

MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SEMINAR II

Theme: “The Foundations for Pentecostal Faith and Practice”

A Biblical Strategy for Ministry in The Local Church

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INTRODUCTION

The word “ministry” refers to the work of the entire church, the body of Christ in the world. In many churches, the work of ministry has been restricted to a few members of the local body. The New Testament teaches that ministry belongs to all of God’s people. The local church is to be a community of ministers fulfilling their individual calling.

The work of a pastor is “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). The ministry of the laity is integral to the accomplishment of the mission of the church.

Jesus Christ is the model for ministry and any theology of ministry must begin with the life and teachings of Christ as presented in the New Testament. His ministry was first incarnational. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14 NKJ).

Jesus proclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18, 19).

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Christ's ministry was carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ's ministry was one of humble service (Mark 10:45 and John 13:14). Christ's ministry was one of shepherding. Jesus depicted himself as a faithful and caring Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11-18). The ministry of Jesus culminated in His substitutionary death for the sins of humanity and His glorious resurrection.

The church is an extension of Christ's ministry in the world. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is essential to effective Christian ministry. The gifting of the Holy Spirit is for every believer.

The Biblical ministry of the laity does not diminish the necessity and importance of clergy ministry, but it better clarifies the role of pastoral leadership. The New Testament makes it clear that ministerial leadership is of divine origin (1 Corinthians 12:28). Every believer, clergy and laity, should cultivate a ministry of edification and service for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom.

Once the theoretical and theological foundations upon which ministry rests have been determined, it is then necessary to put those truths into practice. The "hearer" must become the "doer" (James 1:22-27). The truth of God, received into the heart, will not only bring transformation of the mind, but it will also, inevitably, translate itself into practical acts of ministry.

Nowhere is this concept of truth translating into deeds more important than in the life and work of those who are identified and function as ministerial leaders. From the standpoint of their position and their visibility, they serve as "models" for all believers. In a personal sense, their satisfaction and success depend upon how closely their "practice" parallels their "preaching."

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The purpose of this lecture is to establish a Biblical strategy for the practice of ministry as it relates to motivation, performance, and pattern.

I. MOTIVATION

A. Commitment to the call

Jesus Christ calls all believers to commit themselves to the call of God to ministry. As has been noted, this call is universal since it is given to the entire body of Christ. An understanding of this Scriptural fact is fundamental to the stewardship of the Gospel. Seen from this perspective, money and management considerations are secondary and subservient to ministry. In general, ministry is comprised of all that the church does to accomplish her two-fold mission of love and discipleship (the Great Commandment and the Great Commission). Therefore, when one answers the call to the ministry, it should be understood primarily in terms of a commitment to obedience and discipleship. Within that larger context, however, there is yet a more specific calling to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

B. Dangers Faced in Answering the Call

Ministers, both clergy and laity, face two grave dangers in answering the call to ministry to the body of Christ. The first danger is that we may not develop a workable understanding of our call to ministry and realize exactly what God wants for us. The second danger is that we might get so overwhelmed with the multiple demands people and the ministry

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make on us that we lose sight of God's will for us and lose the joy and sense of divine purpose so desperately needed to fulfill God's call.

A minister confronting these dangers may have a low level of motivation and remain rather bewildered and confused about what is important and designed by God. Some ministers oversimplify issues to avoid conflict at any cost. They may be inadequately prepared to deal with the complex and deep problems of the people. They tend to avoid face-to-face interaction in question-and-answer teaching or small-group discussion encounters. Some pastors may even be more and more personal in the pulpit while becoming increasingly unavailable and aloof in person.

Elton Trueblood makes the following observation: "The central problem which faces the minister is that of his/her own identity. In the midst of competing and even contradictory pressures it is sometimes hard to know who we really are. This problem must be solved before lesser problems can be addressed. Am I a prophet, teacher, promoter, performer, preacher, counselor, visitor, business manager, or what? This question is not easy to answer because it is intrinsically complex."

