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INTRODUCING MINISTRY LEADERS TO THE PERSONAL
MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT RENEWAL CHURCH IN
ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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INTRODUCING MINISTRY LEADERS TO THE PERSONAL
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ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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To my wife, Darci,
who reminds me of Jesus's love and faithfulness daily.

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PREFACE

The kindness and provision of the Lord comes in countless ways. While I have learned so much from my doctoral studies concerning the ministry of the Word, the completion of this project opened my eyes once again to the multitude of blessings from the Lord in my life. Unfortunately, this space only allows a small portion of those blessings to be acknowledged.

Apart from the saving work of God who awakened faith in me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest kindness and gift from the Lord to me is Darci, my wife. Thank you, Darci, for your love and patience. You daily display the love and faithfulness of Christ Jesus to me and our children. Your love for God's Word is a constant encouragement to me and a wonderful model for our children. This project would not have happened without you. I love you. And, I am thankful for our three children Titus, Molly, and Thomas. Teenagers all who have shown patience, forbearance, and forgiveness to their father. I continue to trust Jesus to help me to be a better example of your Heavenly Father. I love you and pray you will always treasure Jesus and his Word.

To the saints at Renewal Church of Anderson, and especially the elders, thank you for not only allowing me to pursue further theological education, but generously providing financial support and encouragement. As long as the Lord allows, I pray he enables me to faithfully and humbly continue to minister the Word to you as we strive together for the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Robert Jones was one of my professors and my project supervisor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Our paths crossed several years before my doctoral studies began, but I am truly blessed to have had the

opportunity to learn from a scholar with a pastor's heart. Dr. Jones, thank you for your time, wisdom, and encouragement. You have richly blessed me personally and strengthened my ministry.

I offer my gratitude to the faculty and staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for a wonderful experience in theological education. I am thankful to have had the privilege of studying the ministry of the Word at this seminary.

Along the way, I have met some wonderful men and women who love the Lord Jesus and his Word. Men and women committed to faithfully bringing Jesus and his answers to those who are hurting, struggling, and in need of hope and change. What an unexpected blessing to interact with men and women from around the world. Lord bless you, brothers and sisters.

Many years before I stepped on to the campus at Southern my love for God's Word began, but over the years through the encouragement of many fellow saints my love for God's Word has grown. I am thankful to those who have encouraged me over the years, and for brothers and sisters faithfully ministering the Word.

Finally, I thank Jesus who saved me and called me to minister God's Word.

Stephen Watson

Anderson, South Carolina

December 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Renewal Church is to “make disciples of all people for God’s glory.” The apostle Paul’s example in Acts 20:17-32 demonstrates that the public ministry of the Word and the personal ministry of the Word complement one another and enable the church to work toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission in making disciples of all people for God’s glory (Matt 28:18-20).¹ The personal ministry of the Word is also described as private ministry of the Word, interpersonal ministry of the Word, conversational ministry, or one-to-one ministry.² The personal ministry of the Word is a “one another” ministry of Christians in the New Testament (Rom 15:14; Eph 4:15; Col 3:16). In the personal ministry of the Word, God’s revelation of himself, his purposes, and his will found in the Bible are applied to specific circumstances, concerns, or struggles in a Christian’s life. While the public ministry of the Word speaks generally to the church, the personal ministry of the Word speaks specifically to a person in his or her moment of need.³ In order to fulfill Renewal Church’s mission and to offer help and hope to individuals and families facing life challenges in Anderson, South Carolina, this

¹ Kevin Carson and Paul Tautges, “Uniting the Public Ministry of the Word and the Private Ministry of the Word,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 73.

² David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 108, 115. See also Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hand: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 17-25; Robert D. Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 9-20.

³ Carson and Tautges, “Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word,” 83.

project introduced ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word.

Context

Renewal Church, located in Anderson, South Carolina, was strategically planted by Crosspoint Church in Clemson in June 2014 with the mission of “making disciples of all people for God’s glory.” Reaching the lost, unchurched, and college students at Anderson University was the emphasis of the new church plant. In the years following Renewal Church’s launch, both the city and county experienced a measure of growth as companies and businesses chose to locate in Anderson. Anderson University also experienced record enrollment and growth. Seven years after its launch, Renewal Church’s demographic make-up is predominately college students, young professionals, newly marrieds, and young families. As a result, the majority of Renewal Church’s ministry leaders are young compared with established, traditional churches in the area. As a young church, a shortage of the personal ministry of the Word exists. Even though Renewal Church’s ministry leaders are young, they are committed to a healthy local church with a strong public ministry of the Word. At this stage in the life of the church, the personal ministry of the Word does not complement the public ministry of the Word.

