

A Theology of Ministry — Thirteen Core Values that Undergird GBC's Ministry Selected Scriptures

Over the next six weeks, we want to think with you about what church ministry looks like. There are two motives behind this:

- ✓ It is good to regularly remind ourselves of the purpose and foundation of ministry — what are we doing and on what basis should we do this? Last spring I preached again on our philosophy of ministry statement — GBC exists to shepherd God's people by God's grace for God's glory. In nine words, that's the ministry of our church:
 - One function (Shepherding God's people)
 - By one means (by God's grace)
 - For one purpose (for God's glory)
 - This morning we want to consider the theological foundation behind that statement: is there a biblical foundation for that philosophy of ministry? And then in coming weeks we want to continue to flesh out what we do as a church.
- ✓ In the next few months, we want to strengthen two areas of weakness in our constitution and doctrinal statement.
 - With the expansion of our counseling ministry, we've come to realize that our position on church discipline is not adequately addressed in our foundational documents; we aren't changing our position on church discipline, but we do want to make our position explicit in all our documents (so Keith will be preaching on that in a few weeks).
 - Our culture is changing rapidly and we must clarify our position on what marriage and gender is and is not in our constitution and doctrinal statement. When those documents were penned 35 years ago, it was unimaginable that we would have to define marriage as being between a man and a woman *only*, and that one's sexuality is determined by how one is born at birth — male or female — and not by one's choice. But that's the world in which we now live.
- So this morning we are going to start this series with a reminder of the *biblical foundation* of why we do what we do in ministry. These are the 13 core values that drive our ministry.

*EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND EVERY CHURCH IS GOVERNED AND DIRECTED BY A SET OF CORE VALUES AND TRUTHS.
THESE ARE THE DOCTRINES THAT UNDERGIRD AND COMPEL OUR MINISTRY.*

1. We Believe in the Supremacy of God Above All Things —

- The ultimate purpose of man — and thus also the church — is to give glory to God.
 - ✓ God's goal for Himself is to bring glory to Himself (**Jn. 17:1-5**)

- *John 17:4-5 “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”*

- God is the most God-exalting person in the universe. There is no one in whom God takes more delight than Himself. [If He did, He would be an idolater.]
- So if the greatest object of God's desire is God, then the greatest object of the creature's desire should also be God!
- ✓ So it is God's purpose that His people glorify Him (Ro. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 10:31; 1 Tim. 1:17)

- *Rom. 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.*
- *1 Cor. 8:6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*
- *1 Cor. 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
- *1 Tim. 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

- ✓ What does it mean to glorify God? Two things —
 - It means revelation — to accurately reveal the nature and character of God.
 - It means delight — to find satisfaction and worship in the true and all-encompassing character of God (being satisfied with all His attribute in all their fulness...)
 - So we say that to live for God's glory is to reveal the character and uphold the majesty of God
- ✓ So the most fundamental questions that drive our ministry are: “Will this glorify God?” and “How does this glorify God?” My children used to get mildly irritated when I would help them think through decisions on non-moral issues: “how does this glorify God?” “I don't know! I just want to _____!” Well, we want to glorify God, and we won't pursue any kind of ministry until we have a clear understanding of how it will honor Him supremely.

2. We Believe in the Preeminence of Christ (Col. 1:16-17)

- Because we believe in the supremacy of God that also means we believe in the preeminence of Christ. He is above all things. He is the head of all men and all the church. So He alone is to be followed, imitated, obeyed and exalted in ministry.

- **Col. 1:15-18** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*
- **Rom. 8:29** *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.*

- Jesus is preeminent and God is working every circumstance in our lives so that we will come to acknowledge that truth each moment of our lives.

“Rest in God’s wisdom—in case of the loss of dear friends, a wife, or child, or husband, let us rest satisfied in God’s wisdom. God takes away these, because he would have more of our love; he breaks these crutches, that we may live more upon him by faith. God would have us learn to go without crutches.” [Thomas Watson, The Body of Divinity, in Works, Kindle Locations 1814-1816.]

- The preeminence of Christ was under attack in the churches in Asia Minor, so John wrote three letters to address the issue; and there are four gospels to tell from four different perspectives how great and glorious Christ is (cf. Jn. 21:25). He is a limitless in His glory and preeminence.

“When Jesus looks at His universe from His exalted throne at the right hand of the Father, and he sees the great galaxies whirling in space, the planets and the people standing upon this planet, and all the minute details of life here including the details of our individual lives, there is nothing that he sees anywhere of which he cannot say, ‘Mine!’” [Abraham Kuyper]

“Loving Jesus is the supernatural passion that delivers us from the lure and the love of the world.”

[James S. Stewart]

- He is first (in everything). Everything we do is examined by the question, “Will this help the church body to make Christ first and recognize Him as preeminent?”

3. We Believe in the Transforming Work of the Holy Spirit

- Transformation is necessary because all men are sinners. Man is sinful and totally depraved (Tt. 3:3-7; Rom. 3; Jer. 13:23; 17:9). I’m not “good people,” and can do nothing to make myself better. This cannot be overemphasized (Lk. 18:19 — “no one is good except God alone”).

