as priority-Lk 4:18f; 6:20f; 7:22f; 13:30

2-the second movement is to extend grace

-because Paul was united in this grace, he extended God’s grace to every church

-hence, he commanded Timothy to “be strong in the grace of God”-2 Tim 2:1

-which translates into doing whatever is necessary to find the lost as a matter of highest priority

-extending God’s forgiveness, declaring to a world of failure—you are forgiven—you belong to God—God reconciles, restores lives

-pastoral work must give highest priority to the affirmation—you are forgiven!

-and if necessary--severe mercy where there is lack of repentance--always with the ultimate goal of see one saved-I Cor 5:5

3-the third movement is to preach grace-Acts 3:19

-our defining message is that in Christ we are forgiven—Jesus has arrested and reversed our human course

0critical in a world devoid of grace

D-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

- 1-Jesus came as Emmanuel-God with us-He is present in this world**
 - praying, indwelling, empowering, bearing up (Isa 40:11; 66:13; Matt 8:17; 2 Cor 1:4)**
- 2-as He lives through us—we are bearers of the presence of God**
 - bearers of His care—as He cares for us-2 Cor 1:3-7**
 - bearers of His comfort--comforting us that we might comfort—for we too will experience His wounds**
 - for aside from this participation, our ability to give bring care loses its divine power**
 - bearers of his blessing—God blessing through us**
 - bearers of His glory-2 Cor 3:18**
 - in all of this—we are simply earthenware containers—the treasure of His presence moves through frail vessels-2 Cor 4:7**

E-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF MISSION

- mission is a huge theme today—prompted by the thinking of people like Newbigin, Wright, Hirsch/Frost, Roxburgh**
- 1-Mission is part of the nature of God**
 - “He pins a missionary statement to every sign post”-Wright**
 - God is intentional, purposeful, goal oriented—missional—in everything He does**
 - history is theocentric—teleological—moving towards a goal**
 - mission is hence the grand narrative of Scripture***
 - everything is about God’s mission**
 - everything flows from it—the whole Bible is a missional phenomenon³⁹**
 - it’s all about God’s mission**
 - mission provides the framework in which to interpret Scripture**
 - Jesus introduces his ministry-speaking in missional terms-Lk 4:14-30; 5:31-32; 9:10; 19:10**
 - shifts the “disciple” to “apostle” identity in Matt 10**
 - ministry must have an apostolic ethos to it**
- 2-in our union with Him—we too are missional—it’s what He created us for**

³⁹ Wright, *Out of Egypt*, 103

- we participate in his mission
- it must shape and orient everything we do
- ministers are destinal—because God is

“Mission is our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation”⁴⁰

(missional flows out of Christology—not Ecclesiology)

- 3-mission must therefore shape everything we do as a church**
- the church is inherently missional (not the church with a missions dept)
- a community driven by a sense of mission to the world in order to avoid becoming a community seeking to gratify its own self-interest
- this goes back to both the great commission (Matt 28) and Pentecost (Acts 2)

- pt-mission is not a function, a task of the church**
- it is the church’s very nature—everything we do is missional
- church and mission are not two distinct entities
- ecclesiology and missiology are not separate theological disciplines

- treating both as one--we approach life as a missionary—utilizing missionary empathy, skills, tools, sensitivities
- contextualized within the particular culture I am in—knowing that every ministry operates in a cross cultural situation
- be it across the street—across the world

-for ministry to succumb to becoming status quo, static, institutional would be to miss the heart of God, the aim of God—THE NATURE OF MINISTRY

-it would be to step out of participation with God—participation in mission

- 4-Our mission is to continue what He began**
- we are not called to create a purpose, discover a new mission

⁴⁰ Wright, Mission of God, 23

**-in our union, we are called to continue the mission-God sent His Son,
sent His Spirit—now sends His church-Jn 20:21**

**-the mission of the church is to carry on the mission of God in the
world⁴¹**

Specifically-two broad tasks--

a-to save the lost

1-Jesus came with a mission to seek and save the lost-Lk 19:10

**-Lk 19:10-the fundamental mission statement-Zacchaeus was not a
delay nor a detour**

**-this was His fundamental purpose—and He crossed all barriers to
fulfill it**

-John 4; Luke 15; Mark 5

**-this was a departure from the OT—where the lost were attracted to
the light-Isa 42**

-centripetal shifted to centrifugal—from ctr to periphery (cf Mk 5)

2-Jesus calls us to partner with Him in this ministry of redemption

**-by partner—we mean give witness to His redeeming work of setting
things right in a broken and corrupt world**

**-we must be careful that a “missional emphasis” does not de-
emphasize evangelism—we are to preach the gospel in all of its
fullness—and not reduce it to social issues—Jesus didn’t**

**-when the disciples wondered if Jesus was going to restore His
kingdom—He gave them the mandate of witness**

**-Acts 1:8-witness is a call to the stand—to plead our case—turn
people from their sin**

-we too must be willing to cross barriers—aim to be multi-ethnic

**-this is our compelling witness—that Jew and Gentile, Anglo and
Hispanic, Indian and Korean embrace, love one another-Eph 3:1-7**

3-the apostles witness to this partnership

**-most of all of Paul’s letters were written in the heat of his
missionary efforts, where he affirmed the necessity of inclusion,
demonstrating that Jesus is savior, calling men to be saved**

-2 Cor 5:18-has given us the ministry of reconciliation

-2 Tim 4:5-do the work of an evangelist-fulfill your ministry

⁴¹ Franke, 174

-Peter declares we have been called to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you”—I Pet 2:9

4-the ministry of redemption includes both words (proclamation) and works (showing compassion, feeding the poor, etc)

-we must not lose either

-humans are not just individuals with souls—sin effects the whole

-Jesus was engaged in both-Jer 22:16; Isa 58:10; Mk 10; Lk 10:25-37; 16:19-31; Js 1:27; I Jn 3:16-18

-in our union—we engage in both-but heart transformation is fundamental

-the mission of God also includes this--

b-to participate in His edifying work

1-to *continue* the ministry of building up the saint

-mission is about discipleship-Jesus devoted significant time to instructing His disciples

-and exhorted His disciples to disciple all men-Matt 28

-baptizing (i.e. identifying—integrating into the body)

2-Maturing the saints was the compelling mission of Paul

-feeding, caring, equipping—seeing the community as unfinished business, standing between its beginning at baptism and its completion at the end

-to the Thessalonians-his goal was to complete what was lacking in their faith-I Thess 3:10

-to the Romans-Paul exhorted the believers to live out the implications of the gospel-Rom 12-15

-to the Colossians—bringing people to completion was his ultimate aim-Col 1:28

-to the Ephesians—where he invested two years of intense teaching, ministry’s aim is to build up the corporate body such that it matches the Head

-leaders (reflecting an apostolic heart, a prophetic voice, an evangelistic spirit, a nurturing ministry of teaching) equipping people for ministry-Eph 4:12

-with the aim of a transformational life-Eph 4:13

-in this work, we partner with Jesus, whose essential ministry is to build us up, equip us for ministry

-a word that is descriptive of someone needing mending, repair-katartizo—setting something that is broken back in place—making suitable for use

1-this involves giving attention to the details of one's life

2-envisioning what the Spirit has designed this person to become

3-helping people discover-Eph 4:8—he measured out—means that His grace is shaped different in each one of us (cf Rom 12:6—different gifts according to the grace given us),

-our ministry is to help people discover their grace shape, develop it and release it

-all with this aim—the words here are destinational—until indicates aim, end, finish(Paul's favorite language)

-God's essential goal is the transformation of God's communities into the image of Christ-Eph 4:13

-Thompson-assessing the ministry of Paul—saw that Paul had this fundamental definition of ministry--“Ministry is participation in God's work of transforming the community of faith until it is blameless at the coming of Christ”⁴²

-preparing believers to meet certain core outcomes before entering eternity

F-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF SUFFERING

-those of us who participate with Him in ministry will share in His afflictions

-Jn 15:20-if they persecuted Me—they will persecute you-cf Matt 23:34; 21:33-44; Jn 12:24-26

-for we too are hated in this world—attacked by this triad of world, flesh, devil-John 17:14 (they are hated because they are not of this world—just as I am not of this world) cf 2 Tim 3:12

-history verifies this

-the prophets, disciples, apostles-Peter, Stephen, James, paul, Barnabas, Gaius etc all suffered for their commitment to Christ

⁴² Pastoral Ministry according to Paul, 14

- early church leaders
 - Gregory of Nazianzus died in lonely retirement thinking himself a failure
 - Chrysostom died in exile in a rain ditch
 - Bucer died in exile
 - Baxter was removed from his parish
- but just as we participate in Christ's afflictions—we also participate in His comfort
 - so that the comfort received can be passed on
 - afflictions become transformed into empowerments for ministry--opportunities to minister divine presence
 - Paul was continually aware of human weakness to accomplish anything of significance for God's kingdom (2 Cor 3:6; 4:7-11)
 - “so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our flesh” (vs 11)
- affliction is therefore not meaningless—God redeems it for good and turns it into ministry

G-WE SHARE IN HIS MINISTRY OF REIGN

- in our union with Him we have died, risen, and ascended with Christ, who has begun His rule
 - a new order has arisen in Christ-Eph 1:20-22; 4:10; I Pet 3:22
 - His resurrection shattered the power of sin
 - He casts down every idolatrous claim to ultimate authority-Phil 2:10-11
 - His ascension guarantees that his past, incarnate ministry is present to us—He continues His earthly reign-Eph 4:7-13
- this means our ministry should reflect something of His power and authority and presence-John 14:12; Acts 1:8
 - in Him, we have authority over idolatrous claim to ultimate authority
 - it is a contested reign—but evil's doom has been declared, its back has been broken at the Cross-Col 2:15
- there is hence no power in the world, no regime, no religious (Islam) or political authority (Washington, the courts), no economic order (globalism), no worldly dominion, nothing and no one that stands above Jesus and His Lordship

**-in this union, we can pray great prayers--prayer that lays hold of
God's willingness and power to change the world
-prayer that unleashes the willingness and ableness of God
-but prayer that submits to how God is exercising His rule
-our ministry takes place in the interim, between the already and not
yet**

CONC

Putting all of this together—

We need the models—for apart from the models—

- all “ministry” is cast adrift from the actuality of God’s ministry**
- it turns into something else of our own invention**

But ministry is far more than some vague imitation

-it is a union—and apart from this union

- ministry inevitably bounces between guilt and burnout⁴³**
- we are cast back on our own resources—ministry becomes what we
do**
- and really-we have no ministry**

In this union--

**-ministry is no longer about us and our skills—it is not our ministries
that make Christ present—it is the present, living Christ who makes our
ministry possible**

- ministry is about what He does**
- for ultimately--there is only one ministry—His**
- it is about wherever Christ is doing ministry—and we are joined to
Him—there is the faithful ministry of the church-Ps 127:1; John 15:5**
- after all, it is His ministry that will heal, speak, bless, save, comfort,
guide**

**If we could grasp this theological reality—we would approach ministry
differently**

- we would step into each day, each situation, each moment in the pulpit,
each visit to the hospital, each counseling opportunity with the mindset
that we are participating with the One who is already in front of us**
- we are simply following in Christ’ slipstream**
- devoted to His ministry—not ours**

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⁴³ Purves, Crucifixion, 12

4-THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY

INTRO

At issue here is where we do ministry—what is God’s strategy?

-it has been the conviction of many that the local church is the central agency of God for the work of ministry on earth⁴⁴

-in the minds of classical pastoral writers, there was an intrinsic connection between ministry and church

-there is no ministry without church—no church without ministry

-for it is here the practices of ministry—preaching, sacraments, are conducted

-baptism initiates membership, creates space for word, communion

-this is the church’s vocation—no one else shares this

THE PROBLEM

What happens when the local, institutional church fails?

-is there legitimacy for doing something other than “church”

-what about “parachurch” ministries?

