

PHILOSOPHY OF CHURCH MINISTRY

MISSION of the CHURCH

The Church exists to glorify God by gathering as one body:

to love God and the people He has made,
to develop followers of Jesus Christ from all people groups,
and to edify one another through the Holy Spirit.

WORLD VIEW

Philosophy of ministry is founded upon a person's worldview. Because of this, it is worth noting that my views can be divided into three areas: (1) *essentials* that are considered orthodox and necessary for saving faith; (2) *convictions* that are believed to be true and should be present in a church where I would serve, but they may not be held by all believing Christians; and (3) *preferences* that would be preferable, but not necessary for effective ministry. What follows is a brief outline of my worldview:

Essentials

1. I believe in God, maker of heaven and earth, who is the only true God – eternally existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who is perfect, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful. (Gen 1:1; Dt. 6:4,5; Matt. 28:19,20)
2. I believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, the begotten Son of God – who became incarnate as a human being, lived a sinless life, displayed His divinity through miracles, died on a cross to redeem humanity, rose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and now intercedes on behalf of humanity. (Lk. 1:35; 1 Cor. 15:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Acts 1:9; Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Jn 2:1,2)
3. I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity who in everything glorifies Jesus Christ. During this church age, the Spirit baptizes believers into union with Christ, indwells and fills in increasing measure, teaches and sanctifies, empowers for witness, and equips the Church for ministry. (Jn. 16:7-14; 1 Thess. 1:9,10; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16-23; Acts 1:8)
4. I believe that all humans were made in the image of God, but each person has chosen to rebel against God and sever relationship with Him. As a result, humankind is utterly sinful and, having

rebelled against God, deserves everlasting punishment in hell. Eternal life is a gift of God, given to those who trust in Him for salvation. (Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7; Gen. 3; Jn. 3:16-27; Heb. 2:7-9; Rom. 3:20-23; 5:8; Eph. 2:12; Col. 3:10)

5. I believe that the Scriptures are God's revelation to humanity, and that in their original manuscripts, they are inspired by God, trustworthy and without error. (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20,21; 1 Cor. 2:13; Jn. 6:63; Ps. 119)
6. I believe that salvation is a gift of God's grace, received through faith, available to anyone who admits their need for a savior, believes in Christ, and repents of sin. Salvation is made possible through Jesus Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and not through any work of our own. (Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:8)
7. I believe that the Church is the body of Christ, a visible display of God's grace in the world. The Church is comprised of all persons who have confessed Jesus as Savior, and each local church is a representation of the universal Church. (Matt. 8:17; 16:18; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 1; 4:12; Col. 3:15; 2 Cor. 8:23)
8. I believe that humanity will experience a literal, bodily resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ – the believer to eternal life in the presence of the Lord, and the unbeliever to everlasting separation from the Lord. (Acts 17:31, 32; Jn. 5:28; Lk. 24:36-43; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:20-24; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Revelation 20:11-15; 21; 22:7-13)

Convictions

1. I believe that God is sovereign over all things, that He has a plan for His creation, and that He completely knows the future. (Eph. 1; Col. 1)
2. I believe that Scripture supports compatibilism – that human beings are free to choose according to their desires and that God predestines His elect without compromising human freedom or divine sovereignty. (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:26; Eph. 1:5-11; 2:10; Heb. 6:17; 2 Tim 1:9)
3. I believe that baptism symbolizes a believer's entrance into God's covenant people, and while the method should not be divisive, all followers of Christ should make a public profession of faith. (Mt. 10:33; Mk. 16:16; Jn. 4:2; Acts 2:38,41; 8:12,13, 35-38; 16:30-33)
4. I believe that charismatic gifts are available to the Church today. The Spirit equips believers uniquely according to His will, and the gifts should only be exercised within the limits provided to us in Scripture. (1 Co. 12-14)

Preferences

1. I prefer to serve in a church that is guided by a plurality of elders, while encouraging the priesthood of all believers. (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Peter 2:5-9)
2. I prefer to serve in a church that values creativity, while being informed by tradition and set within the bounds of Scripture. (Gen. 1:1, 26-31; Ex. 3, 1:1-6; Ps. 33:3, 98:1; 144:9; Eph. 5:19)
3. I prefer to serve in a church that encourages men and women to minister in complimentary roles in the church and home; God reserves oversight of church doctrine and authoritative acts to men, yet what this means depends upon cultural context and church government. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:5-25; Eph. 5:22-23; 1 Pet. 3:1, 7, 8; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Mk. 10:42-45; Phil. 2:3-8)
4. I prefer to serve in a church that recognizes realized millennialism is a biblical position that can be held by evangelicals. (Lk. 11:21-23; Mk. 3:27; Rev. 20:1-10)
5. I prefer to serve in a church that appreciates diverse and blended worship that reflects the surrounding culture. (1 Cor. 14:11)

PROFILE OF A MATURING CHRISTIAN

In order to effectively minister, we must consider what we are working towards. What follows are some signs that will serve as a helpful guide throughout this process. Keeping these in mind will help us assess whether or not we are being effective in ministry.

A maturing Christian will grow as a worshiper:

1. A maturing Christian adult will regularly participate in fellowship and ministry with other believers.

Because Christians are unified in Christ, it is essential that we join with others. By gathering together, we signify what Christ has done in our lives. With all of our differences, we have become united through the Spirit's work in our lives. As reflected in other structures within society, gbest occurs within the context of community. (Heb. 13:16, 10:24,25)

2. A maturing Christian adult will meditate upon God's word to understand the original text, learn enduring principles, and apply the Scriptures to daily life.