Establishing a healthy local church to reach and minister to college students at Anderson University was one focus for planting Renewal Church. As a result of planting a healthy church near the university, a vibrant and young congregation in need of pastoral care and counsel emerged. Students and young professionals experiencing significant life decisions and facing various life challenges for the first time need careful biblical counsel. On-campus counseling at the university employs secular and integrationist approaches to counseling students. University graduates remaining in Anderson for work need wise biblical counsel as they face post-college decisions as young professionals.

From its founding, Renewal Church has held to the core value “Scripture Reveals Truth.” Covenant members affirm and believe, along with Southern Baptists, that “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”⁴ Renewal Church wholeheartedly affirms the inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the Bible, demonstrating these convictions with a commitment to live, in-person exposition in worship. The church’s pastors faithfully preach from the Bible, emphasizing that the main point of the sermon is derived from the main point of the biblical text. Through expositional preaching, the gospel is consistently proclaimed, and Renewal Church is known for its commitment to the public ministry of the Word. The personal ministry of the Word, however, would not find an equal reputation and commitment.

At Renewal Church, small groups are an integral part of church life. Members are encouraged to participate in small groups, the majority of which seeks to apply the Word through sermon-based discussion. Small groups assist the church body to move beyond simply being hearers only to applying the Word as doers also. Small groups typically meet weekly in people’s homes and are multigenerational.

Renewal Church functions with a single full-time Lead Pastor and four lay pastors (elders). Three additional staff are part-time with focused ministry responsibilities. The Lead Pastor is the primary source for pastoral care in the church body. For a young church plant in its formative years, ministry leaders capable of handling common pastoral care needs—such as anxiety, decision-making, and anger—are needed to assist the Lead Pastor and expand the pastoral care ministry throughout the church body. In addition, Renewal Church’s college women, young professional women, and older women need ongoing pastoral care. Spiritually mature women capable of assisting the Lead Pastor and providing pastoral care for unique concerns and struggles

⁴ Southern Baptist Convention, *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.

facing females—such as infertility, a wife’s role and responsibilities, marriage conflict, mothering, and other relational issues—are needed to extend and improve pastoral care to women at Renewal Church.

Absent from the Anderson community are counselors with a Christ-centered biblical counseling approach to assist individuals and families facing life struggles. Local churches employ Christian counselors with an integrationist approach to counseling or delegate counseling to parachurch ministries with a variety of counseling philosophies and beliefs related to the Bible. Renewal Church’s members meet neighbors facing a variety of challenges as a result of sin and suffering. As Anderson University continues to grow, the number of students facing challenges in relationships with roommates, decision-making related to their future, anxiety over finances and future job opportunities, and struggles with identity in Christ continue to grow also.

Introducing ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word faced three challenges. First, biblical counseling and the personal ministry of the Word were new concepts to the majority of Renewal Church’s ministry leaders. Renewal Church’s leaders are college-educated but unfamiliar with the concepts of biblical counseling and the personal ministry of the Word as a ministry of the local church. Second, Renewal Church’s ministry leaders were influenced by and most familiar with secular or professional counseling models. Ministry leaders were not equipped to effectively handle common pastoral care issues from a Christ-centered biblical counseling approach. Lastly, coordinating logistics for working professionals and young families to participate in this project presented unique challenges. The demographic makeup of Renewal Church along with a facility inherited from a dying local church made it challenging to schedule a consistent location for the teaching sessions and space for childcare. Despite these challenges, introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word aided in complementing Renewal Church’s overall ministry of the

Word and helped expand its gospel influence as a healthy local church in the Anderson community and on campus at Anderson University.

Rationale

A conviction of the authority and sufficiency of the Word led Renewal Church to a strong commitment to the public ministry of the Word as a new church plant in Anderson, South Carolina. For the long-term health and viability of Renewal Church, the current commitment to the public ministry of the Word needs complementing with an equal and consistent commitment to the personal ministry of the Word among ministry leaders. Therefore, introducing ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word strengthened Renewal Church's already present public ministry of the Word and helped expand Christ-centered biblical care and counsel to the church and the community. The focus of the project was to develop a six-week course designed to introduce ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word.

Introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word helped to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” at Renewal Church (Eph 4:12).⁵ Because Renewal Church consists of a single full-time pastor, three part-time staff, and four lay pastors, ministry leaders introduced to the personal ministry of the Word were able to assist the pastor in providing Christ-centered biblical counsel to church members, attendees, and other Anderson-area residents. In addition, spiritually mature women at Renewal Church introduced to the personal ministry of the Word were equipped and able to assist the pastor with Christ-centered biblical counsel for college, young professional, and older women with unique female counseling needs and concerns (Luke 2:38; Titus 2:3-5).

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version* (ESV).

Because Renewal Church enjoys a strong commitment to the public ministry of the Word through expositional preaching, introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word was able to complement and strengthen Renewal Church's overall commitment to the ministry of the Word and fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20; 2 Tim 3:16-17). The apostle Paul modeled both public and personal ministry of the Word in his ministry among the Ephesians (Acts 20:17-32). And to the Colossians, Paul wrote, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). Through the personal ministry of the Word, ministry leaders learned how to offer care and counsel with the Bible while fulfilling Renewal Church's mission of "making disciples of all people for God's glory" (Matt 28:19-20).

Because Renewal Church is located in a growing community and in close proximity to a growing university population, introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word enabled the church to minister more effectively to those struggling with cares and concerns in the community and on the university campus (Gal 6:1-2). Paul writes, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). As ministry leaders learned how to practice the personal ministry of the Word, neighbors and college students facing life's cares and concerns found encouragement and hope (1 Thess 5:14).

Lastly, because biblical counselors and a biblical counseling ministry are unavailable in the Anderson community, introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word equipped Renewal Church's ministry leaders to provide care and counsel with a Christ-centered biblical counseling approach in the church and in the community (Rom 15:14). Introducing ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word strengthened the gospel ministry entrusted to Renewal Church and its overall ministry of the Word.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to introduce ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word at Renewal Church in Anderson, South Carolina.

Goals

Introducing ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word was guided by three goals. These goals are anchored in the biblical principles of “one another” ministry found in Romans 15:14, Ephesians 4:15, and Colossians 3:16.

These goals included the following:

1. The first goal was to assess and analyze the current knowledge, understanding, and application of the personal ministry of the Word by ministry leaders at Renewal Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-session introductory curriculum on the personal ministry of the Word for Renewal Church’s ministry leaders.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge and practice of the personal ministry of the Word among Renewal Church’s ministry leaders by implementing a six-session introductory curriculum.

For each of the three goals a research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of each goal.⁶ The research methodology is described in detail in the following section, and it determined the success of this project at Renewal Church of Anderson, South Carolina.

Research Methodology

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess and analyze the current knowledge, understanding, and application of the personal ministry of the Word by ministry leaders at Renewal Church. The “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” (PMWI) was administered to ministry leaders currently serving at

⁶ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

Renewal Church.⁷ Ministry leaders completing the PMWI included elders, church staff, interns, and small group leaders.⁸ Ministry leaders with an interest in growing in their abilities to disciple and care for others were carefully selected. The inventory assessed ministry leaders' ability to provide care and counsel to church members and attendees facing common pastoral care issues. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of ten ministry leaders completed the PMWI and committed to a six-session introductory course for the personal ministry of the Word.

The second goal was to develop a six-session introductory curriculum on the personal ministry of the Word for Renewal Church's ministry leaders. The curriculum covered elementary biblical counseling terms, concepts, and practices. The introductory course communicated a basic biblical counseling understanding for ministry leaders in order to clarify misconceptions and to aid existing mutual care ministries. Participants practiced the personal ministry of the Word with selected case studies related to the church's current demographics and context. Each ministry leader completed assigned readings and homework as well as participated in discussions. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of one elder of Renewal Church, one faculty member of Anderson University's Clapp Divinity School, and one biblical counselor serving in a local church context. The expert panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁹ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the "Sufficient" level. Should the initial feedback from the expert panel have yielded less than 90 percent, the curriculum would have been revised in

⁷ Taken and adapted from Roger Edward Bayramian, "Introducing Leaders to Biblical Counseling at Mount Ararat Bible Church in Northridge, California" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 89-90, and Thomas Kenji Sugimura, "Equipping Members of the New Life Church in Woodland Hills, California to Counsel Biblically" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 28-32.

⁸ See appendix 2.