Such a dilemma need not occur if a Biblical understanding of the ministry of the whole body, putting the servant role of the minister and the church in proper perspective, is developed. It will then become apparent why the apostle Paul majors in character and knowledge of the Word as primary qualifications for ministerial leadership (1 Timothy 3). If the minister understands himself/herself to be a servant, then he/she can develop a specific plan that will give expression to a Biblical identity and

will result in personal fulfillment rather than psychological and spiritual burn-out. Self-fulfillment in service to the body occurs when we see our ministry as more than that of a mechanical, entertaining motivator of passive listeners. When a relationship of mutual trust and interdependence in Christ is the primary goal, the minister and the people make disciples and build ministries which will stand the test of time and eternity.

The servant of Christ believes that each of us will face God and give an account for our every word and deed. We also know that the coming of the Lord will happen suddenly and unexpectedly. This sense of accountability and urgency, when seen in the light of the love of God, becomes a purifying hope which sanctifies the ordinary and extraordinary deeds of ministry. All of life becomes worship to the glory of God, and all who serve Him in the Spirit know that their labor is not in vain. Such a belief becomes a strong motivation for us to summon all of our resources and to put forth every effort to fulfill God's specific will for our lives.

II. PERFORMANCE

As conscientious ministers, we have the desire to fulfill our responsibilities properly. As we learn more and more about what we must do, we are motivated to reach those ideal goals. We want to be successful in the ministry and, most of all, we want to please God.

The tremendous frustration facing many ministers today is not a lack of desire to do what should be done, but rather the lack of time, information, and resources to accomplish those goals. We are generally aware of the "what" and

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the “why” of our calling, but we struggle with the “how.” Our vision to be a person of prayer and anointed to speak God’s Word is sometimes shattered by the real world of ringing phones, committee meetings, and financial pressures. We get too many messages from too many sources, when what we need is to hear from God afresh.

In order for us to break out of debilitating patterns and be the person God wants us to be, we need to focus on the following three guidelines: recognize specific needs; appropriate God-given gifts; and utilize available resources.

A. Recognize Specific Needs

Often there is a sense of frustration and lack of satisfaction in a job responsibility because there is not specificity with regard to the bounds of the responsibility. A pastor under pressure sometimes tries to do everything and winds up doing nothing well. A definition of purpose is absolutely necessary to the proper management of responsibility. “Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men (and women) who do not know the meaning and purpose of life, but as those who do” (Ephesians 5:15-17 Phillips)

1. Analyze the needs

Guided by our own unique perspective of the task, and also by Scriptural insight, we must determine what needs to exist in the church and in our own family. A proper evaluation of people’s needs will help us to understand why people do what they do and how we can relate to them effectively and minister to them as a spiritual leader.

2. Prioritize the needs

All needs do not have the same level of importance. In order to satisfactorily fulfill a responsibility, first things must be done first.

If we do not focus most of our time and energy on the highest priorities, we will lose our efficiency and effectiveness in ministry. It is not always how hard we work that matters but how smart we work. All leaders, at times, find themselves having to juggle several high priority projects. This juggling act can turn out to be very costly when we fail to prioritize needs and tasks.

The needs we should strive to meet first are those that are of the highest importance and highest urgency. We choose or lose. We evaluate or stalemate. Effective leaders tend to initiate positive action while followers tend to react with less planning or prioritizing.

Dayton and Engstrom, in their book Strategy for Living, suggest a simple method to establish priorities. Instead of listing tasks by numerical rank, assign each an A, B, or C designation: A—must do—high priority; B—should do—medium priority; C—can do—low priority. If there are too many “A” goals, then subdivide them, using the same ranking procedure. The main point is to choose. The leader cannot allow the pressure of responsibility to dictate priorities; leaders must take the initiative.

B. Appropriate God-Given Gifts

Once life-goals have been identified, analyzed, and prioritized, then there must be a determined effort to appropriate the gifts that God has made available. These may be supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they also may be natural gifts, talents, and abilities which God provides through others as well as our own personal development.

Scripture makes it clear that God does bestow gifts and graces sufficient to accomplish His will: “I can never stop thanking God for all the wonderful gifts he has given you now that you are Christ’s. He has enriched your whole life...Now you have every grace and blessing; every spiritual gift and power for doing his will” (1 Corinthians 1:4-7 Living Bible).

The discovery, affirmation, and appropriation of these special gifts and abilities are absolutely essential to the accomplishment of the will of God. The following steps of positive action may be helpful in this regard.

