

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

June 30-July 4, 2008



“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them...”¹

We usually think of a ministry of hospitality as one that graciously provides a setting for those in need of food and fellowship. That is one important aspect of hospitality. In our hectic lives we often only slow down and connect with one another over the coffee hour or at a dinner event. A small group finds fellowship enhanced when the Bible study or work is in the home of someone who cares.

But, on a deeper level, a ministry of hospitality is one that connects those that are on the edge by “giving people the space to be who they are”². It honours strangers by accepting them without demanding that they first become like us. It bridges cultural, social, racial, gender and other gaps to bring people together. It comes alongside the one on the outside and deals with misunderstandings so that they can connect with the fellowship.

Ministries of hospitality were vitally important in the early Church because conversion often mean ostracism from family and community. They are vitally important today to lower the barriers that separates people with no experience of Christ from those who walk and talk ‘Christianese’. It also plays a crucial role for believers in need of grace for past sins, both real and perceived. The greater the gap between the Church and the surrounding world, the more crucial are ministries of hospitality.

¹ Acts 9:27 (TNIV)

² Gil Rendle, Alban Institute leader

July 1, 2008

Ministry: Intercession

“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”¹

Prayer is a vital activity for every Christian. It is critical for spiritual growth and we are all called to pray for one another and for the work of God’s Kingdom. However, some are called to devote themselves particularly to this ministry. They devote more time to interceding. Because it is powerful and changes things in heaven and earth, intercessors often see the fruit of this service in answered prayer.

Ministries of intercession might include:

- Prayer meetings
- Prayer ‘chains’ or other venues where people pray individually for shared concerns
- Being a prayer partner for a specific program or event
- Praying singly or in a team for a person with specific needs
- Private ministries of prayer for the local church, missionaries or other kingdom work.

While one may be called to be an intercessor at any time of life, Christians who feel sidelined from other forms of service due to age, infirmity or personal circumstances should give special consideration to this ministry. Prayer warriors do not need to be physically active or able to get to organized events. Their service can be done anywhere and it is important, powerful work for the Kingdom. The visible success of many ministries often results, not from the gifts of the visible leaders, but from the faithfulness of the unseen intercessors!

¹ Colossians 4:12 (TNIV)

July 2, 2008

Ministry: Leadership

“The LORD said, ‘I have come down to rescue my people from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.... So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’”¹

Leaders are those who “cast vision, motivate, and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God”.² Vision is the concept of a preferred future – the place to which God wants to lead us. Leaders see the preferred future and are able to help others to see it. They are able to express God’s values and passion for the group and why it is important to faithfully follow him in the task or project.

While administration focuses on ‘how’ to do things and delights in the details, leadership oversees ‘what’ God wants us to do and grasps the bigger picture. It conveys how the various ministries can work together for the common good and helps people to see where they fit in.

While we often think of leadership as a ‘lone ranger’ activity, it is often exercised corporately in the Church. In Acts 15, the apostles, elders and other leaders gathered to seek God’s vision for the Church regarding relationships between Jews and Gentiles. God revealed his heart to them corporately and a new era of kingdom expansion resulted.

Leadership is vital for any Kingdom activity, no matter how small it may seem. It must be exercised, however, in a spirit of servanthood, which sets Christian leadership apart from all other types.

¹ Exodus 3:8, 10 (TNIV)

² Bruce Bugbee, What You Do Best in the Body of Christ, p. 50

July 3, 2008

Ministry: Mercy

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.”¹

Ministries of mercy give caring, practical help to those who are suffering or in need. These may include:

- Helping those who are physically ill, injured or infirm
- Coming alongside those who have been through a life crisis to listen, encourage and be present with them
- Spending time with those who are lonely, shut-in or are otherwise isolated from others
- Being a sounding-board for someone wrestling with a hard decision or difficult situation;
- Raising funds or finding other resources for those in financial or other need.

Those engaged in ministries of mercy are the hands, feet and voices of Christ who has compassion on the poor, oppressed, sick, imprisoned and suffering. They are willing to give freely of their time, energy, talents and love to help others get out of adverse circumstances. They rejoice in service and in seeing lives transformed for the better.

Ministries of mercy do not need to be organized activities. The Spirit may simply lead to individuals who need a ‘cup of cold water’ in Jesus’ name. Such divinely led acts of love may have more impact for the kingdom than many hours of more publicly recognized service.

¹ Luke 10:33-34 (TNIV)

July 4, 2008

Ministry: Miracles

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”¹

The miracles of Jesus were called ‘signs’ because they pointed to the reality that God was among us. The all-powerful Creator had come to fix his creation. They gave credibility to the message of salvation that Jesus was proclaiming.²

In a similar way, people paid attention to the good news being proclaimed in the early church because of the wonders and miraculous signs that were being performed.³

Believers must be wary of desiring ministries of miracles as an end in themselves. They are not ‘fireworks’ given for our personal excitement. They are not meant to be sought as a primary means of guidance. Experiencing a miracle is no guarantee that saving faith will result and a fixation with them may be a sign of spiritual immaturity or even hardness of heart.⁴

The primary purpose of miracles is to break down resistance to the gospel. In settings where there is persecution, great skepticism or indifference, miracles can gain a hearing for the good news. In this context, ministries of miracles are to be highly valued by the Church and should be sought as a means to win others to faith in Christ and build the kingdom.

¹ Acts 4:29-30 (TNIV)

² Acts 2:22

³ Eg. Acts 2:43

⁴ Matthew 11:21-23; 12:38-39; Mark 6:1-5;