- *Titus 3:3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*
- *Jer. 13:23 “Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.*
- *Jer. 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”*

- Transformation is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us to produce godliness (Gal. 5:16, 22ff; 1 Cor. 2:10ff; Jn. 16:7ff). Also Eph. 2:22; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 - ✓ Not only will God change me in eternity, but He's doing it now. This change is always a result of God's grace, administered through the Word of God. We are dependent on Him.
 - ✓ This means we pray and ask God to do His work in us — people and churches cannot change apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

4. We Believe in the Sufficiency (and authority) of Scripture —

- Scripture is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to produce transformation — 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ps. 119.

- *John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."*
- *2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*
- *1 Pt. 2:1-2 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...*

- ✓ It may seem like, “Take two Psalm 37s and call me in the a.m.,” but our dependence on Scripture is paramount. There is no transformation without Scripture.
- ✓ Scripture — all of Scripture — is sufficient because it is the Word of God, and being God's very Word (revelation), it has authority to compel and accomplish transformation (1 Th. 2:13).

- *Matt. 5:18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*
- *1 Thess. 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

- So we say that Scripture is sufficient for all things pertaining to ministry, life, and practice
- The Bible alone (our sole authority) dictates how we live and how we practice our ministry.

2 Pet. 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

5. We Believe in Grace — grace received from God is stimulant for grace towards others

- We believe in grace because no amount of man's effort can effect salvation or sanctification.
- We are saved by grace, kept by grace, sanctified by grace, and glorified by grace.

- *Gal. 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*
- *Titus 3:4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,*

- Because we have experienced grace, we give grace by forgiving others (Mt. 18:32-33)

- *Matt. 18:32-33 “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’”*

- Because we have experienced grace, we bless others for the exercise of their *God-given, God-exalting* liberty (1 Cor. 8:4ff, 13). This is also why we are *patient* with others and why we changed from using leavened bread to unleavened bread for communion.

1 Cor. 8:13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

6. We Believe in the Church

- God has ordained the church to be His primary vehicle to accomplish His work and bring Him glory (1 Tim. 3:1ff, **15**). Cf. also Eph. 3:9-10

- *Matt. 16:18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*
- *I Tim. 3:15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

- The work of the church is clear (Acts 2:42-47) — worship, instruction, fellowship (including edification), evangelism.
- Church membership, participation, and worship are not peripheral. They are the most significant means God has left us to care for one another.
- And that means all believers identify with, function in, and submit to the leadership of the local church. The NT knows nothing of genuine believers functioning alone, apart from the authority of the church. Christ is building His church. It really is that simple.

7. We Believe in the Priority of a Personal Walk (Life) with God

- God has created us for fellowship w/ Him: He reveals Himself so that we can know Him (1 Jn. 1:1-3)

Phil. 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

- There are two objectives in our life with God —
 - ✓ An undivided life — a heart wholly committed to Him. A personal walk with God is more than 30 minutes of reading and praying in a.m.; it is to consciously live in His presence and under His power every moment & day (Tt. 2:9-10). We believe in connecting all of life to a dynamic walk with Christ.

- *Titus 2:9-10 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.*
- *1 Chr. 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever." (Cf. Acts 13:22; Acts 2:46; Mt. 15:8)*

- ✓ Another objective in our life with God is joy in and happiness with Christ —
 - God is not honored by dutiful and unhappy obedience. Happy obedience honors Him and stimulates more joy in your own life —
 - (Listen carefully) The means to stimulating fellowship with God is through Bible saturation and prayer. Be joyful in those two things and all other disciplines will take care of themselves. **BUT** just because you spend ____ hours in prayer and study does not mean you have fellowship (it is possible to read without reading — a grave danger). The priority is to live with God and enjoy God, as God intended for us to do.
- As we think about ministry, it is rooted in a desire to help people experience this...

8. We Believe in Discipleship

- To be a *disciple* is to be a learner and follower of Christ.
- To be a *discipler* is to be a model of a follower of Christ — one who has been *with Jesus* — Mk. 3; discipleship is simply one believer helping another believer be and live more like Christ.

- *2 Tim. 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*
- *1 Cor. 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

- ✓ *APPLICATION #1* — you need someone ahead of you, someone beside you, someone behind you (a Paul, a Barnabas, a Timothy).
- ✓ *APPLICATION #2* — the older you get, the more self-sufficient you must be (the more you must pour into the lives of others and not wait for them to pour into you).
- ✓ *APPLICATION #3* — regardless of who is ahead of you or beside you, you have what you need because Christ is always with you (Heb. 13:5). That also enables you to always have what you need to build into someone behind you.
- This is the essence of AWANA and SS and counseling and BCDC and men's breakfasts and Bible studies...coming alongside people at various stages of life and saying walk with me...
- Whatever ministry we do, we're attempting to build relationships so that discipleship can be the natural overflow of those relationships. But before we can disciple, something else must happen...

