



BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Grace Bible Fellowship of Silicon Valley

"through God's mercy we have this ministry" (2 Corinthians 4:1)

Preface: In the New Testament the word "ministry" is *diakanon*, from which we get the English word deacon which means "servant, one who serves." That's what Christian ministry is—it is service from God, by God, for God.

Following are biblical principles of ministry that drive our attitudes and actions toward Christian service:

General Principles

1. **God defines Christian ministry-** Ministry is service to God; we were created to serve Him as the Creator, Lord, Savior and Judge. That's why we are here on earth—to do His bidding. As Isaiah the prophet said to God when he was called to ministry, "Here am I, send me" (6:8)
2. **The goal of Christian ministry is to glorify God-** To glorify God means to make Him pre-eminent, to put Him center-stage, to seek His good in all things, to point all people to His greatness. God's glory is the functional motive for all real Christian service. As Paul said, "Whether then you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). So it is not about our ambitions, goals, stature, reputation, popularity, acceptance, our personal happiness or prosperity—the motive for ministry has nothing ultimately to do with us—we are undeserving—it is all about God's good.
3. **Real Christian ministry is Bible-centered-** The Bible is the handbook, blueprint, roadmap, index and final authority on all aspects of true ministry. God has chosen to reveal His truth about how to do ministry in His Word. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says the Scripture is given to make the Christian "thoroughly equipped for every good work." This phrase means that the Bible is sufficient to thoroughly prepare each believer for every aspect of ministry and service.
4. **Real Christian ministry is Christ-centered-** We can do real ministry only after we have been saved and called to ministry by Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus said to His disciples, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The same is true for us. If we have a ministry, it is because Jesus gave it to us. Jesus began Christian ministry, and we have been entrusted to carry on His work. We do what Jesus "began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). And the content of our ministry is all about Christ—who He is and what He did. That is what Jesus did when He ministered—He told people about Himself (Luke 24:44). We cannot deviate from that focus. It is all about Jesus (Galatians 6:14).

5. **Jesus is the model of Christian ministry-** Jesus carried out His ministry in the lives of others in a three-fold manner:
 - (a) Individual discipling (Matthew 17:1)
 - (b) Small group discipling (John 13)
 - (c) Large group discipling (Matthew 5:1-2)Every Christian needs to follow Christ's model by being a participant in all three levels of discipleship.
6. **True Christian ministry has 5 foundational priorities-** Doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, and praising God (Acts 2:42-47). Every true church must make a priority of these corporate spiritual disciplines.
7. **True Christian ministry is modeled in the New Testament-** How do we do Christian ministry in the 21st century? That is a very important question, and the answer is straight-forward: just as the church did ministry in the first century. We don't have to re-invent the wheel. The first Christian church ministered just as Jesus commanded and they are the model for us (1 Corinthians 11:1; 14:37-38; 1 John 4:6). Principles for biblical ministry are timeless and transcend cultures and every other demographic (Acts 2:38-39; 1 Corinthians 11:16). And all those principles are either modeled or stated in propositional truths in the Bible. The Bible is sufficient. This enables us to have great confidence as we carry out ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:4).
8. **Christian ministry flows from the local church-** Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). That is what ministry is—it is partnering with Christ in helping build His church until He brings it to completion (Ephesians 3:21). The Holy Spirit begot the church (Acts 2:1-4), the Apostles laid the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), the church is the pillar and guardian of God's truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and Christ is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). Any Christian service that is truly biblical must have a direct conduit flowing to or from God's church. The church is the only existing spiritual entity that Christ promised to bless and perpetuate.
9. **Christian ministry should extend into the world-** Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). God loves the world (John 3:16). God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to Him in repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus commissioned the Church to go into the world to share the gospel with the lost and to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Our ministries should have an ongoing major component/emphasis targeted at permeating our immediate community, and beyond, to win the lost for Christ.
10. **Christian ministry is a by-product of worship-** When the church gathers, the first and greatest priority for Christians is to meet God and to worship Him; God is seeking true

worshippers (John 4:23-24). Christian service in the local church, a para-church organization, or on an individual basis is secondary and subservient to ongoing corporate worship of God (Luke 10:38-42). Every believer—each elder, deacon, staff member, teacher, etc.—needs to regularly be a part of worship with the whole Body of Christ to pray, hear the preaching of God's Word and to celebrate baptism and communion (Hebrews 10:24-25).