-when the church has stumbled, lost sight of its vision, run off the apostles and prophets, parachurch ministries have served the church in amazing and beneficial ways

-1947-Fuller steps in to fill an educational void

-1949-YFC, CCC, YL step in to reach youth

-Om in Lebanon-emerged to pick up what the church was failing to do

-if legitimate, what should be the relationship between them and the organized church?

⁴⁴ Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church*, 381

-years ago, John White attempted to address this, identifying the prevailing positions regarding this relationship of church/parachurch

1-Temporary legitimacy-the local church is the primary agency for ministry. Parachurch ministries are a temporary corrective—until the local church gets its act together

2-Two structure-there are two biblical structures—the local church’s role is edification/the parachurch’s role is evangelism -here—mission is broken up into silos

3-Church planting-parachurch ministries have legitimacy—so long as their goal is to be an arm of the church, planting local churches, working closely with this divine institution

4-Dual legitimacy-both are legitimate expressions, contexts for doing ministry, whether or not they work together

Today, the divide has grown—contemporary ministries are increasingly thinking of themselves apart from the church -“past traditions of believing, distinctive church architecture, doctrinal language, and the formalities of traditional church life all seem like baggage that needs to be shed”⁴⁵ -what supplemented the church has become the church

a-some of this goes back to a reductionist approach—that reduced salvation to something largely individual—meeting personal needs—as opposed to entering into community

**b-some of this is a reaction to institutionalism -institutional churches that are—
1-no longer missional**

⁴⁵ Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant*, 10

2-no longer personal-instead, hypocritical, judgmental, close minded

3-no longer theologically sound

-hence evangelicalism has become “para” in mentality, with the local church becoming its chief casualty

-a casualty in a market where it competes against “religious fare available in the convenience of one’s living room and in a culture bent on distraction and entertainment”⁴⁶

-house groups that once supplemented the local church have become the church

-a number of new church plants (as well as those who aligned with the Emergent Movement) have distanced themselves from the existent church as well

-seeing the institutional church as a bunch of crusty old men, a product of Christendom—going back to Constantine—that turned Christianity from fellowship to institution, established priesthood, bricks and mortar—and eventually to irrelevancy

“God’s people are more potent when they have little of church institution in their lives”⁴⁷

-note Kimball-*They Like Jesus But Not the Church*-

“Emerging generations can’t stand the church because they see it as organized religion-political, judgmental, male dominated, homophobic, and hypocritical”

Some have put the question this way

“Could we not say Christianity started out in Palestine as a fellowship—moved to Greece and became a philosophy—went to Rome and became an institution—went to Europe and became a government—came to America and made into an enterprise?”

⁴⁶ Wells, 11

⁴⁷ Hirsch, 23

Hence—

-would we be more faithful to our theology of ministry, to our understanding of context, by selling our church properties, disbanding our organizations, and letting them go out of business

-shift from a geographic centric to a dynamic movement

-and carry out the mission in a different context other than the institutional church today in order to be an authentic and radical presence of God in a countercultural way?

George Barna is representative of a number of disgruntled, disconnected voices voicing despair over the existent church's ability to produce transformed lives—and now questions the legitimacy of the existent church

-in his Revolution, he sees our age as one that is revolting against established systems—among them the established church

-as he sees it--to place all of our hope in the local church (as the context for ministry) is a misplaced hope

“If the local church is the hope of the world, than the world has no hope”⁴⁸

His rationale—the context of local church as we define it today is abiblical⁴⁹

-if we define church as a definable group who meets 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

-the communities we have were developed long after Scripture was written

-what we today have as church is just one interpretation

⁴⁸ Revolution, 36

⁴⁹ Developed in his newer book, Pagan Christianity?

- and the days of this institutional church are over—giving way to other expressions of presence—
- people are moving to other “communities” outside of the local congregation—
- house churches
- small aggregations (groups composed of different parts) vs congregations (an assembly gathered to worship)
- family faith-family is the spiritual unit-father is pastor as well as dad
- cyber churches-church is experienced on the internet—communities are developed in chat rooms

By 2025-only about 1/3 will rely upon a local congregation

- 1/3 through faith based communities
- 1/3-media, arts

Whether you are part of a local church or not—is not the issue

- we are to be the church and do ministry—wherever that takes us
- moving outside of the walls of the fortress
- no longer hiding the light under the institutional lamp stand
- becoming incarnational vs institutional
- infiltration vs invitation
- sending out vs extracting

“Ultimately we expect to see believers choosing a proliferation of options, weaving together a set of favored alternatives into a unique tapestry that constitutes the ‘personal church’ of the individual”

-leading to a reduction in the number of churches as presently configured-to a declining number of professional clergy⁵⁰
Maybe not as extreme—not calling for an end to the institution, but certainly calling for an end of any remnant of

⁵⁰ Revolution, 107

Christendom is found in the writings of Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch

-who see the end of the “Christendom-style” of the church, the church institutional and the emergence of the church missional

-a movement church replacing the existing church with its three major flaws:

-attractual—come to us—mobilizing believers to attract unbelievers into church

-dualistic-separates the sacred from the profane

-hierarchical-bureaucratic, top down models of leadership

-other voices include Neil Cole, Tony Jones, Young (The Shack), Eldredge (Life After Church)

The advent of the electronic church is yet one more expression of dissatisfaction of church as is

-church is an electronic experience—be it church via TV, computer, or maybe even video venue

HOW DOES OUR THEOLOGY GUIDE US?

-can you be communal without being institutional?

-is a non-institutional form of church possible?

-how does Scripture guide?

1-Ministry is done in a context of COMMUNITY

-as opposed to a context of isolation, individualism

-in Christ, we have been baptized—incorporated into a community, into the body of Christ (I Cor 12:13)

-the body has a Head—the Head has a body

-the Spirit has formed, immersed us into one spiritual family

-salvation involves membership in a community-cf 12:27

-we see it in seed form in Acts 1 and in the earliest expressions of Christianity (Acts 2:42; 4:32; 6:1)

-evidenced in the letters written by Paul—who writes to communities

-NT history is a record of believers becoming part of a local fellowship that stands as an alternative to secular culture, a community unlike anything else we find in life—I Cor 11:18; 14:19; Gal 1:2

-these communities come before God, worship in awe, and learn to live on God’s terms—and do it together—even as they are dispersed through persecution

-in fact—to not be a part of a fellowship is disobedience—Heb 10:24-26; cf 2 Cor 6:16; I Pe 2:4-9

-there is no legitimacy to say—I’m a believer—I’m just not into “organized religion”

-no—we are called into a local community when we come to Christ

-a community where the Word is proclaimed, the sacraments are duly ministered, sacrifices are brought together, and where people are called to accountability

-only in community can we do what God ordained

-community becomes our witness—apologetics is not primarily about a reasoned faith but a *demonstrated* faith—demonstrated by community

-evangelism is not just “come to Christ—come to church” but “come to church—come to Christ”

-as for size-community can happen at various levels—it is difficult to argue that because the early church were house churches that communities should only be comprised of 3-4 families

-the reality is that some “house churches” were 200 or more believers

-in Acts 3:1—they began, meeting in synagogues—cf Js 2:2

2-Ministry is done in the context of STRUCTURE

- institution (def-organizing, establishing into a society) is unavoidable**
- anarchy does not work**

Neuhaus-Even the most spontaneous and prophetic of movements cannot last unless they find institutional form⁵¹

-as we go through life—we go through institutions—family, school, institutions of a profession—each of which come with rules, obligations—practices which are passed down and evolve

-institutions can impede imagination—they can enforce conformity—but covenanting to be a part, they can also provide the structure and context for doing something great

-“invariably, the people who make the greatest impact in life have subjugated themselves to their profession, their institutions”⁵²

-theology affirms this—while the “church” is always used in the context of people—not buildings—it is also clear the church early on gathered at a specific place (I Cor 11:8; 14:19) and structured

-for good reason--structure is necessary to carrying out mission

-hence—Paul speaks often about “institution”, structure

a-for the church to be a DISCIPLINED MOVEMENT—with the mobilization of giftedness, there needs to be structured, trained leadership-Rom 12:8; Eph 4:11f; I Thess 5:12 (those who have charge over you); I Tim 3:5:17; Heb 13:17; I Pe 5:1-4
b-in order for the body of Christ to MATURE, it needs a structure where truth is proclaimed, doctrine is carefully

⁵¹ Freedom for Ministry, 10

⁵² David Brooks, “What Life Asks of Us”, NY Times, Jan 27, 2009

taught, people are confronted and informed, trained to contend with the truth, hold fast the faith, requires trained teachers-I Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:15; Col 1:28-29

c-in order for the church to be context of CARE, it needs a structure to be effective-cf Acts 6:ff—here, in the context of an apostolic church, radical, revolutionary—they were dealing with mundane issues of providing for widows; cf I Tim 5:9

d-in order for the church to WORSHIP corporately, there needs some structure-cf Acts 2:42; I Cor 11, 14; 16:1-2

e-in order to be a HOLY community, the church needs the structure of accountability, instruction, and discipline, where the unrepentant are shunned, creators of dissension confronted, the immoral removed, the idle corrected (Matt 18:15-19; Rom 16:17;; I Cor 5:1-5; Col 1:28; 2 Thess 3:6, 5:14; I Tim 5:20; Titus 3:10)

f-in order to live out the METAPHORS, the church requires a structure so that the church would act as a body, would attend to the needs at the altar as a priesthood, would live as a holy bride

g-in order for the church to GATHER-there has to be a place

h-in order for the church to serve as a MEDIATOR between God and the world

**-it must occasionally meet in a structured context to pray
-meet to allow Christ to indwell in His corporate body, wherein He is the Head (Col 1:15-20)**

-for while He indwells individually (I Cor 6:19), He also dwells corporately (I Cor 3:16)—a sign and foretaste of the kingdom of God in His reign

-the gathered church fulfills what God has chosen throughout history to do—work vicariously through the life of institutional, priestly communities

pt-we cannot get away from church in all its sweaty, smelly, concreteness

-but we can avoid “institutionalism”—if by it we mean—

-form becomes more important than function

-structure becomes an end to a means that a means to an end

3-Ministry is done in a manner both INCARNATIONAL AND ATTRACTIVE

-Jesus became flesh and blood, entered into our neighborhoods-Jn 1:14

-and calls us to never lose sight of doing the same

-but the church gathered can—must be—a context for the ministry of reaching lost people

-I Cor 14:24-25-the church gathered seems to be the place where God is also reaching lost people, using the witness of worship

-Jesus did ministry that was attractive-cf Mark 1:32; 6:34ff

-pt-on occasion—people came to Him

-the important thing is to not let attractive get in front of incarnational

CONCLUSION

It is one thing to call for renewal

-to establish ministries alongside the church

-seminaries, reformers, missionary movements, parachurch ministries like Crusade, counseling centers, rescue missions

-but to dismiss the local church as irrelevant and unnecessary as a context for ministry is to throw the baby out with the bath water

-ministry can take place in multiple gatherings—campuses, counseling office, at work

-but they are not to be confused with church

-and so long as the church fulfills its mission, calling people out of the world into worship and out into the world as witnesses—it remains the central context for ministry

So how do we avoid institutionalism—attractionalism over incarnational—create buildings, then our buildings create us?

1-keep the function—the mission, vision always in front

2-make the structures serve the body of Christ—not the body serving the structures

-structure always serves function—organization always serves organism

3-constantly check that the wineskins can accommodate the fermenting Jesus-Mk 2

-that rigor mortis has not begun to set in

-atrophy begins at the highest point

4-when necessary—be a prophetic voice—calling the existent church back to these things

5-THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MINISTRY

- our theology tells us that anyone who decides to pursue ministry, care for souls, must meet certain requirements**
- ministry is a high and holy calling that deserves nothing less**

Theology tells us we should be attentive to six things—

1-A CLEAR CONVERSION

-as Paul prepares to charge Timothy with ministry, he first recounts his experience on the Damascus road, that gave legitimacy to his ministry-I Tim 1:12-17

- it is a rule of the “most weighty importance”⁵³**
- for there are many counterfeits—make your calling and election sure writes Paul**

-without a definite and clear personal knowledge of Christ as Savior and Lord, no one will have an effective ministry in the biblical sense—and no one will have the character ministry demands

-you are guiding men over roads you have not traveled—you become a cloud without rain

-you are “like a mole professing to educate eaglets, a limpet elected to preside over angels”⁵⁴

George Whitefield lamented over the number of unbelieving pastors in New England

John Wesley – all his efforts to evangelize Indians and colonists in Georgia was a disaster. Finally he was asked, “Do you know Christ?” After getting salvation sorted out, he became a mighty flame for God

2-A DEFINITIVE CALL

- but what does this mean?**
- on this requirement, there are a couple of positions**

⁵³ Spurgeon, Letters to My Students, 14

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, Letters, 15

A-On one hand-some would argue that there is NO SPECIAL CALLING for certain ones to ministry

-this became popular in the church renewal movement of the 60's

1-in the first place—Scripture makes it clear that all in Christ are called

-first to God, and then to the purposes for which He created us

-all in Christ are called to be vital channels of God's Spirit, taking our giftedness and advancing the kingdom of God

-this is clear in Jesus' mandate-John 20:21

-the apostles address the church as called people-Rom 1:6; I Cor 1:9; Gal 1:6; Eph 4:1 (walk in a manner in which you were called); Col 3:15; I Pet 1:15

2-we cannot compare ourselves with those in Scripture who received a special call of God

-for where there was God's special call, there was always some form of supernatural, audible, revelatory visions, which are not the norm in a world with the completed revelation

-God's call tended to come at decisive, historical moments – in decisive ways

-during the opening days of the church

-bringing Israel back to God

3-finally-to argue otherwise—that there is some special call—leads to a hierarchal priesthood—creating a huge gap between laity and clergy

-the reformation has liberated us from such an approach (see Ogden, Unfinished Business-Returning the Ministry to the People of God)

-contemporary ministry, as well as an emerging generation, place particular value on community and egalitarianism

-in which it is natural to question the validity of call—and with it—clergy/laity distinctions

“How much longer”, asks Frost, “can the church ignore Paul's radical dissolution of the traditional distinctions between priests and laity, between holy men and common people?”

-ignore those in church history (like Zwingli) who radically called into question the institutional ministry, referred to ordination a human invention

-we should take our cues from the Quakers—who make it clear all are ministers, believer priests-I Pet 2:9

**B-On the other hand—some make the case that a call is a
PREREQUISITE TO ORDERED MINISTRY
-this is built on several arguments—**

1-The Nature of Ministry Demands a Special Call

**-ministry requires an authority that is not fitting for all members-the
authority to confront sin, give leadership**

-Gregory-“Not to everyone does it belong to philosophize about God”

-some must protect the church from deception and heresy

**-the need to protect the flock from unscrupulous guides and false
teachers has not diminished⁵⁵**

-there must be solid theological competence⁵⁶

-such a call is also necessitated by the severity of ministry

**-“The assurance of a divine call stirs up ministers of the Word, so that
each one, in his own station, in the fear of God, performs his functions
with greater diligence, faith, and eagerness, without weariness. And he
does not let himself be drawn or frightened away from his office by fear
of any peril or of persecution, since he is sure that he is called by God
and that this office has been divinely entrusted to him”-Chemnitz,
Lutheran theologian in the 1500’s⁵⁷**

**-it is a divine call that enables a preacher the inner security to preach
(Gardner Taylor)**

-cf Eze 3:16-27; Heb 13:17; Js 3:1

Will Willimon shares his own testimony—

**“An old preacher told me, ‘Don’t even try being a minister unless you
are called, unless you have no way of avoiding the summons.’ And I
believed him.”⁵⁸**

⁵⁵ Oden, BAM, 85

⁵⁶ Purves, 14

⁵⁷ Oden, BAM, 35

⁵⁸ Willimon, Pastor, 51

2-Scripture is a history of God calling people into special ministry—underscoring the point that all in ministry must receive a divine summons

- God called Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Amos, etc**
- while God called Israel as a whole to be a light to the nations, a nation of priests (Ex 19:6)**
- God called some out of this community of faith into a specific ministry—often into seemingly impossible objectives**
- these were not classified ads for anyone who would volunteer**
- theses were intentional, focused calls to individuals—each one unique—**
 - Moses-burning bush**
 - Samuel-Eli**
 - Gideon-angel**
 - David-Samuel**
 - Isaiah-a vision from God**
 - Jeremiah-called from the womb**

- Jesus called the 12-Mk 1:17,20; 3:13-19—who became the foundation of the church-Eph 2:20**
- called Paul-Acts 26:19; Gal 1:15; I Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:9**
- called gifted leaders in the early church-Acts 6:1-6; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 2:2**

- the Spirit called Saul and Barnabas-Acts 13**

Those who questioned this—like Korah and others in Numbers 16--who questioned the call of Moses

- (-“all in the congregation are holy—why then do you exalt yourself above the assembly of the Lord?”)**
- eventually—it got them swallowed up by an earthquake**

3-Early church practice respected the same necessity of calling to ministry

- a-the early fathers went so far as to see the bishop as a successor to the apostle**
 - ordination was done by the bishop to assure apostolic succession**
 - inspired by Moses selecting his successor in Joshua, who was set apart for ministry (Num 27:23)**

-Chrysostom-only those who exceed all others in spiritual excellence are fit for the office of ministry

-Gregory believed God ordained some--who surpass the majority in virtue and nearness to God

-such a sense of call sets a minister apart to a high and holy calling

The problem-their definitions scared themselves and others off

-provoked some to run, (like Gregory)—especially from the expectation, holiness, potential judgment that comes with such an understanding of call

-some have gone to radical lengths to disqualify themselves

-Ammonius-believing the body of a priest must be unblemished—took a pair of shears and cut off his left ear

b-Roman Catholics were committed to apostolic succession, special calling

c-others in early history viewed ordered ministry as a decisive calling

-St Francis of Assisi—"Go towards the poor"

-St Patrick had a dream-the Irish were calling—"come among us"

4-Later church practice has also associated ministry with a special call

a-Luther stressed ordained ministry as a gift of Christ to the church

-though he also emphasized that there is no true difference between clergy and laity—no difference in status except for the office and the work

b-Calvin wanted only a quiet place to study—but the horrific needs of the day drove him into the arena of pastoral care

-and if he didn't—perhaps no one would

-but he also respected the fact he could not call himself—it would have to be God⁵⁹

c-The church of England retained the orders of bishop, priest, deacon

-Griffith Thomas—to his students at Oxford-

"The call and consciousness of God are essential to a person at the outset of ministry. Unless one has it, one had better not start out."

⁵⁹ Oden, BAM, 84

-unless one has an intense desire, a convergence of circumstances, a giftedness, a training, and an affirmation of others—one should not pursue ministry

d-early American Christianity

**-the Puritans reserved ordered ministry for those called—
demonstrated by their ability to minister the word**

-those who were scholars of it received the laying on of hands

-JH Jowett – in his Yale lectures of the early 1900's

“How I hold with profound conviction that before a person selects the Christian ministry as one's vocation, he/she must have the assurance that the selection has been imperatively constrained by the eternal God.”⁶⁰

-he continues:

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.

God's constraint may be as soft and gentle as a glance, or it may seize us with a strong and invisible grip, where necessity is laid upon us.

Nonetheless – “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 peasants to early prayer and praise. The candidate for ministry must move like a person in secret bonds.”⁶¹

These special calls can be immediate (a forceful moment)

-but also—they can come over a period of time (Gordon MacDonald describes it as a continual dripping that beats on you till you capitulate)⁶²

-but for both—this calling is definite and distinct

-mediated by the body of Christ-I Tim 4:14

⁶⁰ Jowett, *The Preacher His Life and His Work*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1912, p. 12

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 12.

⁶² *God's Calling Plan*, CT

-in which there are no volunteers

-there is a “divine certainty” given to some (Luther to preach justification; Graham to evangelism), in which God’s ministers do not select their vocation – it is selected by God and confirmed by the body of Christ

-and often resisted by ministers due to personal inadequacy, impossibility of the task, overwhelmed by the task

CONCLUSION

-so who is right?

-is ministry simply a choice about a career, an opportunity—or a divine call?

-MacDonald in LJ makes the point that we walk a sort of theological tightrope

-on one side-it is critical that we affirm the calling of all saints to ministry—to what God has set in the heart

-the sacred ministry is not to be carried out in such a way laity is neglected or denied—but affirmed, enhanced

-on the other hand-there is a place to respect the requirements of a particular call God places on certain ones for ministry-cf 2 Tim 1:9; I Cor 9:16-woe to me if I don’t

-we don’t hear of calls so much today

-but to diminish the necessity of a call is to diminish or disenfranchise ordained ministry

-it is to nullify the special place God for ministers called to lead His church

-to discount a special call to some for ordered ministry is to risk “losing the spiritual example of men and women who have exchanged the life of normal human privilege for one that is sacrificial...walk away from the precedent that God has always selected out certain people,

given them unusual authority, and anticipated that they might suffer for His sake”⁶³

-consequently—we diminish the role of called leadership—need to follow

Oden describes this tightrope this way

“The sacred ministry is not to be affirmed in such a way that the ministry of 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 the ordained ministry is disenfranchised or diminished”⁶⁴

Adds Willimon-

“Damage is done to the unique quality of the ministry vocation when it is conflated with the vocation of all Christians to follow Jesus.”⁶⁵

-there is a balance of Col 3:16 (all are called to come with a word) and 4:17-some are called to a particular task—a ministry to fulfil

Back to Oden—who perhaps says it best—

“There remains a line as thin as a hair, but as hard as a diamond, between ordained ministry and the faithful layperson”

A third requirement—

3 – GODLY CHARACTER

Building a theology of ministry—we can get so focused on the nature and mission and context of ministry—

-and overlook the necessity of a sound theology of character

-for ultimately--MINISTRY FLOWS OUT OF ONE’S LIFE

Nouwen-“A Christian minister will never be able to minister if it is not his own personal faith and insight into life that forms the core of his pastoral work”

-the need for this is obvious

-there exists a significant percentage of ministers whose character has not matched their calling

⁶³ Gordon MacDonald, God’s Calling Plan

⁶⁴ Oden, BAM, 81

⁶⁵ Willimon, Pastor, 16

-forced terminations are on the rise due to control issues, poor people skills, leadership style, sexual immorality depression and mental breakdown, and other moral failures

-there are numerous explanations—

a-the stresses of ministry

-can lead ministers to see sinful acts as a way of release

-as even something deserved for the weight they must carry (cf Gordon MacDonald)

b-a misguided focus

-pastors more interested in becoming personalities rather than models

-a focus more on success in ministry than on personal faithfulness

-measuring everything by this

-“character molded more for success more than character for following Christ”⁶⁶

c-a lack of accountability

-ministers are suddenly thrust on center page—placed in a position of moral authority—with no real accountability structures

-and after a while, some may even assume they are above being challenged

-the begin to entertain a notion--one should not lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed (I Sam 26:23)

-or one should not impede this important work of God

d-unclear theology of character requirements for doing ministry

-the focus has been on methodology to be effective—or theology to defend positions

And too often-the result is a failure of ministry—for our postmodern age, in particular, notices truth only when it is lived out—and listens only when one speaks with authenticity

-but then—this has always been true

Ambrose wrote—

⁶⁶ Fitch, 83

- who seeks for a spring in the mud?**
- who wants to drink from muddy waters?**
- who will think a person to be useful when he/she is useless to oneself?⁶⁷**

Spurgeon—

- the gospel that flows through men spiritually unhealthy is like water along leaden pipes**
- debased, it will eventually injure the hearer**

-theology tells us character is the first preparation – God always begins here

- Moses – 80 yrs of prep**
- Joseph – 13 yrs**
- Joshua – understudy for years to Moses**
- David – lived in caves before palaces**
- Paul – 3 yrs in the desert**
- In each one, prayer, meditation, temptation forged their character (the three issues Luther declared “make the minister”)**

-the words of Spurgeon are instructive—“It will 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.”⁶⁸

It’s a habit that needs development, BOTH in seminary and beyond

- Take care, form the habit, of giving careful attention to your soul**
- Look hard at the stability of your spirit, the control of your emotions, the integrity of your life**

A-WHY IS CHARACTER SO IMPORTANT?

