

Jesus' Ministry Model

*And say to Archippus, "Be sure to carry out the ministry the Lord gave you." Col. 4:17
Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you. 2Tim. 4:5*

I would like to explore how Jesus conducted His ministry while here on earth. I believe there to be an admirable and repeatable model of ministry contained in the strategy of Jesus. I've detected from my study of the Gospel of Mark a fairly clear method that Jesus employed to enlist and empower his disciples to be engaged in ministry.

I'm excited about this for two reasons, 1, is the excellent series Peter recently preached, that ought to be a challenge for each of us to get engaged in ministry, and 2, I've been working on a model for our church to empower people who would like to be part of the ministry that happens in and through Legacy UMC. I'm trying to figure out a way to enlist folks who would like to join our staff in a ministry of the church on a volunteer basis. If you have any ideas, I'd like to visit with you.

This challenge has led me to try and explode 5 Major Ministry Myths:

- 1- Ministers do ministry. Well technically this is correct, BUT only when you understand that we are ALL ministers! All who seek to follow Jesus; are called ministers. ALL believers have a ministry. ALL people are called to be in ministry.
- 2- Ministry happens in the church. This one is true and false. Yes, ministry happens in and through, and because of the church but, No, ministry doesn't just happen in church. Ministry happens whenever and wherever ANY person acts in a way that exemplifies Jesus. Your job might be your ministry. How you treat your boss, or employees, or siblings, or parents or children is your ministry.

The thought that ministry is what happens in church and life is what happens outside, after church, has cheapened life, and emasculated the church.

3- Some are called to ministry and some are not. Not true, we are all called.

Some are called to minister in and through the church, and get paid to do so; while others are called to minister in their homes, offices, businesses, schools, wherever. Those who are paid by the church to be engaged in ministry are also to be in ministry in their homes, etc; but we are also called to help in training others to answer the call to ministry.

4- Ministry is hard, scary and unnatural. Ministry is quite natural when you understand what it is. Ministry is not just preaching, teaching, leading youth and children, or doing music or drama, or serving in the church. When you realize that God has called you, gifted you, given you the exact personality He wants you to have to fulfill your calling; then ministry is one of the most natural things going. Ministry doesn't mean just being a Pastor, or a Missionary, it means being yourself, as a representative of Jesus and an ambassador for God.

5- Ministry happens on Sunday. Well, we hope it does, but ministry happens all the time, whenever people are in need, and people faithfully live their lives the way Jesus taught us all to do.

That being said, let's look into the Gospel of Mark and observe how Jesus trained his disciples to be effective in ministry. Let's look at His ministry for some clues to enhance our own.

1. HE MODELED MINISTRY – HE DID IT (Mark 1, 2).

In the first two chapters of Mark, we observe Jesus being engaged in 7 different forms of ministry that would become the “table of contents” for the remainder of his ministry throughout this book. In those first 2 chapters he was laying the groundwork for his life and work throughout his time on earth. Here are the 7 things he did:

- 1) He preached the Good news. Mk 1:14
- 2) He called people to be disciples. Mk 1:17
- 3) He taught in the synagogue. Mk 1:21
- 4) He cast out demons. Mk 1:25
- 5) He touched and healed individuals and masses of people. Mk 1:31 & 34
- 6) He went away alone to pray. 1:35
- 7) He forgave people their sins. 2:5

Most every time we see Jesus in action following these chapters, we see him doing one of these things. What will be different after these two chapters is that we begin to see the implementation of his ministry training strategy. In these first 2 chapters, he is engaged in this ministry pretty much alone. He has called the disciples, but they are not mentioned much. That is about to change.

2. HE MENTORED FOR MINISTRY – HE DID IT, AND THE DISCIPLES WERE WITH HIM AND THEY WATCHED HOW HE DID IT.

Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called out the ones he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. Then he appointed twelve of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach, giving them authority to cast out demons. Mk 3:13-15

I want you to be sure and notice the very first thing on their new disciple “Job description”. ... They were to accompany him. In another translation it says: *they were to be with him*. I don’t think that is a natural reference to the fact that they just walked or hung out with him; it is a direct command that before you get engaged in some life-giving and life-altering ministry...our first job is simply to be with Jesus.

While they were with him, they were observing him live out his ministry. They assisted in various ways, but for the most part, Jesus was doing ministry and they were observing.

I've been mentored by some great pastors and inspirational leaders. Gordon Fosness was one of my first. Dick Ward taught me many things about being a large church pastor. Jim Beddow was the first to introduce me to servant leadership while he served as the President of DWU. Sam Graf was indispensable in sharing his wisdom during our first years here in Bismarck. The list could go on and on.

But it wasn't until a few years of life/ministry had passed when a young student, struggling with his own call to ministry, asked me to help him; that I came to realize, that all good disciples ought to be being mentored, and being a mentor at the same time. We are never too old to know it all, or too wise to be unable to learn more. And we ought always to be training our replacement – as the saying goes. Jesus was doing that with his disciples and the second step in his strategy was to pour his life into them while they observed him doing ministry. Step 3.