11. **Every Christian is called to ministry-** Every believer is expected to serve God, Christ and the church in formal ministry (Colossians 3:23; 1 Peter 4:10). God prepared works of ministry for every believer before the foundation of the world to complete in this life (Ephesians 2:10). We will all be held accountable for our works of ministry, or our negligence in ministry (2 Corinthians 5:10). Every Christian is enabled to bear fruit in ministry through spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7).
12. **There is specialized ministry in the church-** Although every Christian is called to serve in ministry, God gave formal spiritual leaders to the church to be models of ministry and to equip other Christians for spiritual service (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:17). Today these leaders include elders (overseers/pastors), teachers, and deacons.
13. **Prayer is indispensable in Christian ministry-** Jesus was devoted to prayer—He was dependent upon the Father's guidance in all of His ministry endeavors (Mark 1:35; John 17). The Apostles knew ministry was a by-product of an attitude of regular, deliberate, humble prayer (Acts 2:42). God told us to “devote yourselves to prayer” (Colossians 4:2). Religious work and service that is devoid of prayer may be nothing more than human endeavor, deeds done in the flesh, that do not accomplish God's will or have eternal significance.
14. **There will be resistance to Christian ministry-** Christians need to be realistic about ministry. Jesus said that as we serve Him, work for Him, and proclaim Him, the world will hate us (John 15:19) and despise us; people will persecute, mock and even kill some of us (Philippians 1:29); that the Devil will do all in his power to lie, undermine and torment us and our work (1 Peter 5:8). In addition, we all have indwelling sin (Romans 7:14-25), we all stumble in many ways (James 3:2), we are finite, have feet of clay, and may fail miserably at times in ministry. Therefore we must be totally dependent upon God's grace to help us in everything we do; and when we fail, sin, and compromise we must seek His forgiveness and restoration (Luke 17:3; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8).
15. **Church leaders need to protect the ministry of the church-** The Bible says that false prophets will always be involved in attacking the ministry of the local church, coming from outside and even from within the church (Acts 20:28-31). We need to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), by proactively, aggressively, courageously, and prayerfully defending the Body of Christ from false teaching, as well as divisive, immoral and unbiblical behavior (2 Peter). The Bible says that false teaching will abound particularly in the “last days” (2 Timothy 3:1-4:5).

Specialized Principles for Families and Their Children

- 1. Families need to grow in Christ together-**
 - That is the Biblical model and expectation (Psalm 128:1-4; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Ephesians 5:23- 6:4; 1 John 2:12-14)
- 2. Parents are the primary disciplers of their children-** (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4)
 - Through modeling
 - By deliberate, ongoing evangelism
 - By ongoing discipleship in collaboration with the church
- 3. Children are prime candidates for the kingdom of God-**
 - Jesus said so (Matthew 18:2-5; 19:13-14)
 - They are impressionable (Matthew 18:6-7)
- 4. Children are often in process on the evangelistic spectrum-**
 - Our job is to plant seeds (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)
 - To nurture their mustard seed faith
 - To protect their faith
 - To encourage any positive steps toward faith
 - This is “foundation-laying” time (2 Timothy 3:14-15)
 - God brings the increase—only He knows the hearts (1 Samuel 16:7)
 - We must treat them all the same, showing no partiality (1 Timothy 5:21)
- 5. Ministry to young people requires thorough biblical communication-**
 - Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)
 - Speaking with mutual respect (Ephesians 5:21)
 - All-way communication...between leaders, youth and parents
 - Believing the best—“love believes all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7)
 - To preserve unity and peace (Matthew 5:23-25; 18:15-18; Luke 17:3)
- 6. Ministry to young people requires ongoing opportunities for corporate worship, teaching and fellowship with their families and peers-**
 - They are part of a spiritual “body” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)
 - They are part of a spiritual “family” (1 Corinthians 7:14)
 - They are part of a spiritual “temple” (1 Peter 2:5)
 - The above three metaphors speak of corporate entities that function best when there is regular group interaction and interdependence; there are no “lone ranger” Christians. By God’s design, the church is a social institution and we need each other (Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:24-25). As such, our children and youth need to be regularly exposed to and assimilated into the corporate Body of Christ.