1. Free yourself from the prison of self-incrimination. You are a person of great worth endowed with God’s special gifts (Ephesians 4:7).
2. Make yourself available to God. A person of prayer, study, and faith will create an atmosphere in which his/her gifts will be discovered and appreciated (Isaiah 6:5-8).
3. Center on others rather than on self. Gifts are discovered and revealed as a person is in the process of ministering to others.

4. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your gifts. Recognition of one's own abilities need not be prideful; indeed, it is necessary to the continued strengthening of those gifts.

C. Utilize Available Resources

Boundless resources, which are so necessary to the effective work of ministry, are available to every minister. Sometimes these resources are overlooked because they are so readily available—public and institutional libraries, Bible colleges with special courses for area ministers, state colleges with courses such as counseling and writing, special emphasis seminars offered by other denominations and church agencies.

In addition to its variety of on-campus training programs, the Church of God offers the most extensive programs of in-service training for ministers of any denomination: Ministerial Affirmation Program (MAP), Ministerial Internship Program (MIP), Certificate in Ministerial Studies (CIMS), Lay Leadership Development (LLD), and various other seminars, conferences, and retreats.

Today in our world of high-velocity change, with the breakdown of morals and with a loss of faith, we need ministers who will follow the example of Jesus Christ in attitude, perspective, behavior, values, and desires.

God has called men and women into the ministry of the Word in order to proclaim Christ to a lost and confused world. Spiritual leaders in church ministry, at all levels, must work to shape the ministry by correct belief, behavior, and character. Ministers are role models and everything a

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minister does serves as one more building block in the habit patterns and spirituality of the church.

Because of the call of God upon the lives of ministers, people in the church see ministers as having power and influence. Therefore, ministers are seen as having special ability to achieve that which is important and to motivate others to follow Christ.

More than ever, Church of God ministers must demonstrate daily a profound trust in God's plan and model a life that is on the pathway to joy, peace, and life everlasting. Church of God ministers must never forget that we are servants of God to the church and the world. As Christ did, we must take on the very nature of a servant leader (Philippians 2:7).

Our world has quickly changed. Some would say that the world's role model has switched from Mother Teresa to Madonna. The message of the world is clear: indulge, satiate; pursue pleasure without restraint. Selfish interest is not only tolerated today, but actively promoted and encouraged. This must not in any way be true of the ministry.

We are only gradually awakening to the full extend of the disaster taking place in our world and even in Christianity. The devil is attempting to destroy things which make life important—especially our values and our faith in God. Almost surprisingly, we find ourselves in trouble. All too often, we find our lives to be prayerless, depressing, and self-destructive.

The church needs a ministry spiritually fit for the challenge. Spiritually we need quicker reflexes, more speed, agility, and power with

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God. All too often we find a ministry out of touch with God and blind to the diversions of satan.

Ministers need a plan and a strategy for personal and spiritual development. All ministers should be strongly encouraged to participate in continuing educational experiences and to take advantage of the development resources available to them.

In the final analysis, it is the strength that flows from all the body that makes possible the fulfillment of the individual member's unique ministry. "Under his direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (Ephesians 4:14 Living Bible).

III. PATTERN

Ministry should be the work of a powerful ministry team—a team working together in unity to achieve success by sharing responsibility. Pastors succeed only when lay leaders succeed.

Leading people means that we motivate, train, mobilize, and trust them to fulfill a shared vision. Therefore, pastoral leadership involves reaching, teaching, training, and releasing people to fulfill their passion for ministry.

The local church is called to be a team and to follow a Biblical Pattern of unity and spirituality.

A pastor's role is always that of the coach, trainer, and spiritual leader helping every member of the team to face their challenges to fulfill God's call and purpose.