1. It is what VALIDATES MINISTRY

- There must be coherence between the public and the private**

⁶⁷ BAM, 13

⁶⁸ Charles Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, American Free Tract Society, 12

- Hence, Oden, “You must embody the behavior you teach”. “The responsible behavior of the pastor is the strongest evidence his hearers have that he takes his own counsel seriously.”⁶⁹
- Paul’s warning to Timothy applies here – Watch your life!
- 1 Tim 4:16 – a pastor’s first religious duty is to himself and his soul
- if you do-you will save yourself *and* your hearers
- it is that which God uses to minister to others
 - 1 Peter 5:3 – “but proving to be examples”
 - 1 Cor 4:17 – “He (Timothy) will remind you of my (Paul’s) ways.”
 - 2 Cor 6:3 – “giving no offense for anything – that the ministry not be discredited”
 - 1 Thess 2:10 – “You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers”
 - Acts 20:33-35 – Paul pointed back to his life, as he gave concluding admonitions to his elders – “in everything I showed you”

**Pt-you cannot put straight in others what is warped in yourself-
Athanasius**

2. It is what EMPOWERS MINISTRY

- Character gives force to what one does—
- Stowell – Character is the “critical mass” of ministry
- Gladden – describes the word as needing to become “bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, else it will have little power on the lips”
- Mt 7:17-20-fruitfulness of our ministry is proportional to the sanctification of our heart towards God

The implication—Satan will attack unmercifully here!

- he knows it only takes something small to invalidate a ministry – Ecc 10:1
- Moses’ ministry was upended by impatience-Num 20

B-WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER?

1. PURITY OF MOTIVE

⁶⁹ Oden, BAM, 24

- Self interest has no place
- Paul sought to focus on the higher motives
 - a-pleasing God
 - 2 Cor 5:9 (Paul's ambition); 1 Thess 2:4 (we speak not to please men—but God)
 - b-enabling those he ministered to make great spiritual investments
 - Phil 4:17 (not the gift, but your profit)

2. PURITY OF LIFE

- To be a minister is to promise to live a life in pursuit of holiness – ministry is a “vocation to holiness”-Neuhaus
- it is a pledge that engages the very core of the person.
- it means taking radical action to flee impurity – 2 Tim 2:22

3. DILIGENCE

- The work of saving ourselves and others from temptation, resisting the devil, establishing God's kingdom – is hard work
- and there are two dangers we need to avoid—that actually relate to each other
 - a-Acedia
 - The “noon day demon” will creep in the heat of midday– in subtle ways
 - this is how some in the early monastic tradition referred to laziness—or better, acedia, a word of Greek origin that means (lit) without care
 - that can mean lots of things—far deeper than mere sloth—
 - a despair over continuing to stay passionate for the things of God—that begins to doubt whether God really intended for ministers to reach for the heavens
 - a dullness of the soul that stems from restlessness
 - a dryness of the soul that keeps the word tasteless, the life of prayer pointless
 - when what is required is what Spurgeon calls “a vigorous piety”
 - if your zeal grows dull, people will feel your barrenness even

before you perceive it

Nonetheless—there can be laziness of the more obvious type--

- Consuming time in nothingness – 2 hours in a magazine, chalked up as study
- Hoppins – “He may imperceptibly lower his standard, failing to turn his whole energies into the current of his work – he becomes a

dabbler in literature, indulges in too much periodical and light reading – grows to be a social lounge – neglects his study and frequents his easy chair – loses the spirit of self-denial – and makes his work too easy.”

- **Evenings obliterated by TV – neither of entertainment nor education, but of “narcotized defense against time and duty” – Neuhaus**
- **It is the refusal to engage the pathos of other lives**
- **It can be apathy (activism grown weary)**
- **Failing to redeem the time – Eph 5:16**
- **Peterson-sloth is not about doing nothing at all—it is doing nothing of what we were created, called to do**

-the other danger

b-workaholism

- **we can throw ourselves into a work whose demands are never met—peoples’ expectations are never satisfied, and our own sense of spiritual adequacy for the task is never met—and it can drive us to ceaseless activity⁷⁰**
- **the sacred duty becomes either “the other mistress” or a joyless marathon, an insatiable and unrelenting master we serve in the name of Jesus**
- **Jesus knew His points of exhaustion-when to retreat-when to say—I’m not able to be at Lazarus’ home just yet**
- **Anderson-It is bad theology to have to love the world more than God, interpret calling in terms of the needs of the world than the will of God⁷¹**
- **A theology that allows no rest is not a theology of the cross but a theology of the curse**
- **Ironically—it’s its own laziness**

“Sloth is laziness at the center, while the periphery is a dazzle with a torrent of activity and talk. It is a refusal to do our real work”⁷²

What we must come to grips with in ministry is that most of us do not punch in time clocks – we can structure the day as we please and get away with doing very little—or maybe doing too much

⁷⁰ See chap 17, Ray Anderson, Shape of Practical Theology

⁷¹ Anderson, 287

⁷² Confessions of a Former Sabbath breaker, CT, 9/2/88

- a great deal of our success will depend upon intrinsic structures of time, energy
- ministry isn't for those who need external structures

4. REVERENCE

- A respect for the things of God
- to not let the “behind the scenes” make us cynical
- the day to day begin to treat the holy—preaching, leading worship, ministering to souls—as common, banal
- we must be careful not to make light of the work of God, treat it as a business of reports, attendance, graphs of baptisms/conversions, etc.
- allow my role as minister to turn into quality control engineer, or program director, coming up with products that will bring customer satisfaction

5. LOVING HEART

- Paul's epistles model a minister's requirement—love God's church—cf I Thess 2:8
- even to a stubborn and rejecting congregation in Corinth, Paul yet held out a heart of compassion and tenderness—2 Cor 6:11-13
- the practical importance of this can hardly be exaggerated
- we will confront people who are self-willed, self-centered, jealous, stubborn, bitter
- Jude—even amidst very difficult men, concludes by saying—“keep yourselves in the love of God”—vs 21
- -for he knows what bitterness, resentment will do—it will destroy our ministry, ruin our lives, creep in and kill our families
- God's advice--a heart of peace rather than a combative spirit – 2 Tim 2:24
- a heart that says – nothing pleases me more than what profits you, and nothing grieves me more than what is hurting you life

Polycarp, early bishop – of ministers – “They should be persons of generous sympathies with a wide compassion for humanity. It is their business to reclaim the wanderer, to keep an eye on the hurting”⁷³

-love is what will enable us to powerfully minister

-Baxter – “When we genuinely love, they will hear what you say, bear whatever you ask, follow wherever you lead”

How can we gain this kind of heart, especially amidst difficult people?

-lay our resentments before God daily—and pray for those who injure you

-submit your soul to constant surgery—hate, like little cancers, easily grow in the heart

-guard against impatience-much of ministry is slow

-but patience is critical – it is important to endure

- As Peterson notes, “Impatience is to pastoral character what strip mining is to land – a greedy rape of what can be gotten at the least cost – and then abandoned in search of another place to loot”

- Paul’s metaphors to Timothy were that of strength in grace – 2 Tim 2:1-7

6-INTEGRITY

-with money--it’s dangers should be kept under the closest scrutiny-I Tim 6

-with truth--our word must be our bond – Acts 20:27

- “Integrity can be lost in a thousand ways, but gained in only one way: rigorous, unrelenting devotion to truth and honesty”⁷⁴

- -note I Thess 2:4-6-Paul’s example

- Hence, make sure your stories are true – what is shared behind closed doors is kept with the greatest confidentiality

- Ministry without character is worthless

7-HUMILITY

-Jesus came to serve—not be served-Mk 10:45

-Paul’s life was a cruciformed life

-authoritarianism, status seeking have no place

⁷³ BAM, 11

⁷⁴ Means, 20

C-WHAT IS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING CHARACTER?

1-earlier theologians advocated and adopted ascetical practices—for they recognized that a holy calling will not save an unholy character

- we are required to be committed to the spiritual disciplines**
- realizing that apart from “interior renewal”, our outward ministry will likely destroy both minister and people⁷⁵**
- we can only take people as far as we are**

2-character development is not merely worked out in the privacy of our closet—but also in the context of community, committed to repentance, confession, discernment, and speaking the truth in love-Heb 10:24-25

D-CAN A MINISTER BE DISQUALIFIED FROM MINISTRY?

-any counsel from God’s Word?

1-some would say no

- the only unpardonable sin is the sin of rejecting Jesus**
- everything else is redeemable**
- Moses murdered—and yet was placed into ministry**
- David committed adultery—and remained in God’s service**

-on the other hand

2-some would say yes

- Scripture suggests disqualification**
- Paul feared disqualification-I Cor 9:24-27**
- James warns of a stricter judgment-Js 3:1; cf Lev 10; Lk 12:48; I Pet 4:17**

Some guidelines—

1-at the least--one should go through a restorative process prompted first of all by the sinner’s desire to repent and submit

2-going back into ministry should be at the church’s prerogative—not the sinner’s

- coming at a time when it is clear the character flaws revealed are addressed**

⁷⁵ Purves, Classical Tradition, 118

-this means that re-entering ministry is not a given—it is a privilege and calling not to be taken lightly

A fourth requirement--

4 – SPECIFIC GIFTEDNESS

- Conversion, call, character go only so far if there is not gifting suitable for ministry
- ministry itself is a gift of the Spirit-I Tim 4:14; Eph 4:11f—affirm the legitimate place of an ordered ministry, where people with specific gifts are called by God to lead His church—and are set apart by the laying on of hands
- Scripture would suggest that all in Christ receive gifts, but those in ordered ministry must be appropriately gifted to carry out the mandates of ministry-lead the church, ensure the church is founded on truth, protect the church

Owen – no man can be a minister who is not gifted by Christ

“The church has no right to call and send into the Lord’s vineyard men whose gifts do not warrant the confidence God has called them to”

A fifth requirement--

5 – AFFIRMATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

- it is important the body of Christ is involved at some point—affirming those who choose ministry-
- “It is incorrect to say either that one is properly called by God alone without the church, or properly called by the church alone without God”⁷⁶

- among the things needing affirmation—
- -faith and call, character, giftedness, preparation

And it must be done with great seriousness—“Those who recommend an unfit person for ministry bear responsibility for subsequent undesired consequences”⁷⁷

Finally--

6 – APPROPRIATE PREPARATION

⁷⁶ Oden, BAM, 32

⁷⁷ Ode, BAM, 103

- followers are viewed in Scripture as learners (disciples, mathetes) who need to be taught
- the complexity of problems – the eternal significance of our task means we dare not casually approach preparation
- souls hang in the balance
- a deep knowledge of God and a deep understanding of people is demanded-cf 2 Tim 2:15

Oden – ministry cannot proceed without the acquisition of hard won skills, which cannot be substituted by the pretense of piety

- This involves the mastery of knowledge, development of keen moral awareness, spiritual disciplines, observation and reflection
- Gaining skills so you do not rely on your own perceptions—yet gaining an confidence in making reasonable judgments

But remember it is an art, not merely a skill to be learned

- requiring a cast of mind, an intuition guided by God, and an understanding of people and their nature⁷⁸

Hence, “The good minister is not too hasty to launch from Port Seminary, but awaits the ballast of learning and the wind of opportunity.” – John Earle, Anglican pastor

If the training has been done well—it has made us permanently restless with ministry as it is, and look for the ministry that is to be⁷⁹

