

Summer of Personal Worship

WEEK 7 – Ministry

When the topic of ministry comes up many shy away because of fear; a fear based on their misunderstanding as to what ministry involves. Too often followers erroneously look at others in ministry and convince themselves they cannot do what that person is doing and give up. They believe they do not have the gifts, talents, courage or even time to do ministry and adopt, a wait attitude – I'll wait for God to set me up and point me in the right direction.

Many ignore the truth that our created purpose is to glorify God. Ministry is activities that followers of Christ engage in to express and share their faith thereby glorifying God. Paul reminds us that God has taken special care to make us and has already prepared good works for us to do. God knows our personalities, our preferences, our gifts, and our capabilities and He knows how we can honour Him. We need to be confident in God's truth and take an inventory of ourselves and recognize we are capable of expressing and sharing our faith. We can look to others for ministry ideas but we should remember we can minister at work, at play, during social times, and with others.

This week we offer thoughts about ministry with the hope that people will reflect on their own ministry involvement or lack of it. Some have waited too long engage in activities that help them express their faith. God uses ministry to show His love in action, to transform people, and to draw both the servant and the served closer to Him. Throughout the week ask yourself "How can I express my faith"

DAY 1

The material below, (scripture, reflection video, praise song and prayer) are designed to prepare you for the upcoming week of prayer, reflection and action. Take some time to listen watch or read each piece. Consider revisiting them from time to time during the week as they can help keep us pointed in the right direction. Consider conducting the spiritual practice of a self-examination, (see attachment EXAMEN) at the end of each day looking for times God spoken to you about ministry or any other matter.

SCRIPTURE - Ephesians 2:10 (New International Version)

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"

REFLECTION VIDEO – God's Miraculous Plan – Nick Vujicic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYuVx2LU5QM>

PRAISE SONG – Always

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb4VvNq8WEM>

PRAYER - Read and reflect on this prayer while asking God to help you express your faith.

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“Gracious Lord. You have given me life because of your love; a love that you wanted to share. You created me so I could enjoy the wonders of your creation and experience your grace. You have given me purpose and hope. Your words that tell me I can live my purpose by expressing my faith in actions and words. You have created me to love and have prepared good work for me to do that shows this love to others.

Father, busyness and fear often prevent me from fulfilling my purpose. Will you give me wisdom and discernment to understand who I am and what I can do to bring you honour. I thank you for who you have made me to be, and help me honour you with all that I am. It is in Jesus’ powerful and transforming name, that I offer this prayer. Amen”.

DAY 2 - What is ministry?

If Christian ministry is activity carried out to express or spread our faith, and the Great Commission as shared in Matthew 28:16-20 is the prototype, then there should be numerous possibilities and opportunities for each of us to minister to others. Ministry occurs anywhere we can express our faith and bring glory to God.

Too often we only see ministry as a specific type of activity organized and controlled by a church. We forget ministry can be done anyway and anywhere as long as our motive is to bring God glory.

Moses’ ministry was daunting. He didn’t really know what would happen and from the onset tried to get out of sharing God’s plan for the Israelites with Pharaoh. We must remember that God had a specific ministry for Moses just like He has ministry us. We are not all called to be Moses, Paul, Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, or even the individual who goes into the street every night seeking to bring comfort to the homeless. We can express our faith as a Sunday school teacher sharing God’s truth, as a musician writing and playing music that helps people praise God, as a co-worker willing to listen and offer hope to troubled colleagues, as a volunteer in a food bank, or maybe as a pastor teaching a church. We must not settle for just anything but look to minister in areas God has prepared for us. We must continually seek to grow and find ways to honour God with all He made us to be.

The following verse offers purpose behind ministry. God chooses to use those who believe in Him to share His truths. So, we must take time to reflect on how we participate knowing that ministry can be done anyway and anywhere.

“Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples” Psalm 96:2-3

DAY 3 - Overcoming excuses

For many believers one of the most difficult and elusive things they ever encounter is determining the will of God for their life. There can be several causes for this however we know God created us for a purpose and should that really be that elusive? Upon honest reflection we

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often find that we don't see God's will because we have developed many excuses for not intentionally looking.

If we don't talk with God – if we don't gather with other believers – if Sunday worship is not our priority – if we do not study scripture alone or with a small group – if we never seek corroboration from other believers about our purpose - then how would we ever expect to know God's will? If we avoid all the means and ways God speaks to us then we must ask our self whether we are truly seeking it or not.

We know God's will for our life is to engage in activities that honour and worship Him. It is not something to be feared but is something to be sought after and embraced? Will you read and mediate on the scripture below and then take some intentional time to talk with God, your pastor or another mature believer to help discover who you are and how God can help you express your faith?

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" Jeremiah 29:13

DAY 4 - What to expect

Ministry tests our character more than our competency (Carey Nieuwhof). Regardless of what our ministry entails we will probably face rejection, mockery or even offensive responses. This can come from family, friends, co-workers, and those we don't know. Our reaction to these challenges can define who we can become. God allows tests of our character to mold and shape us into His fullness. Our mindset, attitudes, perceptions and even our personality traits can be changed. Our hearts get stronger and our spirituality matures.

Because we are invited to participate in Jesus' ministry we know that He wants us to succeed. He will help us face the challenges and trials. When our ministry focuses on Jesus He will be with us and will change us.

Read the following verse and reflect on it. Do you recognize fruit in you? Take some time to be alone with God and listen to what He has to say to you.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control". Galatians 5:22-23

DAY 5 - How do I do ministry?