A. Responsibilities of Pastoral Leadership

The roles laity play in the ministry of the local church is vital to the success of the work of ministry. In order to achieve a vision-driven sense-of-purpose and unity, a pastor must seek to achieve the following goals of leadership:

- 1. Recruit and Motivate**
- 2. Train and Discipline**
- 3. Empower and Trust**

B. Goals of Spiritual Development and Maturity

In order for pastors and lay leaders to achieve a faithful obedience to their shared vision, they must seek to attain the following goals of spiritual development:

- 1. Calling and Conviction**
- 2. Character and Cooperation**
- 3. Competence and Consistency**

When pastors fulfill their responsibilities of leadership in equipping people for ministry and when leaders are growing and developing spiritual maturity, each person can fulfill his/her role as part of a great ministry team.

C. Strategic Leadership Roles and Patterns

Within spiritual leadership roles there are basic patterns of abilities and preferences. We will look at twelve (12) positive attributes or characteristics of leadership patterns. Some people are more gifted and prefer some of these attributes over the others.

Levels of strength in these twelve attributes can be measured by an inventory developed by Larry G. Hess, but for this presentation we will only list and briefly summarize these attributes.

1. Enthusiasm

A high score would describe a leader who is optimistic, enthusiastic, and passionate about his/her goals.

2. Integrity

This attribute describes leaders who are motivated by their own values and beliefs rather than manipulating or pleasing others. They are honest, faithful, and assume responsibility for their own actions. They are true to their convictions and willingly accountable.

3. Growth and Renewal

These leaders are committed to learning and adapting to life's challenging situations. They seek answers and faithfully strive to be in control of their weaknesses and inner urges. By constantly seeking spiritual renewal and growth, leaders are better able to control inner forces such as pride, lust, greed, passion or self-centeredness.

4. Accomplishment

A high score in accomplishment describes a leader who makes things happen, gets things done, makes significant improvements, meets real needs, and does things for specific purposes or reasons.

5. Determination

Strong determination indicates a leader who does not give up easily or back down under stages of external pressure. They stand up to challenges, do not compromise principles, and meet life head-on with great resolve.

6. Team Building

A high emphasis on team building describes a leader who seeks to accomplish results through a unified partnership. They focus on helping people work together toward a common goal. They seek to reconcile conflicting interests and to heal divisions between people, when possible. They possess good communication skills, are flexible and adaptive. They express appreciation and give recognition for the contributions of team members.

7. Courage

Courageous leaders display confidence, accept challenges, and trust their own ability to succeed. They have strong convictions in the face of trouble and are resilient over set backs or failures. They manage stress, overcome discouragements, and are

persistent where others might give up. They tend to be good critical thinkers who are capable of enduring adversity.

8. Understanding

Leaders who are high in understanding try to look beyond details and see the big picture with a high degree of insight. They tend to assume the best of others, listen carefully, and admit their own mistakes. They know that building strong relationships requires character, humility, and patience.

9. Judgment

A high score in judgment describes a leader who uses information for careful analysis. They seek to be cautious, accurate, and to anticipate the consequences of actions and decisions. They seek to sort the right priorities within an array of possibilities. They guide people toward positive and moral decisions.

10. Unifying

A strong unifying leader wants to bring people together in unity and cooperation. They build consensus and keep people focused on the primary purposes and highest goals. They appreciate the contributions of others, promote high self-esteem in others, and play down images of status or rank.

11. Encouraging

Highly encouraging leaders show empathy to others, listen, show respect, and demonstrate sincere appreciation. They inspire

people to have faith and to believe in God, as well as believing in their own potential and value. They seek to help people discover positive ways to meet needs, build relationships, and overcome obstacles. They inspire in others courage, hope, and confidence.

12. Serving Others

With compassion and humility these servant leaders look out for the welfare and interest of others. They display a caring sense of concern, a commitment to integrity and sense of self-sacrificing behavior, which is congruent with their claims or stated values. These leaders usually manifest the admired qualities of competence, faith, flexibility, and confidence.

CONCLUSION

The struggle to be all that one should be as a minister is an intense, ongoing process. The process is much more manageable and less painful when the minister understands more precisely his/her responsibilities. In a world of many messages, it is imperative that we hear the voice of God and that we be convinced of the uniqueness of our individual mission.

The motivation to fulfill our ministerial responsibilities becomes stronger as we perceive our work as a completion of the ministry of Christ on earth (John 14:12; 20:21). Our task becomes more joyous as we understand how we fit into the purpose of God. We ultimately embrace the testimony of the apostle Paul: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14).