⁹ See appendix 1.

accordance with the panel’s evaluation until such time as the criteria met or exceeded the “Sufficient” level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge and practice of the personal ministry of the Word among Renewal Church’s ministry leaders by implementing a six-session introductory curriculum. The project aimed to introduce ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word, enabling them to provide care and counsel for common life struggles in the church’s context. This goal was measured by readministering the PMWI and then measuring ministry leaders’ change in knowledge, understanding, and application of the personal ministry of the Word. Ministry leaders completing the six-session introductory course for the personal ministry of the Word were expected to grow in their understanding of elementary biblical counseling terms, concepts, and practices. In addition, ministry leaders were expected to confidently offer care and counsel to church members and attendees at Renewal Church. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the pre-course and post-course PMWI scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms used throughout this project are defined below to provide greater clarity for readers.

Personal ministry of the Word. Essential to believers’ maturing in faith and likeness to Jesus Christ is the ministry of the Word in the local church (Eph 4:13-16; Col 1:28-29). The two elements of public and personal ministry of the Word comprise the local church’s ministry of the Word. The personal ministry of the Word is described as “interpersonal ministry of the Word” and is seen in the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels.¹⁰ The personal ministry of the Word “includes one-to-one, face-to-face ministry

¹⁰ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 103-5.

conversations that take the Word of God and apply it to a specific person's life context."¹¹ The personal ministry of the Word is rightly understood as including biblical counseling. Biblical counseling is defined as "the Christ-like, caring, person to person ministry of God's Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems to help them know and follow Jesus Christ in heart and behavior among their struggles."¹²

Sufficiency of Scripture. By God's grace, Scripture provides a means for salvation and sanctification (2 Tim 3:14-17). As Wayne Grudem defines, "The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."¹³ The Bible is not only a sufficient source of counsel but also a necessary source in believers' personal ministry. "The Bible sets the agenda for the questions we ask and the answers we seek, and contemporary concerns are reoriented appropriately."¹⁴ Ultimately, the personal ministry of the Word helps struggling believers discover that "the sufficient Word points to a sufficient Savior."¹⁵

Two delimitations applied to this project during its implementation. First, the introductory design of the course was limited to six sessions of content. Over a six-week period, one session was taught each week to develop a familiarity with elementary biblical counseling terms, concepts, and practices. The introductory course was designed

¹¹ Carson and Tautges, "Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word," 82-83.

¹² Jones, "What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?," 20.

¹³ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 127.

¹⁴ Jeremy Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 102.

¹⁵ Steve Viars and Rob Green, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 105.

to communicate a basic biblical counseling understanding for ministry leaders in order to clarify misconceptions and to aid existing mutual care ministries. Second, this project was designed for ministry leaders at Renewal Church. Because Renewal Church is a nine-year-old church plant with approximately eighty-five covenant members, a limited number of ministry leaders were available to participate in the project. A minimum of ten elders, staff, interns, and key leaders completed the PMWI and committed to the six-session introductory course for the project.

Conclusion

Essential to the gospel ministry of the local church is the personal ministry of the Word. As believers practice the personal ministry of the Word, the Great Commission is fulfilled, and believers mature in faith and likeness to Jesus Christ through mutual care in the local church. The following chapters show how to introduce the personal ministry of the Word to ministry leaders in a new church context with young ministry leaders. Chapter 2 concentrates on the biblical foundation for the personal ministry of the Word in the local church. Chapter 3 focuses on the Christ-like steps ministry leaders need to practice in order to offer care and counsel to fellow believers as they practice the personal ministry of the Word.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The thesis of this chapter is that the personal ministry of the Word thrives in a fellowship of believers committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and providing mutual care. Three critical passages in the New Testament support the personal ministry of the Word: Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 28:16-20; Colossians 3:12-16.

The Personal Ministry of the Word in the Local Church (Eph 4:11-16)

The apostle Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, encouraging unity and growth among believers, following a thorough explanation of salvation through the saving work of Christ Jesus. Ephesians 4:11-16 places the personal ministry of the Word in the local church. Paul's "theme is spiritual growth, or what we theologically refer to as the doctrine of progressive sanctification. Paul is clear that this growth is not just growth of individuals, but the growth of the entire local church."¹

Grace of Gifted Church Leaders (Eph 4:11)

By his death on the cross, Jesus created for himself "one new man in the place of two" (Eph 2:15). In this "new humanity" of God's people, the Gentiles do not become Jews, nor do the Jews become Gentiles.² Paul writes to this diverse group of Christ

¹ Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 21-22.