Our faith is founded upon truths communicated in Scripture. One of the fruits of loving God is that we love His Word. We cannot claim to love God if we do not know who He is or what He commands. (Ps. 119:11)

3. A maturing Christian adult will pursue personal holiness in increasing measure.

As a Christian experiences the Spirit's work within, there will be more desire to obey and honor the Lord. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will obey what He commands. As such, personal holiness is one of the signs that a person is growing as a Christian. (Phil. 1:6, 3:13,14; 2 Pet. 3:18)

4. A maturing Christian adult will actively participate in worship – both in public and private settings.

Corporate worship is part of the faith community, but it is not enough in itself. A mature believer recognizes that worship continues during the week. As such, all of life becomes an act of worship. (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31)

A maturing Christian will grow as a witness:

5. A maturing Christian adult will testify to the gospel in word and deed.

Personal testimony reflects authentic growth. In light of what Christ has done, Christians are called to proclaim the good news in everything that they do, so that others will become followers of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8; Romans 12:1,2)

6. A maturing Christian adult will strive to cross boundaries and bridge gaps between cultures.

While this is unnatural for most people, it becomes possible as the Holy Spirit works within a person's heart. We are called to "go" and communicate to all nations, so a mature believer is not satisfied with homogenous ministry. (Mt. 28:19,20; Eph. 2:11-22; 4:1-16)

7. A maturing Christian adult will make disciples by teaching others about the Lord.

Jesus instructed his followers to go make disciples by baptizing and teaching. While some believers are gifted for public or formal teaching, all Christians are called to teach the basic tenets of the faith. Teaching others is not optional, but a significant part of our calling as Jesus' disciples. (Mt. 28:19,20)

A maturing Christian will grow as a servant:

8. A maturing Christian adult will transform society by living out the gospel in authentic, practical, and life-changing ways.

As the gospel is embraced, a Christian will affect his/her surroundings. The gospel influences cultural contexts, political systems, economic situations, and so forth. A mature Christian will have an impact upon the surrounding context. The Christian message has many applications for the social, cultural, and political realm. (Gen. 9:1; Mt. 5:13-16, 28:19,20; Heb. 13:16)

9. A maturing Christian adult will not neglect his family, but teach and care for them.

Contrary to the trend of society, a Christian should value family above entertainment, career, and education. The importance of the family is rooted in the Old Testament, which reveals how much God cares about the spiritual health of the family. Church leaders are required to care after their families, and their example is meant to be followed by all. Taking care of the family involves time and effort, but it is part of spiritual growth. (Deut. 6:4-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7)

10. A maturing Christian adult will care for the poor, outcast, and needy in the world.

One mark of spiritual growth is the amount of care shown towards others. Jesus said that His followers should love their enemies, so this can serve as a way to gauge true spirituality. In fact, Jesus goes so far to say that those who never take care of the needy are not part of the covenant community. It is part of Christian responsibility to help – not only those within the church, but those without as well. All Christians will help others to some degree, and maturing Christians will do so in increasing measure. (Mt. 25:31-46; Jm. 2:14-26)

NURTURE/METHODS

1. Christians grow best when motivated by God's character and actions.

From Scripture, we know that God not only created *ex nihilo* (displaying His power), but offered grace to sinners (displaying His love). This display is what best motivates us to follow Him. Embracing God's character and His actions is essential to Christian growth. Our hope does not rest in man's efforts, but in God Himself. As such, all ministry should be Christ-centered and Spirit-led.

2. Christians grow best when they prioritize loving God and others.

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus explained that loving God and loving others is most important. Some churches exalt the intellect or personal experience, but Scripture teaches that all of that is pointless without love. Centering on love will protect against idolatry, legalism, sectarianism, and other spiritual maladies. (1 Cor. 13)

3. Christians grow best when ministered to in a holistic way.

As human beings, we have spiritual, physical, social and emotional needs. Even Jesus had need for food, rest, and relationships. This being the case, we should avoid Gnostic tendencies and recognize that God has created us as complex individuals that need holistic ministry. Sometimes this means feeding the hungry before preaching to them; sometimes this means referring to a medical professional; and sometimes this means that everyday issues are spiritual.

4. Christians grow best when the gospel is communicated in common and understandable forms.

Every culture needs the gospel translated, so that it is accurately understood. This applies to Bible texts, worship lyrics, sermons, ecclesiastical symbols, etc. Ministers should do everything possible to communicate in a culturally relevant way.

5. Christians grow best when encouraged by New Testament emphases upon the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's ministry.

The core of the Christian message is the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in Scripture, but this is made a present reality through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Rather than emphasizing or neglecting either aspect, churches should embrace both. Salvation requires Christ's sacrifice and the conviction of the Holy Spirit; sanctification requires Christ's holiness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

6. Christians grow best in the context of a diverse, yet united faith community.

The New Testament church was comprised of Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, privileged and under-privileged. Even with our ethnic differences, Christ calls us to participate as one body – not in separate homogenous groups. Through unity within the Church, we declare the power of Christ's love and display the reality of the Holy Spirit within our midst. The Church must denounce hierarchies of wealth, ethnicity, gender, and so forth. As barriers are broken down, we recognize our cultural blindness and experience deeper spiritual growth.

(Eph. 2:11-22; 4:1-16)

7. Christians grow best through sermons based on the exposition of Scripture.

Expository preaching enable a preacher to focus on Scripture, encourages preaching from the whole counsel of God, and takes the listener deeper into the meaning of a text. While topical preaching has its place – e.g., for dealing with biblical or systematic theological issues – expositional preaching has a long history within the Church, and it provides a Scripture-directed approach to preaching.