

## PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY STATEMENT

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A philosophy of ministry must be developed out of a biblical understanding of the purpose for the church. The Bible is the primary means by which God reveals His vision (or purpose) to the church. He has set forth in the Word the primary mission of the church (the Great Commission). Therefore, the church, and its leadership, must be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as to how to carry out the Great Commission in its own sphere of influence. All the ministries of a church should have as their touchstone the Great Commission. The Great Commission includes, but is not limited to, exalting the Lord (worship), evangelism (reaching the lost at home and abroad), and edification of the membership (discipleship ministries).

A biblical philosophy of ministry then is a statement of purpose as to how one is to accomplish the ministry to which God has called them. This must always be related directly to leading the church to accomplish its God's given purpose or mission. In short, everything the church does should be "God-centered." From a biblical perspective, we do not have the luxury of originating our own ideas about what kind of church we want to develop - God has already given us that direction in His Word. Unfortunately, the trend in evangelical churches has shifted over the last ten to fifteen years to a "man-centered" emphasis.

My personal philosophy of ministry is directly related to the purpose of the church as outlined in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) and the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40). My goal in serving the Lord is to utilize my spiritual gifts to edify and encourage the body of Christ. Having been gifted in preaching, teaching and administration (Romans 12:6-8), I believe that I can best serve the Lord and His people as a pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11-13). My philosophy of ministry is to teach and preach the Word so that the members of my congregation will grow in spiritual maturity and be equipped to do the work of the ministry.

God blesses obedience. As a church grows in spiritual maturity and conforms to the standards of Scripture, God opens new doors of ministry opportunity. The church then must find out what God is doing and get involved (Henry Blackabee's "Experiencing God" is an excellent tool to help people understand the concept of how God works in giving vision to a church). The primary question that must be asked in any ministry endeavor of the church is, "is this ministry 'God-centered,' is it based on the Bible, and is it what the Spirit of God is leading us to do at this time?"

Spiritual leaders (in most Baptist churches this would include pastors, ministry staff, and deacons, as a minimum) must be spiritual visionaries. Pastors have a key role in seeking God's will and direction for the church. The best process is to follow the Bible while being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit (who never directs us to do anything contrary to the Word). I personally operate by what I call the "*two church principle*" (learned from Ernest Reisinger). One church is the ideal church as presented in the New Testament. I never abandon this ideal. The other is the church that gathers on Sunday morning. While recognizing that the two will never meet on earth, the joy and satisfaction of the ministry comes in narrowing the gap. That is my goal as a pastor-teacher. The following concepts are foundational to the standards that I have

established for my ministry. They have proven to be very valuable in helping me manage my time and be more effective in the delivery of ministry to God's precious people.

The work and role of the pastor is clearly set forth in 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8. First, a pastor must be a thorough Bible man (2 Tim. 3:10-17), that is, he must have a deep and growing knowledge of the Word of God, and he must have a personal walk with God. Second, a pastor must have a thorough Bible ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-8), one that is based on Biblical principles. The priorities, as I see them, are as follows,

#1 **To Preach** - that is to feed the flock the Word (Heb. 5:11-14).

#2 **To Prepare** to preach - you can't preach unless you are prepared (2 Tim. 2:14-26).

#3 **To Pray** - to seek God's presence and His will, to get a Word from Him (Luke 18:1; Col.4:2). [Consequently I have learned that I must - *keep my mornings for God* - then my plan is afternoons for the church, evenings for the family. Practically speaking it doesn't always work this way, but it is my goal.]

#4 **To Pastor** - to shepherd and love the flock (this would include counseling, visiting, evangelism, the basics of pastoral care). [In a large congregation this has to be managed and modeled for all who are involved in the important task of pastoral care.]

#5 **To Protect** - to warn of the error and danger that can come from false teaching, false religion, and ungodly lifestyles.

#6 **To Plan** - to lead the church in the role of bishop or overseer, which means to superintend (Acts 20:17-38; Prov. 29:18).

The New Testament church was designed to be a theocracy under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, with the pastor (leadership) and people seeking His will. The pastor has a God-given position of authority and leadership which is to be exercised in a servant style (1 Pet. 5:1-6). The relationship of pastor and people has to be one of mutual trust and respect. My prayer is that my ministry will be marked by humble, servant leadership, the greatest model of that being Jesus Himself. Hebrews 13:7 & 17 teach that the pastor is to be the spiritual leader of the church. The pastor is to lead the people of God by setting the right example and giving direction to the overall ministry of the church. This means that he is to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12).