

Ecclesiology

Semester 2 – Topic 9 – Ministry Philosophy

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Review

We began our study of “practical ecclesiology” by reviewing the theological foundations of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). We looked at the NT Greek usage of the word “ekklesia”, the difference between the “universal” and “local” church, the uniqueness of the church, the birth and end of the church, the church’s purpose and mission, and the local church’s organization and leadership.

Next, we investigated the Biblical characteristics of a healthy church or a local church that is striving to honor God and walk in a way that pleases Him.

Then we studied the definition of worship and the practice of personal and corporate worship.

Next, we considered body relationships or the ‘one-anothers’ which are those commands in Scripture that describe how members of the body of Christ are to interact.

Then we examined spiritual gifts – their definition and characteristics, distribution, and the details of the temporary sign/revelatory gifts and the permanent edifying gifts.

We have also started evaluating some theological/philosophical “issues” in the church starting with parachurches and a philosophy of missions. Then we discussed the Family Integrated Church Movement (FICM) and the Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM), considering the positives and areas of agreement VBC has with the movements as well as the concerns with each movement.

Introduction

“Ministry” can be defined as the faithful service of believers given to God and others on His behalf to bring Him glory, build up His church, and reach out to His world.

A simple internet search will demonstrate that what one person or church believes about a “philosophy of ministry” is much different than another person or church. Some view a “philosophy of ministry” as an all-encompassing statement on ecclesiology and Biblical ministry similar in character to a statement of faith while others view it as a simple statement about the purpose and mission of the universal and local church.

Simply put, a philosophy of ministry is a statement that describes how a local body will go about ministry in certain spheres (i.e. to the world or to the body).

Today, we will look at VBC’s ministry philosophy and how ministries come about at VBC.

VBC’s Ministry Philosophy

As we have studied, the purpose of the church and individual believers is to glorify God (Eph 1:13-14; Eph 3:20-21).

¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, **to the praise of His glory.** Eph 1:13-14

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹**to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.** Amen. Eph 3:20-21

To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can look at us and see what God's character is like (Ex 33:17-23; Matt 5:13-16). When a Christian lives a life that brings glory to God, he is fulfilling his/her purpose (Isa 43:7; 2 Pet 1:5). Glorifying God is the believer's highest calling. We can do it every minute of every day no matter what our circumstances. All aspects of life provide a wonderful opportunity to display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

¹⁷The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." ¹⁸Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" ¹⁹And He said, "**I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.**" ²⁰But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" ²¹Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; ²²and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." Ex 33:17-23

¹³"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶**Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** Matt 5:13-16

⁷Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." Isa 43:7

⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in **your moral excellence**, knowledge, 2 Pet 1:5

"Moral excellence" was a lofty term used for moral heroism, viewed as the divinely endowed ability to excel in heroic, courageous deeds. When anything in nature properly fulfills its purpose, that fulfillment was referred to as "virtue" or "moral excellence." Land that produces crops is "excellent" because it is fulfilling its purpose. The tool that works correctly is "excellent" because it is doing what a tool is supposed to do. Our purpose is to glorify God.

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

❖ What is your daily, moment by moment purpose?

Similarly, the mission of the church is to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

¹⁹Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matt 28:19-20

Making disciples involves three steps: going (evangelizing), baptizing (identifying with Christ), and teaching to observe all that Jesus commanded. The church's disciple making activity includes building itself up in the faith through worship, teaching, fellowship, remembering Jesus' sacrifice, and prayer (Eph 4:11-16; Acts 2:42).

❖ What is your daily, moment by moment mission?

In order to bring this overriding purpose and mission into the day-to-day ministry of VBC, the Elders have developed a ministry philosophy that guides the functioning and development of ministries (see here: www.valleybible.net/purpose.php). VBC's ministry philosophy is simply:

“We are committed to utilizing relationships for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship.”
(Matt 28:19-20; Eph 4:15)

¹⁹Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt 28:19-20

¹⁵but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, Eph 4:15

In order to support the ministry philosophy, the Elders have developed a vision for our church, the community, and world with accompanying goals:

1. Our vision of the church is to prepare Christians (Eph 4:11-13): Our goal is for every member to be personally discipled through the ministry of a small group.
2. Our vision for the community is to proclaim Christ (Col 1:28): Our goal is to enable every member to reach their unsaved or unchurched family and friends for Christ.
3. Our vision for the world is to partner with churches (Mat 28:19-20): Our goal is for every member to be supporting our cross-cultural partnership with churches in Japan and Mexico, and with our Deaf fellowship in bringing spiritual life and spiritual growth to the world.

In order to bring about the vision, the Elders seek the body involvement of all those attending VBC:

1. Each individual should have a balanced involvement in the church that includes both personal edification and service, both input and output.
2. This balance can be found through involvement in our adult or youth ministries for personal growth, and in other service opportunities to help others.
3. We recommend that you begin by participating in our (*growth*) ministries and then prayerfully consider how God has enabled you to help others at Valley Bible.

