

MAINTAIN BALANCED MINISTRY PRIORITIES:

- What should our ministry priorities be?
 - ◆ First: Exaltation (Worship)—toward God
 - ◆ Second: Edification (Word)—toward the saints
 - ◆ Third: Evangelization (Witness)—toward the world
- Key Scriptures
 - ◆ Matt 22:37, 38; "And Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND' This is the first and greatest commandment."
 - ◆ Matt 22:39 "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
 - ◆ These are commands and NOT a request or suggestion
- God has a distinct order on how we are to deal with people
 - ◆ As we have just seen, God must always be first
 - ⇒ Implication is that this is our first ministry priority
 - * This begs the question – what does this mean?
 - * God demands our worship first – and yes, that is above all others
 - * Matt 22:37, 38 makes this very clear
 - * Webster: Exalt - to elevate by praise or in estimation
 - ⇒ When we get to the point where God is indeed first, we will always "WANT" to leave it like that
 - ◆ Next is ministry to our fellow brethren
 - ⇒ Still not the unsaved
 - ⇒ Some argue we should be more concerned about the unsaved than the brethren
 - ⇒ Webster: Edify – "**1** *archaic* **a** : build, **b** : establish **2** : to instruct and improve especially in moral and religious knowledge
 - ⇒ So why is edifying Christians higher priority than others – shouldn't we be saving the lost?
 - * Yes, but not as second priority
 - * We must have unity among brethren
 - * Recall message on Christian maturity and unity of the body?
 - ⇒ There is a very real lesson here
 - * If we can't show brotherly love and unity how can we even think of reaching others?
 - * What are we mostly accused of? – Being hypocrites
 - * So the message is we must have our house in order first
 - ⇒ Also, what is result of edifying one another?
 - * We encourage each other
 - * Story of logs in fire – one soon burns out more fire burns stronger
 - * We need each other to strengthen the body
 - * Our ministry to others will be more effective if we have taken care of family

- ◆ Finally, ministry to others
 - ⇒ This is characterized by the word “evangelism”
 - ⇒ Webster: Evangelism; **1** : the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ
 - 2** : militant or crusading zeal
 - ⇒ Key verse: Acts 1:7, 8: “He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - ⇒ Witness - what does that involve?
 - * Spreading the gospel by telling others
 - * But that is only part of it – spreading gospel by the way we live
 - * The second item is one that is sometimes minimized or even overlooked
 - * Story of friend in Arizona
 - ◇ You knew every Scripture you quoted
 - ◇ You never judged me
 - * Actions speak louder than words is a real truism when it comes to demonstrating God’s love

- Note the logical flow to what we have looked at today
 - ◆ We place God first
 - ⇒ By focusing on Him and allowing Him to guide
 - ⇒ He is now free to use us as “empty” vessels for Kingdom work

 - ◆ With God on the throne or center of our lives, we can see others through God’s eyes
 - ⇒ Good question is how does God see people?
 - * Everyone is created in His image
 - * Everyone is a soul needing God – “He is not willing that any should perish”
 - * Is that the way we see people?
 - ⇒ Best example is Jesus Himself
 - * He always had compassion – regardless of who He was in contact with
 - * Best example is the thief on the cross – “Today you will be with me in paradise”
 - * Even though God, He did not judge – casting stones at the prostitute
 - ◇ “The one among you without stone cast the first stone”
 - ◇ Who in the crowd had no sin? – did He cast a stone?

 - ◆ So with God at the center, we become “conduits” for His love
 - ⇒ Our eyes are off self and on Him
 - ⇒ Others will definitely notice this

- How is this envisioned for Grace Bible Fellowship?
 - ◆ God-centered
 - ⇒ Worship is focused on glorifying God
 - ⇒ Planning is performed only with His guidance

 - ◆ Ministry priorities
 1. Exalt God – through worship
 2. Edify fellow believers – through fellowship
 3. Evangelize the lost – through outreach