MEN OF GRACE & GRANITE
SERIES 3: PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY
Study 1: How Should We "Do" Ministry?

A Philosophy of Ministry is a set of unalterable principles (non-negotiables) that determines how we will function in ministry.

The purpose of this session is to develop and understand a thoroughly biblical philosophy of ministry. Temptations and idolatries governing unbiblical approaches to ministry will also be discussed and examined.

Bible passages for study:

Eph 4:12–16	John 13:35	1 Cor 10:31	1 Tim 3:15
Matt 5:13–16	Titus 2:11–15	Rom 3:10–18	Jer 17:9–10
Gen 6:5	Rom 3:23		

1. Prerequisites for understanding faithful ministry (Eph 4:12–16)

    a) Principles governing ministry don't change based on the culture.

        i) Benign cultural elements can and should change.

        ii) Application of the principles will depend somewhat on the culture.

    b) God has designed ministry to be long-term.

        i) It requires faith.

        ii) It requires patience.

    c) Ministry is cyclical.

    d) Ministry results are entirely out of our hands.

        i) We can't produce or manufacture results.

        ii) We can't often measure the results.

2. Idolatries that drive an unbiblical philosophy of ministry

"Changing methodology for the sake of 'results' proves your ministry is being governed by idolatry."

    a) Cultural influence

        i) Approval of man/fear of man

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"Could it be that a failure to implement a faithful philosophy of ministry is not only that we fear being disliked by the world, but also that we fear being disliked by the church?"

ii) A desire to remove the offense of the gospel

iii) An elevation of humanitarian-centeredness

iv) Numbers for numbers' sake

b) Unbelief

i) Our flesh is prone to not trust the Lord's method.

ii) Our flesh is prone to want quick, visible results.

"We have become convinced that the only way to attract people to our Jesus is to warm them up to Him by meeting all of the felt needs, both tangible and not, in the culture. This is very attractive to our flesh because to be about gospel ministry and not humanitarian efforts first and foremost is offensive, even with many in the church. We must realize that the Jesus that exists in many churches today only exists to the degree that He is relevant to their humanitarian efforts."

3. Principles that govern a faithful philosophy of ministry (Eph 4:12–16)

a) It should be done to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

i) Not in order to be viewed as "successful"

ii) Not in order to have the results terminate on us

b) It should be geared toward Christlikeness.

i) The sheep are to think like Christ.

ii) The sheep are to speak like Christ.

iii) The sheep are to act like Christ.

"What is biblical growth? According to Ephesians 4:12–16, it is the maturing of the saints unto the stature of the fullness of Christ. There's no growth that matters that has to do with numbers. It's depth, not width, that we are to be concerned with. 'A mile wide and an inch deep' is not endorsed by Christ, and that sadly describes evangelicalism in America today."

c) It has a consistent and unified approach to ministry.

i) The sheep should be built up in the faith.

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ii) The sheep should mature spiritually.

iii) The sheep should be equipped to do the ministry of the gospel.

d) It is concerned with doctrinal precision (Eph 4:13).

i) "unity of the faith"

ii) Notice the definite article. It is "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3).

e) It is fundamentally strategic and thoroughly biblical.

i) It is driven by the explicit teaching of Scripture.

ii) It is driven by the implicit methodologies seen in Scripture.

4. Key components that permeate every aspect of a faithful ministry

The principles found within this section on philosophy of ministry are a compilation of materials—some developed by Grace Immanuel Bible Church, Jupiter, FL, as well as many adaptations from materials of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA, under the leadership of Dr. John MacArthur. We are deeply indebted to Dr. MacArthur and the pastoral team at Grace Community for their labors and biblical clarity through the years on this vital subject.

a) A high view of God

i) A failure to have a high a view of God leads to a toleration of sin and a focus on man's evaluation rather than God's truth.

ii) God is holy, righteous, and just (Exod 34:6–8; Isa 6:1–3; Jer 9:24; Rom 11:33-36; Rev 4:8–11).

iii) We, then, must be holy (practical sanctification).

b) The authority and sufficiency of Scripture

A failure to hold to the sufficiency of Scripture inevitably leads to personal experience as the authority, and contemporary thinking as the guide for living, rather than divine truth.

i) It is the sole authority for our lives and conduct.

ii) It has sufficient relevance for every situation.

(1) Through explicit instruction

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(2) Through implicit principles

c) An accurate anthropology

i) Mankind is totally depraved.

(1) He can do no good on his own (Rom 3:10–18).

(2) His heart is deceitfully wicked (Jer 17:9–10).

(3) He is driven continually by selfishness and evil (Gen 6:5).

ii) Mankind is alienated from God and seeks to glorify himself (Rom 3:23).

d) A proper understanding of the purpose of the church

i) The church exists to worship and glorify God (1 Cor 10:31).

ii) The church is the repository of divine truth (1 Tim 3:15).

iii) The church encourages mutual edification (Eph 4:12–16).

iv) The church provides the context for the use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12–14; Rom 12; Eph 4).

v) The church is a light in a dark world (Matt 5:13–16; Titus 2:11–15).

"A failure to correctly understand the purpose of the church leads to superficial and counterfeit ministry, resulting in disunity. 'Program success' is glorified, rather than God. People become passive spectators rather than active participants. Leadership is forced to spin all the plates to keep the programs functioning."

5. Satan's agenda with the church's philosophy of ministry

a) He knows what's at stake.

i) Gospel influence

ii) Sanctification of God's people

iii) God's glory

b) He seeks to distract.

i) He weakens our fundamentals.

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ii) He propagates false doctrine.

iii) He tempts us with pragmatic results.

c) He convinces the deceived of their "maturity" and "influence."

"If Satan can weaken us in the fundamentals of spiritual maturation, the end goal of gospel influence becomes vulnerable to error, and we become easily distracted and enamored with vain things and pragmatic results. Satan gets the pragmatic church to assume that it is accomplishing great things, when in fact they are deceived and are doing ministry man's way, not God's."

Suggested resource: George J. Zemek, *Doing God's Business God's Way: A Biblical Theology of Ministry.*

6. Results of a biblical philosophy of ministry (Eph 4:12–16).

a) The church is built up.

b) The church is unified in its doctrine.

c) The church becomes like Christ.

d) The church is protected from falsehood and deception.

e) The church has actual gospel influence.

"Granted, there's nothing about the culture or the world explicitly in Ephesians 4:12–16. But Jesus does say that if you love one another like that (the way you are called to in Ephesians 4), then you will have influence (John 13:35). That's the result of a faithful ministry. That is the light to the world, not humanitarian aid. Become like Jesus and He will make us a light to the world. If we will be satisfied to become like Christ, we will influence the world."

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