Ministry Evaluation

A way to evaluate ministries within the body is to bring our purpose (to glorify God) and our mission (to make disciples) together with the characteristics of a healthy church (see topic 1):

- A high view of God
- A high view of Scripture
- An emphasis on doctrinal soundness
- An emphasis on discipleship
- An emphasis on evangelism (a sincere concern for the lost)
- An emphasis on the clarity of the gospel
- An emphasis on the equipping ministry of the church
- An emphasis on Biblical church organization
- An emphasis on Biblical fellowship
- An emphasis on Biblical service

Each local church ministry or proposed ministry is then evaluated based on the Biblical purpose, mission, and healthy characteristics for inclusion into the overall ministry of the church. So, let's do that...

Sunday Morning

- Sunday morning worship service
- Babies/Toddlers – Nursery care during Sunday Worship Services
- Sunday School/Children’s Church (PreK-4 grade) – Sunday mornings
- Adult Education Classes – Sunday mornings
- Spanish Ministry – Sundays at 10:30 am
- Deaf Ministry – Sundays at 9:00 am (Sunday School) and 10:30 am (Worship Service)

Children and Youth

- Babies/Toddlers – Nursery care during Sunday Worship Services
- AWANA – Sundays during the school year (3-8 grade and High School)
- Summer Vacation Bible School
- CIA (grades 5-6) – Sunday mornings and Thursday nights in the summer
- GLORY (grades 7-8) – Sunday mornings and most Thursdays
- POWERHOUSE (grades 9-12) – Sunday mornings and most Wednesdays
 - Many youth outings, summer and winter camps, sports days, summer swim parties, and theme parties
- Soccer Camp outreach
- Father/Son Camp
- Trunk or Treat outreach
- Summer Co-Ed Slow-pitch Softball league outreach

Adult

- College Group – Fridays evenings and Sunday mornings
- Career Group – Fridays evenings
- Growth Groups – Weeknights at various homes
- Men’s Ministry – Monthly breakfast out and a Spring Man Camp
- Women’s Ministry – Weekly Wednesday Bible Study (August - May), Quarterly Women’s Coffee Connections, and an annual fall retreat
- Baby & Preschool Play Days – most Thursdays (August - May)
- Evangelism Explosion (evangelism training) – Thursdays (Fall & Spring Semester)
- Counseling Ministry – Personal care to anyone struggling with life issues and sin
- Foreign Missions – Partnering with churches and ministries in Mexico and Japan
- Community outreach activities

Other (too many to list all)

- Donut ministry (AWANA support)
- Scrip ministry
- Vehicle restoration ministry (missions support)
- Sunday morning prep team
- Grounds care
- Facility maintenance
- Event planning and assistance (weddings, memorial service, etc.)
- Holiday decorating
- Music ministry and special music events (Christmas and Easter choirs)

What about some things that other churches are involved with?

Some of these types of ministries develop from an unbiblical perspective on the church's mission.

- Political activism
- Anti-abortion activism
- Social justice causes

Some of these types of ministries develop from unbiblical perspectives on care. For example, believers do not need to experience the same difficulty as other believers to provide care. Many people believe that it is impossible to care for some else to whom you cannot personally relate. The thought is, "I have to walk in their shoes before I can help them." The Bible holds to a very different paradigm for providing care. The only requirement to provide Biblical care is a Spirit-filled believer. Because I am a believer, by definition I have received the Lord's comfort for the purpose to be able to comfort others.

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Cor 1:3-4

- Various support and recovery groups (substance addiction, behavior addiction, cancer support, abuse support, abortion care, etc.)
- Divorce Care (www.divorcecare.org)
- Divorce Care for Kids (www.dc4k.org)
- Grief Share (www.griefshare.org)

Ministry Development

Note: This is my perspective of how this works. It might not be completely accurate.

Have you ever thought about how ministries develop at VBC? It is rather simple. A member who is walking in the Spirit (we hope) has an idea for ministering to a person or people and they do it. Hopefully, even as individuals, they would evaluate the idea in light of Biblical patterns of ministry. As long as the "ministry" only involves them, then they are free to minister as they believe God is giving them direction. If the person is looking to or begins to recruit others from the church or the ministry grows to where it looks like an official church ministry, then the elders evaluate it and take oversight of the ministry. Generally, ministries at VBC will be overseen by an elder or their representative (a deacon or an identified ministry leader).

VBC already has many ministries that are meeting the disciple making mission of the church. In terms of developing a new ministry, there are many people who have ideas, fewer have good ideas, fewer have ideas that meet the ministry philosophy of VBC, fewer still are able execute the idea (develop and bring leadership to it). Additionally, the body simply does not have the manpower or financial resources to do everything, so priority decisions need to be made on which ministries to support. That is why we don't have many new ministries starting.

Conclusion

VBC is committed to a Biblical philosophy of ministry that places the Biblical purpose of glorifying God and Biblical mission of making disciples through Biblical means as primary. Whether as a local church or individuals, we should evaluate our ministry involvements in light of the Biblical principles of ministry.