7-FAITH, PRAYER, SPIRIT

-to do ministry will require faith (Heb 11) to see beyond the walls, prayer (Luke 11) to lay hold of God’s willingness, and Spirit (Luke 24:49) to do the seeming impossible

⁷⁸ Purves, PT, 119

⁷⁹ Willimon, “First Call”, Christian Century, June 17, 2008

6-RESISTANCE TO AND AUTHORITY FOR MINISTRY

As we build our theology of ministry—its important that this same theology prepare us for the inevitable resistance that comes with ministry—and the authority we have from God to deal with it

A-RESISTANCE TO MINISTRY

There will be resistance—discouragement

-there is a conflict between two kingdoms

-there will be closed doors, there will be unwilling hearts, attacks, deficits, lack of growth, dark nights of the soul

-we are in this unseen war—where resistance includes persecution and loss of life

In this last century alone—more have lost their lives for the sake of Christ than in all of church history

-Scripture's stories AFFIRM THIS

-in the OT, those in ministry faced ongoing resistance

-Moses-was challenged at every level (Num 11-people complain; Num 12-Miriam and Aaron; Num 14, 16)

-most every king was tempted to numerous sins (David, adultery; Solomon, lusts; Uzziah, Hezekiah, Asa, Josiah-pride)

-the story of Nehemiah is one opposition after another

-the prophets were thrown into pits, mocked by the hearers, slain by the adversary (cf Jeremiah, Daniel)

-In the NT

a-the story of Jesus is the story of the Son of God resisted from the very beginning of ministry (Mk 1:13, 32-39)

-He came to destroy the works of the evil one-I Jn 3:8; Mk 3:27

b-the early church faced persecution and displacement (I Thess 1:6-10; I Pet 2:11; Js 1:2-4; Heb 11:23-12:2; Rev 6:9)

-ministers like Paul were resisted at every level—by each of the worlds he lived in—Hellenistic culture (Acts 17), Judaizers (Acts 18), Roman authorities (2 Tim 1:8-10; Col 4:3); church culture (2 Cor 11)

-without/ within--church dissension, physical challenges, persecution, malicious attacks, people bailing out, team disruption, angry mobs, the result of Paul's faithfulness to live a cruciformed life

-little wonder he warned the elders that "savage" wolves would come-Acts 20:29

-to the Corinthians he recounted the personal price of being God's minister; 1 Cor 4:8-13, "we have become as the scum of the world-THE REFUSE OF ALL THINGS"

-I Cor 16:9 – God has opened wide a door – and there are many adversaries! cf. 2 Cor 6:4-10

-in the pastoral epistles, Paul repeatedly warned that ministry will entail hardship—there are powers and principalities that contend with kingdom work

-we are the church militant-engaged in conflict

-it will be a fight—but it is a good fight-I Tim 1:18-wage the good warfare!

1-REASONS FOR RESISTANCE

a-Our IDENTITY as ministers of the gospel

-Baxter warned: "If you will be leaders against Satan, he will not spare you. He bears the greatest malice against the one who is engaged in working the greatest damage against him."

-Spurgeon, in his lectures to his students, gave this warning—"Upon the whole, no place is so assailed with temptation as the ministry...our dangers are more numerous and more insidious than those of ordinary Christians."⁸⁰

b-Our MISSION inevitably leads to it

-we have been called to advance God's kingdom—equip the church

-a prophetic voice calls for an alternative community—evoking, forming, reforming an alternative community

-and a dominant culture cannot tolerate criticism-note Jeremiah

-Moses countered an oppressive culture with politics of justice and compassion—and they wanted to kill him

⁸⁰ Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, 24

-things haven't changed

c-Our UNION guarantees it

-Jesus-if they hated Me-they will hate you-Jn 15:18-20; 2 Tim 3:12

Ministries are marked endeavors – and ministers are marked people

2-FORMS OF RESISTANCE

a-OVERT-the early church were food for the lions, entertainment for the pagans

-Paul faced mobs-Acts 19

-Bonnie Wittherall was shot in the face-Lebanon

b-COVERT-subtle temptations

-not so much enticements to do evil but distractions to keep us from doing the good

1-temptations that get us off the ministry God has called us to

-Peterson-"Though it may not seem like it at face value, ministers are persecuted in North America, and I don't believe I am exaggerating when I say that it is far worse than in seemingly more hostile countries. Our culture doesn't lock us up; it simply and nicely castrates us, neuters us, and replaces our vital parts with a nice and smiling face."

-and then we are imprisoned in a mesh of things that keep us from being ministers⁸¹

-bullied by well-meaning but ignorant demands

2-temptations that lull us to sleep when it comes spiritual war

-we've been treated nicely for so long that we have forgotten we are in enemy territory

3-temptations that deceive us

-hence it is imperative we have a good sense of hamartiology evil (see Plantinga-Not the Way, Wright-A Theology of the Dark Side)

a-sin is deceptive-for sin to do its worst must look its best

b-sin is parasitical-it always aims to take something good and pervert it

-sin is essentially SIN IS HIJACKED GOODNESS (read N.G. Wright-Theology of the Dark Side)

⁸¹ Unnecessary Pastor, 183

-“evil is nothingness”—it draws its energy from what God created (Barth

-like money—something that can be good—but can become a god called Mammon once bounds are transgressed

c-sin is a transgressor—it oversteps its bounds—and so as we submit, we end up making ourselves gods

The aim is to disorder the soul, disintegrate our character

3-FOCUS OF RESISTANCE TO MINISTRY

-here are four—

a-PRIDE

-few fields will expose the ego so relentlessly to the ruses of pride and vanity as ministry

-we’re up front, we’re in positions of authority, positions that set us up as the one who can help you through your weakness

-we can be tempted to seek applause-become enamoured with ourselves, human approval

1-there is the subtle temptation to manipulate, impress, use our gifts for self-aggrandizement, use spiritual tools to manipulate, assume we are necessary

- Peterson, “Few fields of work expose the ego so relentlessly to the ruses of pride and vanity as ministry.”**
- We begin to believe in our importance, and we have difficulty acknowledging failure, in our quest to be perceived as all together**
- To use His abilities to gather a crowd, make a show, build a name**
- Use the pulpit to work out grievances**

2-there is the subtle temptation to start relying on our own power, enslaved by the need to keep up a pace in order to ensure a congregation is growing—and no longer relying on God

-Luther, speaking of pride, warned, there is no more harmful vice to ministry⁸²

-we need to constantly be on guard against authoritarianism and status seeking-Mk 10:35-45

⁸² Luther, WA 17II, p.144; WLS 2, pp. 952-53

b-SEXUAL TEMPTATION

- Paul alerted Timothy to this-2 Tim 2:22
- I've seen so much in my own peers-grad-suicide/ spiritual father/best friend
- In the Catholic church, they will pay approximately 1 billion in civil lawsuits over the next 10 years for sexual misconduct

c-RESTLESSNESS

- much of ministry is not glamorous-"cleaning out the barns, mucking out the stalls"
- we can compare to others-look at the other side of the fence-failing to realize the grass is brown on both sides
- we can become spiritual wanderlusts who commit ecclesiastical pornography, parish glamorization-seek passage to Tarshish
- become "ecclesiastical climbers"-Hughes
- It is a serious temptation, for it ultimately distracts, can rob present ministry of the vigor it demand and deserves
- It can generate a sense of anxiety, ungratefulness, anger (often directed at those we minister to – why can't they be what I expect them to be – or like that people group?)
- As Peterson puts it, "Our voices take on a certain stridency as our anger and disappointment at being stuck in this place begin to leak into our discourse."
- We sometimes need to make a vow of stability—get out of our adolescent boredom

d-DEPRESSION/LOST HEARTS/DARK NIGHTS

- on the heels of the previous temptation is this one
 - Whether it is restlessness, or weariness in well-doing (Gal 6:9), vocational demoralization, compassion fatigue, or facing severe difficulties –we can become so busy caring for the household of God that we neglect the One who called us there (Taylor, Leaving Church)

- We must remember that Satan ultimately has a primary mission of driving us out of ministry—and he will con us to mistrust God’s care – wonder--where is God?
 -he will do anything to take advantage of the tones of our minds—to unhinge our spirits, sour our spirits, paralyze our exertions, bringing the dark cloud of unbelief over us
 -cause us to believe it is God who is our adversary (Job 13:13-16)

- there will be despair over the demands—a tiredness that seeps into our bones—as we invest in lives that sometimes leave us after years of pouring in
 -“having found someone kind enough to accept their radioactive waste, they have no intention of coming back to visit”⁸³

- there is also the strong sense of inadequacy
 -Calvin-“Ministry is not an easy and indulgent exercise, but a hard and severe warfare, where Satan is exerting all his power against us, and moving every stone for our disturbance”⁸⁴
 -Fisher – We are in a high demand – low stroke environment
 -it can come in the middle of life, middle of ministry
 -we can over time lose heart, for people are not always ready to change
 -“Ministry is like the drip of water against the stone – you know it is making ridges, but it takes a long time to show up.”
 -and sooner or later, we begin to no longer want to drip

- read Martin Lloyd Jones, Spiritual Depression

4-GOD’S USE OF RESISTANCE

-RESISTANCE CAN BE USED BY GOD TO REFINE US

- 17:3-God uses the refining pot to purify silver—the furnace to purify gold—and tests to purify us, bring us face to face with who we really are—what we’re capable of becoming
- 25:4-out of the fire--we become a vessel for the smith-25:4
- 27:17-out of sparks--we become sharpened for the task

⁸³ Taylor, 146

⁸⁴ quoted in Bridges, p. 14

tance

- Carson, “Ministers are not only appointed, they are forged.”
- Oden puts it this way-“No Christian teacher or exponent is worth listening to who is not willing to suffer if need be for the truth of what is taught. The readiness to suffer for Christ is an intrinsic part of the whole fabric of Christian living, and hence teaching, and thus not an optional part of the equipping of God’s minister”⁸⁵
- Luther acknowledged how much he owed to his enemies, for “through the raging of the devil they have so buffeted, distressed, and terrified me that they have made me a fairly good theologian, which I would not have become without them”⁸⁶

So what do we do?

B-AUTHORITY FOR MINISTRY

-along with a theological assessment of our resistance—there must be a corresponding theology that defines our authority, our power

-how does God make us equal to the demands and pressure we face?

-how is it possible that ministry is suffused, saturated with the power of God?

-how do we fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12)?

- i.e. take the offensive, run toward righteousness, keep a steady course, rendering good for evil, overcoming evil with good?