3. HE MONITORED THEIR MINISTRY – THEY DID IT AND HE WAS WITH THEM.

And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits...The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, "let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." Mk 6:7 & 30-31

Many lessons here. Finally after 3 chapters of observing, they are ready and Jesus sends them off; two by two. John Maxwell was fond of saying the key to ministry is four words: "Never do ministry alone." He and Jesus were obviously advocating that ministry is usually better when done together. There can be strength in numbers, but there can also be an enhanced sense of mentoring while doing ministry together.

Also, do you detect a sense of excitement or joy in the remark about them telling Jesus all they had done? I remember when the first Bolivia group returned and they told the church how they actually built walls that one day would hold up the church.

Those snot-nosed kids like Eric and Andrew and Nathan, and Maria, Katie, Meagan, Brandon, Adam and Jordan; who couldn't make their own beds had built a church, and they were excited to share about that experience! Because they did it. Nycol was with them, and so were we back home praying. They came home different.

And do you also notice that his monitoring of their ministry included a call (is it a command) to go off to a quiet place and rest...awhile? Ministry can be taxing, it can be exhausting. I know that in my early days I subscribed to the philosophy that it was better to "burn out" than "rust out" for Jesus. That was stupid! Burned out people don't do the kingdom any good, and they are a poor witness of self-indulgent, self-importance. If Jesus and his disciples left ministry (for awhile) to rest, then we better too!

4. HE MOTIVATED THEM FOR MINISTRY – THEY DID IT AND HE WAS IN THE BACKGROUND ENCOURAGING THEM.

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone...When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs. Mk 16:15 & 19-20

They were now on their own...or were they? Who does this verse mention was doing the work? The Lord was working through them. It is so important to remember that no matter what ministry task is before you...that Jesus is behind you and within you, and He will work through you. Talking to your kids about sex and drugs and bullying is hard work, and vital ministry, and Jesus will work through you. Talking to a stranger on your CB radio or even calling a wrong cell phone number...might be a "God-cident" for a ministry encounter. Serving your children by picking up trash, theirs and others after their soccer game is a ministry all its own. In each and every case, we must remember that Jesus works through us, Jesus gives us the words, attitudes, strength, and will, to do what He has called, gifted and empowered us to do. Jesus is always in the background giving us encouragement, and occasionally miraculous signs!

5. HE MULTIPLIED THE MINISTRY – THEY DID IT (WE DO IT)

But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. Acts 8:4

You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. 2 Tim. 2:2

Isn't it interesting that after Jesus left earth, the church really took off? Wouldn't you think that his presence would be so profoundly integral to the process that there would be a natural drop off following his death? Makes me wonder if all along he knew that the key to continuing God's great work in this world; hinged on the success of this method of training and discipling ministers/us. He also knew that his ministry would be continued, even expanded by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But it makes me also wonder how well we are doing? If you are only here because of me or Ernie, or Peter or Suzanne, Walt or Marvin...that is probably not enough! I hope that you are finding the power of the spirit and the strategy of Jesus being employed to enhance your life, and empower your ministry. If God is using us to help that process, great, but it is not about any of us! It is about Jesus!

In the early chapters of Acts numerous times it is mentioned that the church grew and grew; many people were being "added" to the church. But in about chapter 6,7, or 8, we suddenly notice a different word: the church was being "multiplied". What caused the shift from simple addition to magical multiplication? You won't like the answer. Suffering – persecution drove the believers out of Jerusalem for fear of their lives; and wherever they went, they took the good news with them. The center of their religious lives was no longer the temple in Jerusalem or even a community outside the city. The center of their lives was Jesus, and he was plainly transportable and transformational!

I'm afraid that in order to multiply the ministry effect of Jesus, we may need a little suffering. Can we choose it? Can we as disciples of Jesus choose to deny ourselves some of life's unnecessary pleasures to give more money to God's work? Can we, will we choose to deny ourselves the rights we think are ours to use our time only for our own personal enhancements and to chase our personal dreams? Can we see that the difficulties and injustices of our lives are not your punishments, but you're your empowerments to make us more like your Son? Maybe its time we consider that God's calling might indeed need answering. Maybe it's time we all signed up for the ministry of caring, sharing, living a distinctive, authentic, spirit-filled, Jesus inspired, servant Christian life. Maybe it's time we see ministry for what it really is; the opportunity to be with Jesus, and do for Him what He chooses to have us to.

He modeled it by doing it. He mentored them while they worked together. He monitored their first fledging attempts, and rested them when they needed it. He motivated them with signs and wonders. And he multiplied the effect by leaving them in the power of the Spirit. God, help us join you with our lives – our ministries. AMEN.

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- 3- _____ are called to ministry and some are not.
- 4- _____ is hard, scary and unnatural.
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