

Ministry Formation Series
Finding Direction in Ministry: Ministry, Authenticity, Calling, Church
By Bob Young

Session 1

Accountability, principles for ministry

Session 2

Calling, working on the heart [Jeremiah]

Session 3

The future of ministry—the future of the church

SESSION #1

Goal: Ministry in word, prayer, heart (compassion)

The importance of ministry:

- No US county with church growth exceeding that of 10 years ago
- It appears that first time marriages may have only a 50% change of success
- 75% of African-American babies are born out of wedlock
- Families are struggling, crumbling, society is disintegrating due to the loss of family frameworks.

Old Testament text: To study crumbling walls, check Nehemiah

New Testament text: In his second letter, Peter several times mentions the problem of forgetting and the need for reminders (1:9,12-15; 2:20-21; 3:1,5,8). We human beings are prone to forget; we need reminders. Over four decades of preaching and local ministry, I have determined that there is not enough “review” in the typical congregation. In the academic world, students review so they can pass a test. In many occupations, professional journals provide reports, reviews, new information.

Authenticity

Real, genuine? Being, not doing.

1. Wholeness
2. Humanity and image of God
3. Balance

Accountability, for what does God hold us accountable? What are the essentials?

You cannot prioritize essentials, all are essential.

Absence of one thing messes up everything else.

Interdependence.

#1—God holds me accountable for getting the **focus** of life right. What is at the center of my life? What is my purpose on earth? If one misunderstands the purpose of life, all else will be messed up.

#1—What is At the Center/Focus/Purpose

Solitude, we sort our values in solitude, school for leadership development, make a list of leaders who were formed in solitude

#2—God holds me accountable for **relationships**. Relationships 101 (10 commandments were relational). Three are paramount.

>God holds me accountable for a heart of worship. I was made for intimacy with God. Do I live intimately with God? Do I seek his presence? Does my life honor, adore, magnify, and glorify him? Is he my paraclete? 2 Kings 6

>God holds me accountable to live out faithfully my family roles.

>God expects from me friendships. God's plan for his creation includes my godly friends, shared intimacy, friendships that are more than fellowship, personable vs. personal

Living Life (10 commandments dealt with living life)

#3—God holds me accountable for how I live my **life**.

>God holds me accountable for service. God by example showed me how to pick up the towel and basin. He calls me to advance the cause where it does not exist. He calls me to live out the reality of God in this world wherever I go. Jesus disappointed more people in his lifetime/ministry than any other person, but he pleased the Father

>God holds me accountable for my work. God created me and I am responsible for learning how to work hard and to enjoy my work. This is not natural; this is an acquired aspect of my Christian accountability.

>God calls me to rest. We do not know and appreciate the process of sabbathing or resting. [Check Mark Buchanan as author in this area.] In our culture, we are driven. We never stop; we never rest. 20-25% of Jesus' ministry was spent in intentional rest. We do not work well because we do not rest well. These three are a package—serving, working, resting.

#4—God holds me responsible as a **steward**.

I am a steward of my physical body.

I am a steward of God's stuff—possessions and opportunities. Stewardship of my possessions/stuff and my opportunities (fool in Proverbs lives in chaos regarding possessions)

I am a steward of my mind, with the great God-given capacity for creativity.

I boldly suggest that virtually all of life is encompasses in these four categories, ten items:

Purpose

Relationships--to God, to family, to friends

A life--of service, work, rest

Stewardship--of my body, my possessions, my mind

God holds us accountable!

SESSION #2

Considering Your Calling

"LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance" (Ps. 16:5-6).

I often require ministry students to write about their call from God. In this class, reflect on God's call. Over my lifetime, I have had several jobs. Not all were full-time. Some helped support me during educational endeavors. My list of jobs includes retail lumber and construction sales, janitor, switchboard operator, director of student housing, metal extrusion press operator, and advertising director. Recently, I have worked with one foot in the local church and one foot in Christian higher education. I have served as professor, preached and ministered, sponsored student organizations, done mission work, directed academic programs, consulted with churches, and served in academic and university administration. Today, in addition to preaching regularly, I am a writer, adjunct professor, and participant in numerous mission activities. How does this relate to our call?

Interesting, Lk 12:49. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!" Jesus came to make a difference in the world--to shake the spirits, open the fountain of redemption, make humanity anxious for regeneration, help us ask where we are coming from, where we are going.

Is crisis of faith today. Externally in our world--liberalism, materialism, humanism, individualism, hedonism. In the religious world--ecumenism, soft theologies, Biblical ignorance. But greatest failure is internal. We are failing, failing God, failing to act, failing self, failing our world.