9. We Believe in Evangelism

- Four reasons we believe in evangelism —
 - ✓ There is no discipleship without evangelism.
 - ✓ Because God is an evangelist (He seeks glory so others will know Him). Cf. **Rom. 1:5**.
 - ✓ The only means to growth in church (universal or local) is conversion (theological reason)
 - ✓ It is commanded (Biblical reason) — Mt. 28:18ff; Tt. 2:11; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 6:19

- *Matt. 28:18-20 “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
- *2 Tim. 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
- *1 Tim. 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
- *Eph. 6:19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,*

- How to stimulate a heart of evangelism —
 - ✓ Study and know and believe the reality of Hell — Rev. 22:11. (Just purchased, *Sighs from Hell: The Groans of a Damned Soul*, by John Bunyan. I need to know the reality of Hell to continue to impulsion me to share the truth of the gospel).

“Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.” [C. T. Studd]

- ✓ See conversion as a lifestyle more than a decision and evangelism as a process instead of an event.
- ✓ Pray for opportunities and boldness — Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3-4
- ✓ Love *everyone* in the Body of Christ (Jn. 13:35) — being committed to each other is evangelism!
- ✓ Believe that conversions are not your responsibility; believe that obedience to go is (**Mt. 28**)

10. We Believe in the Power and Priority of Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Eph. 4:32)

- To forgive someone means —
 - ✓ to close the door on the past (let go of all “rights” to return to it, including talking about it) *and*,
 - ✓ the relationship is restored to (and even supercede) its previous fellowship.

- *Eph. 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*
- *1 Pt. 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

- All relational problems can be resolved by humility and forgiveness; when problems remain it is because of foolish pride that prevents people from confessing or forgiving (2 Tim. 2:25-26; 4:11).
 - *2 Tim. 2:25-26 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*
 - *2 Tim. 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*
- The ability to forgive is rooted in the work of Christ (Eph. 4:31-32); so it is through forgiveness that what we believe about Christ, the cross, the resurrection, and redemption is most fully revealed.

11. We Believe in Marriage and Family

- We believe in marriage between one man and one woman (Gen. 2).
- Marriage is also one of the greatest places to model the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18).
- Marriage teaches us how to live in the church family —
 - ✓ Being committed to your spouse (& having to work thru forgiveness) will teach you the meaning of commitment to church & relationships here.
 - ✓ Marriage teaches us about our own selfishness and pride.
- And we believe marriage is not only a place of deeply satisfying relationship, but it is the figure which most closely pictures our fellowship with God (Eph. 5:32), anticipating our future joy with Christ.

- *Rev. 19:7-8 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*
- *Rev. 21:2-3 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...”*

- The lack of a marriage (or children) also teaches us about the sufficiency of Christ and the joyful freedom to serve Him wholeheartedly (1 Cor. 7:32-35)

12. We Believe in the Value of Problems (and Trials) — both our own *and* others (yours)

- Problems demonstrate the truthfulness of Js. 1:2-4 —

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- ✓ 2 Tim. 1:8, 12 — God is trustworthy
- ✓ 2 Tim. 2:2, 6 — There is eternal reward for persevering in it (cf. Js. 1:12)
- ✓ 2 Tim. 2:10 — Salvation may come as a result of it.
- ✓ 2 Tim. 3:12 — *IT'S NORMAL!*
- Years ago we had a church softball team and in one game I got on base and got so excited about possibly scoring that I ran through Walter Britt's "stop" sign at 3rd base and was out at the plate (by 20 feet??). Don't miss the message of your problems — God is able to perfect you through it!
- Your problems are not only designed by God for your good; they are designed by God for the good of the body of Christ. Your problems are an encouragement and exhortation to me as I see you live faithfully — don't minimize the influence the way you live your life has on others. cf. 1 Cor. 10:1ff.

13. We Believe in "Every Member Ministry" and the Ministry of Presence — Our Relationship with Fellow Believers

- You are a priest — in OT, just a few set aside for priesthood; fewer still could go into presence of God; in NT, a veritable army has been unleashed on world (1 Pt. 2:9)

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

- You are a member — the "one-anothers" are general commands that are a blueprint for our

relationships with other believers. **Brother** is used some 200x in the NT to describe our relationships with each other. I am *more* than Raye Jeanne's husband — I am her eternal brother ...it is my privilege and responsibility to minister to her as her brother (and as brother to Elizabeth and Emily and you)

- You are gifted with spiritual gift(s) — each member of the body should use his or her gift for the equipping and building up of other believers (1 Tim. 4:14).

1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

- ✓ Ministry is not programs...buildings...jobs/vocations. It is being with people so you can be used by God to build up those people.
- ✓ Relationships in the church are no small thing — they are eternal and of eternal value (when we are intentional in using our gifts).

- Ministry is designed so that we can be with one another and build up one another.

CONCLUSION:

Church ministry can sometimes seem abstract or complicated. These truths remind us of the core that we are commissioned by God to accomplish. And the way we condense these truths at GBC is by saying that we are united together as a body for a particular purpose — to *shepherd God's people by God's grace, for God's glory*. Those three simple statements are merely the condensation of these 13 core theological principles.

That's what we've been called to do; let's get back to work and let's keep working.

BENEDICTION: