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PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

As a pastor, approaching a philosophy of ministry is a thoughtful process. For centuries, faithful, godly pastors have been doing the work of Jesus, the same things that I am trying to do in my life, with my family, and with the ministries that God places before me. In this overview of my own personal philosophy of ministry, I am trying to honor that which has come before me and reflect on how I may make it my own for the work that the Father has ordained for me. My philosophy of ministry begins with my walk with God, continues with my family, then goes to corporate worship, and all the other aspects of ministry.

MY WALK WITH GOD

The most important thing in my life is my relationship with my heavenly Father and my identity found in His Son Jesus Christ. Before all other aspects of my life, before being a husband, a father, a pastor, my identity being rooted in Christ is first. He called me first to Himself (2 Thess. 2:14). A personal and private walk with God is essential to fruitful ministry. The practice of the spiritual disciplines, pursuing holiness, my own sanctification, and living a life in obedience to God is an essential part of this walk. I seek to do ministry out of these practices and out of my identity found in Jesus, not for personal success but rather to grow closer to Jesus and become more like Him.

MY FAMILY

God has graciously gifted me with a wife, Kelly, and six children. My relationship with Kelly and my kids is vital to my personal and ministry health. God has given me the responsibility to provide for them, protect them, and to point them to Jesus. For this reason, I must prioritize my family, shepherd them, lead them, love them, serve them, and spend time with them. Doing this well means loving and pursuing my wife, raising my kids to know and love Jesus, and living out my faith in front of them. This means that I need ample time at home so that they may know me, and I might know them. Their needs must come first because God has given them to me as my responsibility. This includes their need to know Christ. Kelly and I seek to take advantage of every opportunity to point each other and our kids to know Christ.

CORPORATE WORSHIP

The Sunday morning gathering of the saints is one of the most important liturgies and aspects of a believer's life. We gather in fellowship and worship because we are commanded to (Hebrews 10:25). We also gather for corporate worship because it is the God-ordained instrument for the sharing and preaching of God's Word, and He works through His people more powerfully when

His people are together. Therefore, it is my personal belief that Sunday worship should only be missed or skipped for legitimate reasons (e.g., personal sickness, etc.).

It is my personal belief that the liturgy of any corporate worship should look to the historical record of the Church, meaning that corporate worship should have an order to it and a purpose behind it. I believe both traditional and contemporary songs are acceptable and beneficial, if the lyrics are biblically and theologically accurate and meant to encourage the body in worship and instill biblical truths in their hearts. Expository preaching should be the main emphasis of the preaching; this is the preacher preaching verse-by-verse through the books of the Bible. Topical sermons and series have a place and purpose in the exhortation of believers, but the main diet should be expository preaching.

Every aspect of corporate worship should point people to our King Jesus and bring glory to God our Father. It should be biblically faithful but also contextualized to the culture and people that the church is serving.

DISCIPLESHIP

As a minister of the gospel, discipleship is one of the things that I am most passionate about. I want to see every believer grow in their Christlikeness and in their closeness to their risen Savior. I echo Paul's desire in Colossians 1:28, where he states that his desire is to "present everyone mature in Christ." While my desire is that all may come to know Jesus, I also desire deeply that those who have come to know Him grow in their relationship with Him and come to a deeper understanding of their faith. Growing in Christ never happens by accident, but rather through the intentional effort of the believer and the believers around them. This is done not only through the structured teaching during Sunday worship, but in fellowship with other believers, through Bible study, prayer, etc. (Acts 2:42-47).

COMMUNITY & CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

God made us as relational beings. We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). God is in constant fellowship and relationship with Himself in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He created us to be in relationship with Him and with each other (Genesis 2:18). Fellowship and community are an essential part of a believer's life. It is primarily in community where discipleship, confession, growth, encouragement, love, care, and the building up occur. Small groups play a vital role in accomplishing the goal of being known and knowing others so that these things may be done.

OUTREACH

Every church and believer should have an emphasis on evangelism and outreach. Jesus commissioned every believer with one primary goal: to share his message and teachings (Matthew 28:18-20). By this, I just mean that the people of God should seek to evangelize the

lost and be a blessing to its community. We should not be attractional in our outreach so that people may come for our programs, but intentional in sharing the gospel with the lost and seeking to bless our community.

Both local and global missions should be emphasized in the church. Every church should seek to plant new churches or be involved in planting new churches. We should seek to bless our community around us by the spread of the gospel locally, but also through the support of missions and missionaries that are called overseas to people that need to hear the gospel.