Christianity urgently needs men and women to send fire to our world—men and women who are genuinely converted, see God's eternal purpose, have a real message on their hearts, are moved by the love of Christ, and are obedient to the heavenly call. These words should describe all of us, but do not. Here is our failure—we are not prepared, have not prepared ourselves, have failed to answer the call when we are prepared.

Backgrounds: In the OT, God calls

Jer. 20:9. The fire Jer felt in his bones, spir fire, originated with God. God's flame burns in the soul of every person called to his service. God called Jer. (1:5). God does not use the same procedure for all. Isa's call was distinct. Ezek was called by spectacular visions (Ezek 23). Jer's call, by contrast, seems natural, usual. God's word comes to him. Jer protests, as you and I often do. But God is calling Jeremiah. God is putting fire in Jer's bones.

A. Consuming call.

When fire is within us, we are consumed. Internal fire confronts the spir coldness in the world, but first confronts the spir coldness w/i our hearts. Ps 39:3 says meditation started the fire. Jer felt the fire. He answered the call.

God w/i us does not consume us, and the world questions his genuine presence within us. Fire can smolder just so long, and it breaks forth. The cold reception of the message in our world, a message that fails to consume hearts, is explained by the cold reception of the message in the church of Christ, the very people of God. The spir ignorance of our world is explained by the spir ignorance among us.

B. Convicting call.

Jer's conviction is seen in 15:15-18. We do not know how the prophet died, but we do know he was convicted and answered the call of God even in the face of death and persecution by his countrymen. A Jewish story accepted by early Xns says Jer died in Taphnes, stoned by his own people. He was undoubtedly persecuted, even imprisoned, but God's convicting call cannot be ignored.

In our heart of hearts, we have wanted to do more than we are doing in missions. I want to give more. Bro, sis, do what God is laying on your heart to do. Only those with convictions can make a difference in our world. Salesman must be convicted- convinced of the value of the product they offer. We have claimed the fire without the flame of God. The fire has just about gone out in many hearts. Faith slips, hearts sink in doubt.

C. Continuing call.

God said, you speak what I command (1:7). With the fire of his missions burning inside him, he spoke a short sermon: 22:29. Whether God's message is a sword bringing war or an offering bringing peace, God calls us to continually spread the message as we go into all the world by going into the spheres of our individual worlds.

The call is not continual for many Xns today because we have lost sight of the purpose of our existence. Our question is similar to that of the prophet in Jer. 20:18. To serve God is a difficult task, full of obstacles. To overcome the obstacles, the servant of God must maintain a clear vision of his mission. We have a order, marching orders if you will, and we must respond.

Listen to Paul in Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:16.

D. Challenging call--going to the very core of our being.

We get tired, pessimistic, spiritually discouraged. We may react as Jer did. We may resemble Jonah. We may try to hide from God. Elijah escaped Jezebel and argued with God trying to justify his desertion. Some today have deserted the ranks, failed to answer the call, and are arguing with God about why they cannot be more generous, more involved, more active, more faithful. Others like Job and Jer become discouraged and may even become spir rebellious.

Jer was upset with God, 15:18. He discussed his dilemma with God, vowed to forget the call of God, but the fire was centered within him, and his identity as God's person in the very core of his being demanded that he respond. Jer. 23:29.

In the life of every servant of God, there are Gethsemanes of moral depression, Mt. Tabors of optimism. In the middle storms, there is always a calm from God. In the midst of darkness, light shines forth. He calls us--consumes us, continues with us, convicts us, calms us, challenges us--in the very center of our being.

CALLING

Illus: Many preachers have doubts, inner and outer trials. What called to do? Don't have a clue—nothing working like it should. What called to do with your life? ??

I believe God shapes the hearts of his leaders and ministers through the call. Without a clear call, hearts are misshapen. Call—divinely orchestrated setting apart of person for a special task. In this, God initiates, guides, positions, intervenes. We hear, respond, search, and order and reorder life.

The call is a mystery. Begins with God, circles through human individuals, ends with God. As though we are on a string. It is personal, but is bigger than we are.

A. Seeing God

Our call reveals God. When the call is heeded, it is because a person has seen God in some form or way. What we have seen about God is what we can share.

How do you know you have God's call? Increasing emphasis on fact that all are called, ordained, and we lose something essential to effective ministry.

The call that is based in God's revelation is not a religious career or position. A career and a call are two very different things. Having a job with a church does not guarantee a call from God.

The collapse of the traditional church culture means that many ministers will not serve out their call within the church culture. This trend has been emerging over the past decade or so. When one sees the call as a heart-shaping subplot in the minister's life story, one sees a call that one can order one's life around. Personal concerns become subservient to the call. The call guides life.

The call is not yours, it is God's. It is his decision, sovereign selection. You can run from the call and refuse it. But you cannot drum it up. The call is not invented, it is revealed. Life options and opportunities are evaluated against the background of the call. The call clarifies.