We don't face ministry alone; we enter following God. He has prepared the way for us to express our faith. Jesus said He would send a helper and comforter once He ascended to the Father. He was referring to the Holy Spirit. Some ways the Holy Spirit can be seen as vital to adding us in ministry are as follows:

- Remind us all that Jesus taught – John 14:26
- Help us understand and apply scripture – 2 Timothy 3:16
- Empowers us for witness – Acts 1:6-8
- Convict us of our sins – John 16:8
- Guides us – Romans 8:14

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- Guide us to the truth – John 16:13; and
- Bring Glory to Jesus – John 16:14 s

Open your bibles and read the scripture noted above. Reflect on what they mean to you and how these truths can support and encourage you as you seek to express your faith in ministry.

Day 6 - Service to others

Many years ago while in Egypt, I found myself watching for the honey bucket man. He was the individual who went around the camp emptying and cleaning the portable toilets. I often wondered what was going through his mind as he and his donkey meandered from toilet to toilet. Often he would sing to his donkey as he walked, ignoring those who mocked or laughed at him when he came by. It seemed that regardless of what other thought, he knew he was performing a necessary service for the community and was happy to do so.

While watching the 2015 dramatic presentation of the *Gospel of John*, I found the scene where Jesus washed the feet of His disciples to be a very powerful reminder of the humbleness necessary for ministry. Christians are called to make a positive influence on the world and sometimes ministry does not come across as very glamorous. We can end up doing things we generally avoid and can be exposed to some uncomfortable situations. Ministry is about service to others where we can give our heart, our time, or our resources to another who may benefit from what we offer.

Read the following verse and spend some time thinking about what it means for you. We are not expected to search out honey bucket duties to prove we can do the dirty jobs. However, we can express our faith by showing others that, like Christ, nothing that brings glory to God is beneath our efforts.

“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” John 13:12-17

DAY 7 - Now what

As this week passed we should have picked up on the truth that those who choose to follow Jesus are expected to find a way to express and share their faith. The term MINISTRY is used to describe the means by which we show and tell others about this faith. It is not difficult to look around and identify activities that churches call ministry and maybe they are the only measuring stick you have used to select a ministry. However every pastor will tell you that these are not the only means by which we can express and share our faith and that God has something in mind for us that takes *who we are* into consideration.

Everyone’s starting point into ministry begins with tugging of the heart that pushes us to want to tell others about how Jesus has affected our lives. Scripture, our pastors and friends remind us

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that God created us for a purpose and that not only has He prepared something for us to do, He helps us do it. What we like to do is an important consideration because it implies we will succeed at it, however sometimes we may have to do something we don't like.

Whether we are engaged in a ministry or not, we should try to figure out who we are in this season of our life. We should take a personal inventory of our gifts, talents, personality preference, strengths, and even weaknesses. When we do so, we can enter into ministry with a clear understanding of how wonderfully made we are. There are free tests that can assist and it will be both fun and rewarding to figure out how God has wired you (if you wish more information on these activities, email us and we will put you in contact with someone who can guide you). This information is not meant to pigeon-hole or limit us, but help us discover how and where we can express our faith, and where we can serve God and others.

Bottom line – we have been created for a purpose, which includes loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and loving others. We are not meant to hoard our blessings but use them to tell others the Good News.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" Luke 10:27

The spiritual practice of “EXAMEN”

This document was developed using material from various spiritual leaders and sources such as Ignatius Loyola, Henry Nouwen, E.M. Bounds, Adel Calhoun, Christianity Today and the website *Ignatian Spirituality*.

Overview

Throughout the centuries prayerful people have found direction for their lives through the practice of *Examen* also called *examination of consciousness*. It provides ways of noticing where God shows up in our day. It recognizes that our daily activities and busyness might cause us to miss out on God's presence. It can be helpful when looking for an area of ministry to serve. When we see where God is we can choose to build on those circumstance to intentionally express our faith.

Perception and direction for the future happens through listening to where and how God shows up in our day and then interacting with God in prayer. Awareness of the Spirit's presence puts us in touch with the kind of person God created us to be. When we begin to recognize who God created us to be, we have the raw material for discerning God's call and design for our lives.

EXAMEN question

Questions are the foundation of EXAMEN as they help us pay attention to our mental state, our body responses and our emotional baggage. It also draws our attention to how God's internal movements are present in our daily lives. The EXAMEN can open us up to both the difficult and beautiful in our lives, our relationships, and our professions.

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Consider asking yourself these questions daily and possibly journaling your responses (at least jot down some points). At a minimum do this activity weekly

- For what movement today am I most grateful? For what movement today am I least grateful?
- When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today?
- What was the most life-giving part of my day? What was the most life-thwarting part of my day?
- When today did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others and myself? When today did I have the least sense of connection with God, others and myself?
- Where was I aware of living out of the fruit of the Spirit? Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?
(The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)

Reflection questions

Consider asking yourself these questions as you reflect on ministry.

1. How do you tend to recognize God's presence in your day? How do you respond to His presence?
2. How does the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life reveal God's presence and will?
3. What has God been doing in your life over the last six months? What themes are emerging and how will you address them?

Spiritual exercise

1. Establish a time and location to undergo EXAMEN. Remove all distractions. Find a comfortable chair to sit in. Light a candle if you desire.
2. Identify your daily activities and encounters. Looking at each activity separately asking yourself the EXAMEN questions.
3. Reflect on where God was in the highs and lows of your day. How is God inviting you to pray about these things?
4. Place your hand on your heart and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the moments you were most grateful for. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the time you felt most loved or where you were able to love another. Talk with God what it was like to be in those movements.
5. Place your hands in front of you and open your palms towards the sky. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the moment you were least grateful. What made that moment difficult? Accept your feelings and don't try to change them or make them seem acceptable. Offer them up to God. Talk with Him about them.
6. At the end of the week, make a list of things that brought you life and the times you were able to truly give and receive. Make another list of life thwarting moments. What have you discovered about yourself? How can this discovery help you choose a healthier, God-directed life?