1-LAY HOLD OF THE AUTHORITY WE HAVE AS MINISTERS

-several passages suggest an authority that is ours in Christ

-first—come to grips with Christ’s authority over the devil (Matt 3), hearts (Matt 7), disease (Matt 8), storms (Matt 8), demons (Matt 9), forgiveness (Matt 9), everything (Matt 28)

⁸⁵ Oden, *The Living God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 358

⁸⁶ Luther, *WLS III*, pp. 1358-60

-second-come to grips with this authority now transferred to us
-Mark 3:15—we have been given authority over darkness (cf 4:39; 1:25)
-Matt 5:14-we are the light of the world-the work of light is to eliminate darkness
-(Eph 6:10-20)-our weapons are not merely defensive but offensive—underscoring we are to be active agents—transmitters of God’s authority
-we put this on the same way we put on Christ—by being continually transformed

-behind the authority of Mark 3:15 is the work of Christ (Col 1:13; 2:15-the enemy has been disarmed and displayed as defeated—and his final end is foreshadowed
-hence—there is an authority He expects us to wield-cf Mk 4:39
-there are prayers he expects us to pray/Word He expects us to use
-we have the authority to withstand, resist, unmask, and move forward (cf Neh 4:6)

-equally so, we have the task of reminding the body of Christ that the sovereignty of the powers has been broken, a limit has been set for their work, and an authority has been given for ours
(though we cannot become triumphalistic—we have not yet come to the final moment of conquest-I Cor 15:24)

2-GET IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

-for the Spirit is necessary for dealing with the powers
a-the power of Jesus’ earthly ministry was attributed to the work of the Spirit-Acts 10:38

b-the early church was commanded to wait for the power of the Spirit-Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8

-and each time the Spirit was poured out-the church received great power-Acts 4:31-33

c-there is a power working through us (Eph 3:18)
-this requires that working side by side a theology of power is a theology of weakness (Marva Dawn)

- that we operate out of our weakness-Gal 2:20; 6:14
- our weapons are His weapons—and unless we are equipped—we will fall
- it is a battle against the powers—not against the people aligned with them—but it is always God’s work through our weakness⁸⁷
- Paul attributed all the power he had for ministry to the work of the Spirit-Rom 15:18-19
- and admonished Timothy to take hold of this power for ministry-2 Tim 1:7
- for in and of himself—he would not be able to fight the good fight

3-DEVOTE ONESELF TO PRAYER

- for prayer is what releases God’s willingness and power to act-Mk 9:29; Matt 9:38
- something happens in the invisible realm that affects the visible—history is formed, forces are confronted
 - Jesus began His ministry praying; Luke 3:21
 - the more popular His ministry, the more fervent He was to escape to the desert-Mk 1:35

4-CONFRONT SIN WITH WISDOM

- a-for sexual sin
 - build fences—the fence of rest (for stress, weariness will set you up); the fence of realized consequences (Alcorn)
 - Haggart-the travel, the connections, the applause, the power, the perks, the introit to people of position, the opportunity to say an influential word to teachable young people, the certainty of God’s anointing—are all gone
 - the fence of relationships (starting with wife, key relationships of accountability)
 - bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ-2 Cor 10:5
- b-for restlessness

⁸⁷ See Marva Dawn, Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacle of God, 130f

-first-it is good to aspire to the place where God call us – a place as Buechner put it, “...where our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

-second-be careful not to glamorize, romanticize-- remembering that, “every time we open a church door, and take a careful look, we will find them there again...sinners.”

-third-Phil 4:11, learn to be content, dig in, feel a part of our people, realize there are pros and cons everywhere

c-for dealing with depression

1-Take care of your soul:

-pastoral work is not easy—Luther-“The household sweat is great; the political sweat is greater; the church sweat is the greatest”⁸⁸

2-Know well your theology proper

3-Have that one person who so believes in you that he/she will be there to get you back on course

4-Remember that you are not alone

- -Paul must have dealt with such despair—2 Corinthians; cf 2 Tim 4:9-18
- Such despair is the common lot – Spurgeon, for all his greatness, fought deep bouts of depression
- Catherine of Siena (1300’s), patron saint, spoke often of her overwhelming sense of failure
- Luther despaired over the burden of soul care – note W&S (Oden), p. 13
- All concluded that ultimately it was the adversary seeking to drive them out of ministry

5-Remember you are not God

-you are not called to be the savior of the world

d-for dealing with pride

⁸⁸ Luther, “Lectures on Genesis Chapters One to Five, 1535-36,” WA 42,159,WLS2, p.951

**-keep in mind we are totally saints and totally sinners
-and while we have worth—we are not indispensable (cf Esther)
-we are here—then gone-Ps 39—“The world’s cemeteries are filled
with indispensable men”**

**-we have important work—but if we don’t do it, God will find
someone else**

**-journal-stay close to God--prayer rescues us from a preoccupation
with self, pulls into adoration of God, puts us in our place**

**-keep ever in front your desperate need—if not, if we fall prey to
self-reliance and self-exaltation, we invite our God to break us our self-
assurance - Piper**

**-keep in front the example of people who made it to high places and
then imploded**

**-MacDonald-there is an ego that seeks to destroy us—and amasses
energies that, unrestrained, tempt us to do the very things we believe
against**

e-for dealing with material things

-Marva Dawn talks about our need to desacralize things, money

-recognizing that things, money easily control

**-pt-things carry a spiritual force, a potential for idolatry-cars,
technology**

7-ASSESSING MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

How should we measure, evaluate ministry?

-it's important—especially in an age that has tended to shift pastoral ethics from one of faithfulness to one of productivity and success

Nearly 20 years ago, Kent Hughes wrote a book describing his own personal crisis in ministry, Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome

- **Sooner or later – you begin to assess**
- **How do I measure this thing called ministry?**
- **Have I been successful? Especially living in a culture caught up in success**
- **Have I been a failure? What does failure mean to God?**
- **Is it okay to strive for success?**
- **What is success?**

Are there theological guidelines? Here's what Scripture teaches—

1-It's biblical to dream – Ecc 11:1-6

- **It's important in ministry to be future oriented – forward looking**
- **Better to want to change the world than settle for a 4X8 world- John 1 and the story of Nathanael**
- **It's legitimate to hope – our theology centers around hope**
- **But one must hold dreams loosely**
 - **What God has in mind may not be what we envisioned (Pro 16:1-3)**

2-It's biblical to seek God's blessing – 1 Chron 4:9-10

- **Not demand it**
- **But realize God delights in granting it**
- **For God promotes-Josh 3:7 “today I will begin to exalt you”**

- 1 Sam 2:7 – Hannah
- Eze 17:24 – I make high the low tree
- 1 Chron 29:12 – David-It is in Your hand to make great
- 1 Peter 5:6 tells us, promotion comes in His way – willingly posturing ourselves, under His hand
 - Andrew Murray, “Water always fills the lowest places first.”
 - How do we posture ourselves? Degrade, humiliate, and tell others we’re ugly?
 - True humility is not self-degradation – it’s magnifying God
 - It’s not stepping down, it’s standing next to God – Isa 6, Job 42
 - Cf I Cor 2:1-5
- Promotion comes in His time – 1 Peter 5:6 – the kairos – the right moments—Scripture is the account of God occasionally making people successful-cf Gen 39:2ff, vs 39
- Promotion comes for His purposes
 - He never brings us success to stroke our egos – but to further His kingdom

3-It’s okay to have ambition

-Jesus told His disciples that they would do greater things (John 14)
 -in the parable of the talents—God does not honor those who play it safe
 -but one must be able to detect the odor of personal ambition
 -especially in our culture of self absorption, consumerism, success
 -the battle with wrong ambition can be huge—the sort that is more concerned with results than faithfulness
 -concerned to win the largest church game

-the question before us is--is it holy ambition or wholly ambitious?
 -it’s not new--Paul warned the Philippians—do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit-2:3
 -we must be willing to go after it—yet ready to die to our ambitions when God changes our course

4-It’s critical to measure success as God measures success

-measuring success in ministry is not easy—

- **Stores can count customers, add up sales**
- **Factories can count orders**
- **Farmers can measure crops**
- **But how do we measure success in ministry?**
- **Here are some ways we tend to measure—**
 - size of church, practice, organization**
 - level of proficiency in speaking**
 - an advanced degree**
 - authoring a published book**
 - conferences we speak at**

-God has His guidelines

A. It cannot be measured with the same precision as business

-we can, should use metrics that measure effectiveness, growth, accomplishment of the mission

-after all—“There is no virtue in Christian leadership that does not recognize at some point the importance of vision, strategy, and good administration”⁸⁹

-Collins is helpful here (Good to Great and the Social Sectors)

-but while numbers tell us important things—they miss measuring how well a church is functioning—e.g. are lives being transformed?

-if we are not careful—measurements can move us to more managerial forms of leadership—oriented toward growth rather than spirituality—success rather than fidelity

-the desire shifts from pastor-theologian to CEO

B. It cannot be measured merely by outward growth

-in Luke 16:15-Jesus warned of measuring as the world measures

-in ministry, we measure things differently

-“The success of a movement is not to be assessed in the light of its numerical size; to do so is to submit to the dominion of the very idols that Christian faith is seeking to subvert”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Stackhouse, Gospel Driven Church, 221

⁹⁰ Stackhouse, 164

**-if we don't understand this, we will get all messed up—you first must know what genuine ministry is; how God measures it; what pleases God most; and make this matter the most
-otherwise, you will spend your life using the world's measuring stick, and become utterly confused and frustrated⁹¹**

- **Isaiah – He was given a ministry of unresponsiveness – Isa 6:9-11 – yet he was successful**
- **Jeremiah – he was a successful prophet - but no one listened**
 - **Israel still went to Babylon**
 - **Those that remained behind still went to Egypt**

**Many of the NT churches were small—but God worked powerfully within
-and what growth there is is caused by Him-I Cor 3:7—we can take no credit**

Oden-“Effectiveness in a church is not measured by size of congregation, but by depth of genuine hearing of the Word of God”⁹²

C. Success is sometimes measured by loss

- **It is true—where there is health, there will be growth-Warren**
- **And it is true numerical increase can serve to give some validation to ministry success**
- **Yet, John 6 tells us that the most successful minister who ever lived shepherded a church-shrinkage program**
 - **It was one of the great evangelistic failures in church history**

Point: We may have tons of consumers, and no disciples--John 6:26; Matt 28:19-20

-if people are not transformed into radical Christlikeness—do numbers mean much?

D. Success is measured by what God sees internally—not externally

⁹¹ see London, 63

⁹² Oden, W&S, 38

- **Paul-I Cor 2:1-5-my message was marked mainly by its simplicity—relying on the Spirit to speak powerfully through me**
- **I Cor 13:1-3-if I have all of these accomplishments—but have not love—it matters little**
- **Here are some guidelines**
 - 1-for my life**
 - **Have I been faithful?-I Cor 4:1-2**
 - **Did I serve with humility?-Acts 20:19**
 - **Did I declare everything God called me to declare?-Acts 20:20, 27**
 - **Did I follow the Spirit’s leading?-20:22**
 - **Did I complete the ministry God called me to?-Acts 20:24**
 - **Did I carry out ministry with the right motives?-Acts 20:33**
 - **Did I give more than I received?-Acts 20:35**
 - 2-for my ministry**
 - **Is this a community where I can confess sin?**
 - **Is this a place where prayer is taken seriously?**
 - **Is this a place one hears a word from God?**
 - **Is this a place that cares if I am sick?**
 - **Is this a place an outsider is welcomed?**
 - **Are marriages being saved?**
 - **Are people financially helping others?**
 - **Are people invited into each other’s homes?**
 - **Are people being restored from addictive behavior?**
 - **Is there a marked statistical difference that differentiates the ethics of this community from culture?⁹³**

5-Success can be one of life’s greatest tests

- **The tough times can sometimes do us well – the good times do us in – Hezekiah – 2 Chron 32**
 - **Vss 22-24 choked when the hand of blessing was on his life**

⁹³ Fitch, The great Giveaway

- **Proverbs 27:21 – “Success is one of the rare, if unique moments, God will leave us to ourselves to expose what is in our innermost being.”**
 - **Ironside, “ There’s no hotter crucible to test a man than when he is put through a fire of praise and adulation. It is the most searing furnace.”**
 - **Will we give God the credit?-note I Cor 3:4-7—“but it was God, not we, who made it grow**
- **Time magazine – Harvard Psych – Dr. Stephen Berglas**
 - **His work – he focuses on people who suffer from success**
 - **People who’ve made it to the top**
 - **People who have experienced enormous accomplishment**
 - **For many, his observation is that they “implode”**
 - **They burst apart within and everything crashes—like a submarine that gets too deep—and implodes**
 - **The drive that propels some leaders towards extraordinary levels of achievement is a drive that often keeps expanding even after reasonable goals and objectives have been achieved—and like a river that breaks a levy—can do lots of damage⁹⁴**

Over years he has discovered 4 common results of success
a-Arrogance-I give and give in this position-I deserve special privileges—even the privilege of living above the rules; I have done so much for these people—it’s time I receive something; I am so good, I can talk my way out of anything

b-Aloneness

c-Need for adventure

d-Adultery-that comes as a result of a narcissistic view of life—that I am owed for my success—I am above the rules (e.g. John Edwards, 2008)

⁹⁴ MacDonald, Blog, Nov 9, 2006 Discussing ted Haggart

CONCLUSION

-Kent Carlson warns that a pastoral ethic centered around productivity and success can be brutal to the soul. Ambition that centers around self is all too common in ministry, especially in American culture.

When God sees success, He sees what is usually hidden—the prayer life of a minister, a ministry. He sees faithfulness, integrity, hard work, a servant heart, a humility that glories in the things that are often hidden.

8-THE INGLORIOUS – AND GLORIOUS SIDE OF MINISTRY

INTRO

As our theology bears out, ministry has both an inglorious and glorious side to it. Wrestling with both sides, I can identify with John Newton – “Ministry is the worst of all trades, but the best of all professions”. Hybels adds, “No other vocation offers higher highs – and lower lows”. Understanding both will enable us to maintain a certain steadiness as we do ministry.

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- Despite what you read in the publications and see at the conferences – ministry is by and large, not very glamorous, or attractive most of the time
- as Peterson puts it – “Ministry 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 stead, we will be severely disappointed.”

We will sometimes be asked to do the most mundane of things—
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-like Peterson, we will find ourselves thinking—

“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.”

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the gospel is profoundly countercultural—a declaration the kingdom has arrived

But sometimes it is like learning high school Spanish – it is soon nonfunctional from disuse. Did we learn the wrong language?

Not really – it's where everyone God uses starts –

- The first act of Jesus in the Upper Room was to show the disciples that ministry begins with a towel and a basin—Jn 13

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- This is where most of us begin—need to begin—picking up, cleaning up

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- We may sometimes feel like a type-writer repairman in an age of computers – Leonard Sweet
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⁹⁷ Oden, BAM, 26

-In the section “Call to Ministry”, I noted my favorite – Ammonius, asked to be Bishop in 365, seeing that he was “trapped”, he pleaded – swore he would not accept their 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 he said, “Now it is impossible – for OT tradition makes clear that the body of a priest must be unblemished.”

Yet—as Baxter puts it—“It is no safe course to imitate Jonah, in turning our back upon the commands of God. If we neglect our work, He has a spur to quicken us; if we run away from it, He has messengers enough to overtake us, and bring us back”-Baxter, RP, 130-131

B-THE GLORIOUS

The good news is that there is a magnificent side to ministry – which overshadows the dark side

-a fact we will need to hang on—something often buried under the pile of daily tasks

-dismissed under the barrage of criticisms

- Paul speaks of this in 2 Tim 2:20-21-“special instruments” set apart**
- Oden “Those seeking to be ministers do well to think of themselves as vessels set apart for extraordinary, honorable, special purposes.”**

A closer look – and one realizes there is no other profession that comes close to the glory reserved for ministry

Anglican Bishop Gilbert Burnet, writing in 1692 on “the dignity of sacred employment”, noted that as much as the soul is better than the body, as much as eternity is far superior to this transitory life, so does ministry excel all other professions⁹⁸

1- THERE’S GREAT GLORY IN BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS

⁹⁸ Oden, BAM, 23 (Burnet, Of the Pastoral Care, chap 1, 41)

- Of being a conduit for God, ministering needed words, life-changing words, bring words of healing, being a spiritual midwife
- Handling the most awesome power – the Word of God – of guarding a treasure entrusted to us – 2 Tim 1:14
- It was Jesus who said to those serious about the business of the great commission – “And lo, I am with you always” – there is the glory of God’s presence
- Paul, constantly arrested, was nourished by the glory of his vocation – even in 2 Corinthians, with all its despair and darkness, Paul could write of the glory of being involved in the ministry of life – 2 Cor 3:7-8

-this is our primary work, bearing witness to Jesus, to His present, living, redemptive, reigning work

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones left a promising medical career to enter ministry – 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 man to call him to be a herald of the gospel.”

The glory of bringing good news is captured by Ray Stedman, “I will never be given a greater honor than what has already been given to me – that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

If God calls you to preach – don’t stoop to be a king

2 – THERE’S GREAT GLORY IN DOING WHAT GOD CALLS GOOD

- God calls the work of ministry good – I Tim 3:1
- It is a “good work” - - kalos – beautiful, noble – worthy of double honor – I Tim 5:17
- Images that remind us – that in spite of the world’s values there’s great glory in the sight of God to be in ministry

3 – THERE’S GLORY IN THE HIDDENNESS

- In the silence
- They may not see us at 7:00 a.m. praying, entering into partnership with the Spirit Sunday morning in the chapel

- They may not see you investing deeply into lives in the counseling office
- They may not see you in the hidden jungles north of Manila, or in the back streets of Beirut
- Or staying up late in the night wrestling over the accuracy of a text
- Much of ministry takes place in obscurity
- Work that needs to be left there – to reveal it would rob one of the glory reserved for eternity

4 – THERE’S GLORY IN WATCHING OVER SOULS

- overseeing life change-preparing people for heaven
- There are few tasks on earth that have such ultimate responsibility – and accountability in judgment
- We are involved with people from birth to death – at their brightest moments and darkest moments – in their most profound moments
- “No other vocation allows a person to get so close to so many people in such life-changing ways”⁹⁹
- We often get the best seat for life’s highest moments – whether it be in the hospital room to celebrate birth, the altar to celebrate marriage, the front of a chapel to mourn death or to stand by a widow at a grave site.
- It is a tremendous trust to lead people in the things that matter most
- We will sit in the front row to view the spiritual contest for a soul
- London-“I love the privilege of living at the front lines of life where grace works and where the peace treaties of reconciliation are cosigned by God and broken people. As flawed and frail as I know myself to be, I am privileged to represent Christ at the main events of peoples’ lives”¹⁰⁰
- We will be invited into the intimate part of people’s lives – dedication of their lives, their children, their baptism
-
- We will have the privilege of being the life raft when the ship has gone down
- and in those moments, there is a bond that is forged

⁹⁹ London, 120

¹⁰⁰ London, 134

-Fisher, describing his relationship with a family through a tragic death notes—“As long as I live, I am bound to each member of that family with cords of love. The extreme moments of ministry do that kind of binding.”¹⁰¹

5 – THERE IS GLORY IN THE GREAT CHALLENGE

- No other work will test your will, your emotions, your intellect, your creativity, your stamina, your patience, your tact, your authenticity, your perseverance – helping people through crisis – is there a greater challenge?**

Hopping – “There is no profession in which a person, if his heart is in it, has the opportunity of exerting every faculty to a better purpose for a more direct good.”

Kesler – Ministry, if you want to be effective, demands everything you’ve got

6 – THERE’S GLORY IN ENTERING THE SAME PROFESSION CHOSEN BY THE LORD JESUS

- To partner with him in His work, shepherd souls**
- To know He understands how we feel**
- To enter into a true fellowship of His sufferings-Phil 3**
- “Working with God, I wouldn’t give that up to be president or prime minister” Allister Brown, Scottish pastor**

7 – THERE WILL BE GREAT GLORY IN JUDGMENT

- Though there is the warning of stricter judgment (Js 3:1), there is the promise of reward**
- Hence, Paul was propelled to press on , 2 Tim 4:8 – cf. 1 Peter 5:4**
- It’s God’s applause – not men’s approval – that in the final analysis will count – Mk 9:35**

All of which led Jowett to conclude:

¹⁰¹ Fisher, 21st Cent, 142

“If we lose the sense of wonder of our commission we shall become like common traders in a common market, babbling about common wares.”

- It would be a error to lose a sense of the wonder, the trust

No wonder Paul declares, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service.” I Tim 1:12

CONCLUSION

These glorious and inglorious sides to ministry stand side by side in a mysterious way.

-as Oden puts it—

“The perplexity is that the deepest joys of ministry are intrinsically related precisely to what makes ministry at times very difficult: (Quoting Luther) ‘We can engage in no sublimer and greater work on earth than educating people by preaching and teaching...But no work is more difficult than making other people good. Yet this is the best service we can render to God.’”¹⁰²

*DMS 501
2011
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-God had to ask Moses as many as six times—He also led me the same way—had I known what I was getting into, “He would have had to take more pains to get me in”-Table Talk

-Menno Simons-“Trouble and fear were on every side—my talents were limited-I was unlearned, weak in nature, timid, wicked, perverse—the woefully heavy cross that would weigh on me should I comply-Reply to Gellius Faber

-In the section “Call to Ministry”, I noted my favorite – Ammonius, asked to be Bishop in 365, seeing that he was “trapped”, he pleaded – swore he would not accept their 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 he said, “Now it is impossible – for OT tradition makes clear that the body of a priest must be unblemished.”

Yet—as Baxter puts it—“It is no safe course to imitate Jonah, in turning our back upon the commands of God. If we neglect our work, He has a spur to quicken us; if we run away from it, He has messengers enough to overtake us, and bring us back”-Baxter, RP, 130-131

B-THE GLORIOUS

The good news is that there is a magnificent side to ministry – which overshadows the dark side

¹⁰⁵ Oden, BAM, 26

-a fact we will need to hang on—something often buried under the pile of daily tasks
-dismissed under the barrage of criticisms

- Paul speaks of this in 2 Tim 2:20-21-“special instruments” set apart**
- Oden “Those seeking to be ministers do well to think of themselves as vessels set apart for extraordinary, honorable, special purposes.”**

A closer look – and one realizes there is no other profession that comes close to the glory reserved for ministry

Anglican Bishop Gilbert Burnet, writing in 1692 on “the dignity of sacred employment”, noted that as much as the soul is better than the body, as much as eternity is far superior to this transitory life, so does ministry excel all other professions¹⁰⁶

2- THERE’S GREAT GLORY IN BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS

- Of being a conduit for God, ministering needed words, life-changing words, bring words of healing, being a spiritual midwife**
- Handling the most awesome power – the Word of God – of guarding a treasure entrusted to us – 2 Tim 1:14**
- It was Jesus who said to those serious about the business of the great commission – “And lo, I am with you always” – there is the glory of God’s presence**
- Paul, constantly arrested, was nourished by the glory of his vocation – even in 2 Corinthians, with all its despair and darkness, Paul could write of the glory of being involved in the ministry of life – 2 Cor 3:7-8**

-this is our primary work, bearing witness to Jesus, to His present, living, redemptive, reigning work

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones left a promising medical career to enter ministry – people would admire his self-denial, but he would respond, “I gave up nothing – I received everything. I count it the highest privilege

¹⁰⁶ Oden, BAM, 23 (Burnet, Of the Pastoral Care, chap 1, 41)

and honor that God can confer on any man to call him to be a herald of the gospel.”

The glory of bringing good news is captured by Ray Stedman, “I will never be given a greater honor than what has already been given to me – that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

If God calls you to preach – don’t stoop to be a king

2 – THERE’S GREAT GLORY IN DOING WHAT GOD CALLS GOOD

- **God calls the work of ministry good – I Tim 3:1**
- **It is a “good work” - - kalos – beautiful, noble – worthy of double honor – I Tim 5:17**
- **Images that remind us – that in spite of the world’s values there’s great glory in the sight of God to be in ministry**

3 – THERE’S GLORY IN THE HIDDENNESS

- **In the silence**
- **They may not see us at 7:00 a.m. praying, entering into partnership with the Spirit Sunday morning in the chapel**
- **They may not see you investing deeply into lives in the counseling office**
- **They may not see you in the hidden jungles north of Manila, or in the back streets of Beirut**
- **Or staying up late in the night wrestling over the accuracy of a text**
- **Much of ministry takes place in obscurity**
- **Work that needs to be left there – to reveal it would rob one of the glory reserved for eternity**

4 – THERE’S GLORY IN WATCHING OVER SOULS

- **overseeing life change-preparing people for heaven**
- **There are few tasks on earth that have such ultimate responsibility – and accountability in judgment**
- **We are involved with people from birth to death – at their brightest moments and darkest moments – in their most profound moments**

- **“No other vocation allows a person to get so close to so many people in such life-changing ways”¹⁰⁷**
- **We often get the best seat for life’s highest moments – whether it be in the hospital room to celebrate birth, the altar to celebrate marriage, the front of a chapel to mourn death or to stand by a widow at a grave site.**
- **It is a tremendous trust to lead people in the things that matter most**
- **We will sit in the front row to view the spiritual contest for a soul**
- **London-“I love the privilege of living at the front lines of life where grace works and where the peace treaties of reconciliation are cosigned by God and broken people. As flawed and frail as I know myself to be, I am privileged to represent Christ at the main events of peoples’ lives”¹⁰⁸**
- **We will be invited into the intimate part of people’s lives – dedication of their lives, their children, their baptism**
-
- **We will have the privilege of being the life raft when the ship has gone down**
- **and in those moments, there is a bond that is forged**

- **Fisher, describing his relationship with a family through a tragic death notes—“As long as I live, I am bound to each member of that family with cords of love. The extreme moments of ministry do that kind of binding.”¹⁰⁹**

5 – THERE IS GLORY IN THE GREAT CHALLENGE

- **No other work will test your will, your emotions, your intellect, your creativity, your stamina, your patience, your tact, your authenticity, your perseverance – helping people through crisis – is there a greater challenge?**

Hopping – “There is no profession in which a person, if his heart is in it, has the opportunity of exerting every faculty to a better purpose for a more direct good.”

Kesler – Ministry, if you want to be effective, demands everything you’ve got

¹⁰⁷ London, 120

¹⁰⁸ London, 134

¹⁰⁹ Fisher, 21st Cent, 142

6 – THERE’S GLORY IN ENTERING THE SAME PROFESSION CHOSEN BY THE LORD JESUS

- To partner with him in His work, shepherd souls
- To know He understands how we feel
- To enter into a true fellowship of His sufferings-Phil 3
- “Working with God, I wouldn’t give that up to be president or prime minister” Allister Brown, Scottish pastor

7 – THERE WILL BE GREAT GLORY IN JUDGMENT

- Though there is the warning of stricter judgment (Js 3:1), there is the promise of reward
- Hence, Paul was propelled to press on , 2 Tim 4:8 – cf. 1 Peter 5:4
- It’s God’s applause – not men’s approval – that in the final analysis will count – Mk 9:35

All of which led Jowett to conclude:

“If we lose the sense of wonder of our commission we shall become like common traders in a common market, babbling about common wares.”

- It would be a error to lose a sense of the wonder, the trust

No wonder Paul declares, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service.” I Tim 1:12

CONCLUSION

These glorious and inglorious sides to ministry stand side by side in a mysterious way.

-as Oden puts it—

“The perplexity is that the deepest joys of ministry are intrinsically related precisely to what makes ministry at times very difficult: (Quoting Luther) ‘We can engage in no sublimer and greater work on earth than educating people by preaching and teaching...But no work is more difficult than making other people good. Yet this is the best service we can render to God.’”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Oden, W&S, 10

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9-CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF MINISTRY

With a theology of ministry, we can begin to evaluate and assess the direction of contemporary ministry

In 2003, Leonard Sweet attempted an aerial view of present ministry, looking at various models, using the metaphor of a garden—

-he identified four landscapes—

***1-THE GARDEN*-represents continuity of Message and Methods-classic pastoral wisdom**

-a ministry rooted to the past—the church is focused on preserving—not evolving

-memories—roots are what are important

-the longest memory—the deepest roots get you the best future—hence—it is necessary to build high walls to preserve its beauty, its purity

-beliefs are shaped by the church—not culture

-to aim at being relevant is to become potentially irrelevant

-what we must never lose is classic pastoral wisdom (here are names commonly associated with this—Oden, Purves, Peterson, Horton)

Danger-some areas can begin to die

***2-THE PARK*-represents continuity of Message—but Methods evolve**

-while there are new methods of planting-these ministries are still anchored to the rock

-there are new themes and expressions—but the same paths, boundaries (same unity and continuity of tradition)

-the properties are constant—but the look changes—it is concerned about speaking to the language of culture

-“to stay the same—some things have to change”--

-ministries under men like Hybels, Warren, McManus, Driscoll aim to be culturally relevant—yet immovable regarding truth

-deeply interested in the implications of a post Christian culture—while committed to doctrine

Danger-church becomes a playground

3-THE GLEN-represents ministry with an evolving Message—but the Methods are preserved

- the glen is an open system-theological innovation is welcome
- but methods may not depart from historic practice—they are suspicious of encroaching culture—technology interfering with liturgy
- mainline churches serve as an example-where the action is in the evolving message-social justice, etc
- but traditions are maintained

Danger-one can fall into toxic areas

4-THE MEADOW-represents ministry where there are an evolving Message and evolving Methods—coming out of a radical reconsideration of both

- meadows are not highly managed—come first after a devastating fire—the foundations are destroyed
- nothing is neat and clean—weeds are allowed to grow alongside the wildflowers
- evolving may mean a message that takes dialogical form
- less foundational, a message with less certitude, a more tentative approach to truth
- truths that may begin to be less orthodox
- methods that are creative, innovative-the church's vitality is in its wild, untamed landscape
- emergent voices exemplify this—led by such people as McLaren, Pagitt, Seay, Jones

Danger-One can get lost in the wilderness

It is in these diverse landscapes that a careful theology of ministry is ever more critical

-so how do we apply a theology of ministry—particularly to those in the meadow?

1-FIRST TASK-DEFINE WHAT WE ARE CRITIQUING

A-What are the challenges out there today?

- what are the movements? What are the emerging meadows?

-more recently-the emergent movement gained a certain amount of attention

-but some their influence has diminished—which typically happens when you begin to remove the foundations

B-What are the meadows?

-Some would define the meadow as missional communities arising in a post-modern culture as an alternative to existing churches

1-a deconstructionist movement of sorts—that finds fault with the existing church, calling less for renewal and more for new beginning

-skeptical of power structures

-the dominant protest is against “culturally conservative forms of evangelicalism”, boomer values-performance, size—the loss of history, worship, authenticity, mystery, awe, participation

-Frost puts it this way—“We need a whole new model. Think of the existing church as a VCR. If you have newer DVDs, you can’t play them on your old VCR—you need an entirely different device” (The Shaping of Things to Come, 35)

-think of preaching as a piece of cultural baggage

2-there is a protest against Modernism—a rethinking of epistemology—how we know things

-modernism says we can know—there is absolutism, foundationalism

-postmoderns believe we can’t really know—no one can say “this is reality”—we are cracked eikons—everything we know is limited, influenced by who we are

-only God can know absolute truth

-hence-emergents are suspicious of all foundationalism

-and while they would see themselves as epistemological relativists—neither would they see themselves as “arrogant absolutists”

-maybe more as perspectavists-claims to truth are no more than different perspectives

Jones, New Christian, gave one picture of the meadow—

-new communities of faith vs ecclesial elites

-innovative forms of monasticism vs suburban birth rite

-adventurous theology vs academic tenure

-life on the frontier vs old established mansions

-movement vs bureaucracy

- denominational differences vs generous orthodoxy
- feral, wild and messy vs domesticated

- questioning vs maintaining the status quo
- dialogical vs unilateral communication—nothing roots out heresy better than a group
- agile vs rigid—because of their smaller size and egalitarian structure, are much more responsive to change, innovation, progress

C-What attracts people to meadows?

1-they are believers disappointed with the modern church—it is too big to provide meaningful community

- would prefer a network of smaller communities for believers who want to be included—see Barna, Revolution

- they are intentionally leaving the “old country”, the meadow, the park as well as the glen

- the park, in particular, is too modern—and emergents have little interest in the modern church

- which—like pay phones—is dying

- by “modern church” we mean physical buildings, professional clergy, denominational bureaucracies, seminary training—configured to reach a world of large, monolithic organizations

- and consuming a disproportionate amount of capital and resources to do so

- modern church has a number of forms—mainline protestants, fundamentalism, and evangelicals (who in particular have made little moral impact—and tend to avoid addressing core ethical issues)

2-emergents are attracted to theology that is crafted—not in ivory towers—but out in the street

- and good theology sees the gospel as a message that cannot be frozen into one particular articulation that is timeless, universal—for when it is—it creates a host of problems

- it seeks to retrieve a theological tradition of wrestling with the intellectual and spiritual difficulties—making room for questions—avoiding simplistic answers

- three traits make up the DNA of theological reflection

- a-theology is local-shaped by our context

b-theology is conversational—in conversation with the myriad of theologians before us, as well as those amongst us

c-theology is temporary—we dare not assume our convictions are timeless

-there are ambiguities, unsavory parts of Scripture, that we should approach with honest questions—not simplistic answers

3-emergents see themselves as speaking with a humility that declares—we cannot speak with certitude—though we can speak with proper confidence

-talk of truth demands the same humility as talk of God—we cannot definitely describe truth anymore than we can definitely describe God

-one interpretation can trump another

-the conversational quest for truth is an act of faithfulness

-knowing my story will help me recognize how it taints my reading of Scripture

-there can be no objectivity--so accept my biases—embrace my subjectivity

-interpretation is an art-honed by studying the Bible and practicing it

-paradox is not to be feared—but embraced

2-SECOND TASK--IDENTIFY THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

-it is important to be fair—to not create straw men and then look really good as we tear them down

-it's helpful then to find the positives—

A-DESIRE TO BE CONTEXTUAL

-SENSITIVE TO READ THE TIMES AND ADJUST WHERE WE SHOULD

-do ministry in light of culture-do ministry locally-just as Paul did-e.g. Acts 17

-what Jones gets right is that the existing church is not reaching the next generation as it could, should

-and just making things more relevant—changing the music, using candles—won't do it

B-DESIRE FOR AUTHENTICITY

-there is a passion to avoid hypocrisy—to not do things merely because we have done them

- to fall into clichés—to become something other than the church (e.g. conservative right)
- emergents prefer a higher level of honesty—hate the divisiveness that characterizes too many existing churches

C-DESIRE TO BE INCARNATIONAL

- to focus less on attractional-come to us/ focus on being Jesus-go into their worlds
- there is a renewed passion to be evangelistic

D-DESIRE FOR COMMUNITY

- a reaction, in part, to the mega church and its emphasis on program, production
- desires that individualism incorporate into incorporation

E-DESIRE TO BE MISSIONAL

- emphasize kingdom, social and spiritual gospel

F-DESIRE TO RECAPTURE BEAUTY, THE ARTS

G-DESIRE TO BE HOLISTIC

3-THIRD TASK-CRITIQUE FROM A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY PERSPECTIVE

A-this requires asking the right questions—

1-is it fair to paint with such broad strokes, putting most existing churches in a Christendom box?

-those like Jones, Barna, Hirsch tend to paint in broad strokes—tend to stereotype

2-do we have any grounds for believing a church does not have to die?

-that churches do not necessarily have a shelf life?

-can churches change—remain constantly emergent?

3-should churches aim to be a covenant community calling for commitment?

-vs an emergent approach more comfortable with becoming than belonging—not drawing the lines so clear between believing and unbelieving, members and non-members?

4-can there, must there be a place for structure, hierarchy—pastors, elders, deacons, policies, lists?

5-is it our mandate to be intercultural, intergenerational—or are we free to create monocultures?

6-does God change as culture changes?

7-when does one go too far with contextualization?

-the emerging church is a contemporary attempt at contextualizing the gospel in a postmodern world just as Paul used the culture to connect his message

-in contrast to some institutional churches that have lost the need to contextualize— using insider language

-emergent churches have aimed to be Christian communities adapting to a changing cultural situation

-but have many gone too far—where the context begins to determine the message—rather than addressing the culture with the unchanging message?

-has contextualization becomes a license to become something other than church, turn preaching into something other than preaching, etc?

8-have we gone too far in losing the attractional side at the expense of stressing the incarnational side of ministry?

**B-This requires doing an ongoing theology of ministry
(see example-Dialogical Preaching; Apostolic Leadership)**