Now believe that God called me to strengthen and provide insight to his work both locally and globally. He has opened doors. I have strong backgrounds in ministry, academic training and experience, mission doors have opened. I speak, write, consult, guide, teach.

This road has not been easy always, but it has been fulfilling. The point is this: it is touch to serve as a Christian leader or minister with a call. Without a call, the choice constitutes cruel and unusual self-punishment.

B. Seeing ministry.

What did you answer the call to do? The rules are changing. Those trained or training to serve in a traditional church culture may be contemplating a call to a world that will not exist in 17 or 42 years. What then? Lots of ministers in their 50s experiencing this. The world of ministry they entered has passed away.

Their past experience in ministry ill suits them for the future. The trip they prepared for has been cancelled. Some retool, many do not have the drive to do so.

God's call is current to the times, and the growing minister keeps the call current, in relationships and competencies. This requires that we understand ministry and know ourselves.

Models of Ministry—who is a minister, what does a minister do.

- Holy person.
- Minister or chaplain.
- Educated person, master, wordsmith, teacher.
- Church builder.
- Social reformer.
- Pastoral care, counselor.
- CEO, professional manager.

The Changing Shape of Ministry models

- Missional
- Kingdom conscious
- Team-oriented
- Entrepreneurial
- Interdisciplinary—schooled by the business culture
- People developers
- Visionary
- Spiritual

C. Seeing self

In reflecting on these matters, face to face with issue of your call's "future development"

Many are experiencing "call transition"

What do your gifts and talents tell you about your call?

People who feel called should evaluate what they bring to the table. Significant evaluation of competencies, aptitudes, gifts. "Call clarification"

Do your skills match up with what you are trying to do? Sometimes, leaders or ministers are working in areas where they are not impassioned or gifted to serve. Certainly, there is a place for skill development, but over time a certain aptitude develops if a person is working in the area of call.

Conclusion

The constant throughout life is that I am God's person. All is for his glory, for his purpose, for his cause. Oswald Chambers: "In the beginning we do not train for God, we train for work, for our own aims; but as we go on with God we lose all our own aims and are trained into God's purpose. Unless practical work is appointed by God, it will prove a curse."

In mysterious ways, God equips us to fulfill our calling. He makes us wait when we want to act; he leads us where we cannot see. He takes us where we never dreamed of going; he closes and opens doors. He uses unlikely methods, places, people, and challenges. God got Moses ready by herding sheep for 40 years. Israel got ready by wandering for 40 years. God prepared Joseph with a prison sentence. Amos got ready as a shepherd. Jesus was prepared as a carpenter. The apostle Simon prepared for service in the Jewish sect of the Zealots. Saul got ready by opposing what he eventually embraced.

God is forming us; he is changing and transforming us. God is equipping us, preparing us. God's message is sharpened within us; God's power is focused. God has a plan for your life. Pray that God accomplishes His intended outcome in you through the work you are doing today.

SESSION #3

How Will We Do Church in the future—in 2020?

Introduction

This final class focuses on culture as a dynamic that informs ministry.

What is really happening right now? Can we discern the times? (We see the clouds, but can't see the times) "Urban God"—what is God up to right now?

Look at the facts....

A significant religious news item was the release by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life of a survey which studied the religious affiliation of the United States population. The survey results found nearly half the American public saying they're something different today than they were as a child." Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, calls it a "dynamic religious marketplace, and very competitive."

When we hear that 44% of American adults have left the religious group of their childhood, should we respond with dismay or with renewed hope for the future? Changes in affiliation are swelling the nondenominational churches. We have claimed to be nondenominational but have become very denominational if our outlook, methods, and understandings.

Here are three action items for consideration.

1. Let us make a concerted effort to reclaim our nondenominational heritage and to live it out in the context of our churches. Let us thoughtfully shape our worship, daily lives, and shared faith to reach as many as possible who want to make Jesus Lord of their lives. Should our churches not be places where all whose allegiance and loyalty are to Jesus Christ can find a home?
2. Let us be bolder in trying to reach and convert our friends and neighbors who are already religious. The survey found that evangelical churches may claim to win new believers from the unchurched, but that the reality is most converts to evangelical churches were raised Protestant.
3. Let us be more thoughtful in how we develop and shape faith—in our own lives and in the lives of our families.

While it may be easy to resort to hand-wringing (a wonderful religious exercise) in the light of the survey results, I prefer to see a new horizon with new opportunities to make a difference in the lives of countless people. The question is whether our churches are bold enough and faith-vibrant enough to seize the opportunity.

THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

Ray Bakke statistics:

410 cities in world over 1 million

Not black vs. white but brown vs. yellow

1900, 90% of all world lived in west; 1980, 50%; 2000, 10%

In 2000, China announced plans to build 50 cities of 1 million plus

Cities are gigantic magnets

At the height of British rule, Britain rules 52 nations; now all 52 are in London

14% of Paris is Algerian

There are 100K Turks in Berlin

Sao Paulo has 1 million Japanese

Buenos Aires, 10% of the churches are Korean

US is catch basin—more Jews than Israel, more Arabs than most Arab nations (Detroit is center); 50K Serbs in PA. In World Trade Center, 80 nations were represented. At 9/11, Britain suffered the most deaths ever except in WW2.

Sam Roberts, "The Changing Face of the Nation"

Significant changes in last 10 years, based on comparison of 1990 and 2000 censuses

During '90s, grew to 292 million, increase of 32.7 million, largest 10-year increase in US history

In '90s, foreign born population increased 57%, more than 31 million. The US is the least American-born ever.

NYC, proportion of foreign born went from 28% in 1990 to 40% in 2000.

52% of those who are here as foreign born are from Latin America.

In 2002, are more Hispanics than Afro-Americans.

Non-Hispanic whites are less than 50% of the population in TX, CA, NM.

With current growth rates, the US will be 24% Hispanic by 2050. Non-Hispanic whites will be a minority in our country by 2055-60.

Changes in households—households with married couples dropped from 4/5 in 1950 to 1/2 in 2000.

26% of U.S. population lives alone. There are more single households than those married with children.

7% of total households have working father and stay-at-home mom

Since 1960, proportion of children living with both parents has dropped from 88% to 68%

In 1960, 9% lived with single parent, in 2000 is 28%, is 53% of blacks.

of families headed by a woman grew 5 times faster than families in married with children category

2001-02, 1/3 of babies born out of wedlock, 2/3 of black babies

Obvious erosion of marriage

2/3 of US population live in state where born (of those US born)

Image of mobility has limitations: of 18-24s, 54% of men, 47% of women still live with their parents.

At end of 2002, 2,166,260 people were in prison

701 prisoners per 100K, up from 601 7 years earlier.

2001 poverty, 11.7%, 1/2 of 1959. But of children in poverty, 30% of black children, 28% of Hispanic children.

The poorest 1/5 of our nation received 3% of aggregate income.

Population will continue to grow, today is double 1950, 300 mill by 2010, 338 mill by 2025, 404 mill in 2050, 571 mill in 2100.

Much due to increased life expectancy.

From 2000-2025 elderly will double to 70 million.

2050—those 65+ will number 80 mill, double today.

Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom

ChurchNext, Eddie Gibbs, professor of Church Growth at Fuller

What Is God doing?

What will church look like in future? Looking at future must see—

Church of future must move from living in the past to engagement in the present.

- The church has been traumatized by internal problems, failed to notice the cultural shift around us. What are we about if we are internally focused.
- What is happening now—we know about the wrong things.
- I brought you the world, and you didn't go to any of those groups.
- All roads now lead to the US (not Rome).
- 1/3 of U.S. congress not have passport.
- 197 nations in Olympics—all of those are represented in this country.
- If we are to be alive, we must engage the present.

Church of future must move from mission to market, not vice versa. Mission is primary. We will respond to needs, must needs are not the first priority. We must move from focusing almost exclusively on needs to mission. If the church is driven by market and felt needs, it will always see first its own internal needs.

Be mission driven. In market, customer is right, attender is sovereign. God is sovereign. We must be attention to world, yes, but more so to God.

Church of future must move from ritual to relationships.

In ARM, baptism is right, Lord's Supper.

But we didn't get relationships right! Should have never split in 1906. No Bible supporting the division of the body. It is always one person at a time. 1 John is a book re: the advantages of staying together when the church is in danger of splitting. Check also the message of 1 Corinthians.

Stop degrading the church.

Church of future must move from generic congregations to incarnational congregations. Forget the megachurch model, it can't transfer. Forget cloning. Be real in ministry in your context. Philippians is not Colossians.

Thessalonica is not Athens. The Gospel bridges between church and culture.

Church of future. In the next 10 years, mother churches must plan and plant other church. Intentionally, with vision, knowing who we are.

Here's how not to do it—decide that we must get it all right before we begin. Demand that all of the new churches be perfectly like the former churches.

- We will go to heaven with right relationships, love God and others.
- What did you do for others? Matthew 25.
- There is a way to do it—congregations sending out people to do it, with full intent.
- We must mentor in c/c—mentor young men.
- White males are lost in church, ridiculed in the sitcoms.
- Develop shepherds, from leaders at home.

We must reach out to searchers, who will listen, consider the groups we have discussed. We have been very good at talking. We must develop a theology of listening, and we must learn to listen as we share the good news.