² Curtis Vaughn, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 63.

followers in Ephesus to encourage spiritual maturity and growth in “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:13). The personal ministry of the Word is found in Ephesians 4:11-16 in how Paul envisions spiritual growth in the context of the local church.

First, Paul states that Christ gives pastors to the local church to enable believers to understand the gospel and how to live out the gospel. Peter O’Brien states that Christ “sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of the body” for the growth and well-being of the whole.³ “Each member has a distinct part to play, a distinctive service to perform, for the effective functioning of the whole.”⁴ Church leaders are foundational to the church’s growth. Jesus gives church leaders as gifts of grace to equip each believer in the church for “the work of ministry” and for “building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Clinton Arnold writes, “The resurrected Christ has bestowed his grace on every member of his body, but he has especially gifted certain individuals within the community to establish churches, minister the Word of God, and equip others for service in the church.”⁵ Paul lists these gifted individuals when he writes, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers” (Eph 4:11).⁶

Disagreement exists concerning Paul’s list of church leaders. The disagreement focuses on whether Paul’s list includes four or five offices.⁷ Some consider “shepherds and teachers” separate offices functioning within the church along with the first three

³ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 297.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 155.

⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 255.

⁶ The translation provided by the ESV grammatically demonstrates four offices. The last is a combination of “the shepherds and teachers,” creating the single office of pastor.

⁷ See O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 297; Frank S. Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 275-77.

offices functioning outside of the church. Concerning “shepherds and teachers,” Grant Osborne says, “Most likely [Paul] speaks of two offices, though Paul viewed them as overlapping, with pastors required to teach well and teachers playing a pastoral role in the church.”⁸ O’Brien sees a single office of “shepherds and teachers” who “carry on Jesus’ pastoral ministry” of nurturing and caring for the congregation.⁹ The single Greek article *tous de* used by Paul for “shepherds and teachers” breaks the pattern in Paul’s list, and according to some scholars, the single article supports a single office. Frank Thielman notes that Paul uses the single article *tous de* in Ephesians 2:20 when referring to “the apostles and prophets” as the foundation of the New Testament church. Paul does not consider “apostles and prophets” as a single office but two separate offices. Based on the Greek grammar, Thielman sees no reason for a change in Ephesians 4:11 and supports two separate offices of “shepherds” and “teachers.”¹⁰

Rather than creating two separate offices with “shepherds and teachers,” “it is more likely that the terms describe overlapping functions” of one office understood as pastor-teacher in the local church.¹¹ The qualifications for the office of elder in the local church given by Paul to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) provide further evidence for a single office in Ephesians 4:11. Paul’s “shepherds and teachers” in Ephesians 4:11 are best understood as a single office of a local church pastor. Best described as a “pastor-teacher,” the local church pastor provides pastoral ministry and is “gifted to teach.”¹²

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 48.

⁹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 300.

¹⁰ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 275.

¹¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 300. Although Thielman does not see adequate evidence for “shepherds and teachers” to be a single group serving in a local congregation while the former in the list engaged in itinerant ministry, he does agree that the functions of “shepherds and teachers” likely overlapped in the church body. See Thielman, *Ephesians*, 275.

¹² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 260.

The teaching ministry of the pastor-teacher in the New Testament church “appears to be an authoritative function concerned with the faithful transmission of apostolic doctrine or tradition and committed to men specially chosen.”¹³ The growth of new believers relied heavily on pastor-teachers’ instructions of the core apostolic understanding of the gospel, including eyewitness accounts of the risen Christ and his teaching about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).¹⁴ “An important part of the ministry of gifted leaders in the church is to help impart this correct knowledge, which is essential to the unity of the church and its growth to maturity.”¹⁵ Mark Dever states, “Churches are given shepherds to teach them. They are not given lecturers. They are not given podcast preachers or information booth attendants. They are given shepherds, who combine both teaching and overseeing.”¹⁶ Pastor-teachers are essential to the ministry of the Word in the local church that encourages spiritual growth.

“To Equip the Saints” (Eph 4:12)

Second, Paul envisions growth as a result of the fruitful ministry of Christians within the local church. Jesus gave “gifted leaders to the church not merely to do the ministry, but to invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry to the body.”¹⁷ According to Paul, Jesus gave church leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body” (Eph 4:12). These three successive prepositional phrases have stirred no small amount of debate. One view held by Roman Catholics and other high church leaders states that “the three

¹³ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 300. For the qualification for elders to be able to teach, see 1 Tim 3:2, 5:17; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:1-2; Titus 1:9.

¹⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 277; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 265.

¹⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 265.

¹⁶ Mark Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission*, Church Basics (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 25.

¹⁷ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

prepositional phrases are coordinate and describe the ministry responsibilities of the five gifted leaders.”¹⁸ However, from Paul’s argument, the common view seems best. The church leaders identified in Ephesians 4:11 “equip *all believers* to do the work of ministry for the edification of Christ’s body.”¹⁹ “The first prepositional phrase sets the agenda for the work of the gifted leaders. They are to equip the saints to do the work of ministry.”²⁰ F. F. Bruce notes, “The verb [‘equip’] means to train or prepare the people.”²¹ Brad Bigney and Steve Viars state that the word “equip” “is a Greek word that connotes making something fit or preparing something fully through training and discipline.”²²

The “work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” is an ongoing activity by the believers equipped by church leaders to “serve their Lord by serving one another” in the local church (Eph 4:12).²³ Clearly in view is the New Testament idea of “one another” ministry (Eph 4:14-16). While the ministry of all believers encompasses all spiritual gifts given for the “common good,” O’Brien sees in Ephesians an emphasis on “word” ministries (1 Cor 12:7).²⁴ Church leaders “are the principal ministers responsible for the proclamation and application of the Word to people’s lives.”²⁵ These leaders “help build into people’s lives a sound and growing knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of

¹⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262. Arnold provides a list of scholars holding to the first view, including Andrew T. Lincoln and Margaret Y. MacDonald. See O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301-3, for a lengthy discussion of the views.

¹⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 279 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263.

²¹ Osborne, *Ephesians*, 48.

²² Bigney and Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” 23.

²³ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303.

²⁴ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303.

²⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 256.

God” (Eph 4:13).²⁶ As the “shepherds and teachers” teach and equip the sheep within the church body, “the duty of the sheep to care for and instruct one another also reinforces the idea that teaching should occur primarily in the context of the local church and its accountability.”²⁷ The local church is the best location for the personal ministry of the Word as Christians are equipped for ministry by local church pastors and held accountable in the local church.

“Speak the Truth in Love” (Eph 4:13-15)

A third way Paul envisions a growing spiritual maturity among believers in the local church is when the work of ministry among them includes “speaking the truth in love.” In Ephesians 4:13, “Paul states the anticipated outcome and goal of Christ’s work of imparting gifts to his people for the edification of the corporate body. He expects all to reach a full level of maturity.”²⁸ Paul describes this expected maturity as “mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children” (Eph 4:13b-14a). The growth and maturity of the believers in “unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God” is the church’s becoming “more like Christ himself in all of his completeness.”²⁹ Thielman describes Paul’s goal as “union with Christ in all his fullness.”³⁰ What Paul envisions for the local church is the ongoing work of the entire church body “until” all reach the “unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.”³¹ The maturing of the whole church body is displayed through a growing likeness to Christ Jesus among believers.

²⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 256.

²⁷ Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission*, 25.

²⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 264.

²⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 265.

³⁰ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 280.

³¹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 280.

The positive growth of the church toward the fullness of Christ is not the only measure of growth Paul has in mind. Paul includes a warning against immaturity, “so that we may no longer be children” (Eph 4:14). The influence and intrusion of false teachers harm the church. Paul says that immature believers are “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14).³² Thielman says, “The church’s goal, negatively viewed, is to move believers out of childhood, with its susceptibility to various false teachings.”³³ Additionally, Thielman notes, “A church moving toward full unity with Christ is leaving behind immaturity, with its intertwined characteristics of ignorance and individualism.”³⁴ Immaturity and susceptibility to the influence of false teachers were constant concerns of the apostle Paul. Therefore, “the whole congregation should be involved in sanctifying and protecting one another.”³⁵

In Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love” is Paul’s admonition to every believer in the church at Ephesus. The spiritual growth desired by the apostle Paul takes place, in part, by “speaking the truth in love.”³⁶ As church leaders equip the saints for the work of ministry, an interpersonal and conversational ministry to one another develops among believers. This interpersonal and conversational ministry is the personal ministry of the Word within the local church. The ministry of “speaking the truth in love” follows closely on the heels of Paul’s concern for the immaturity of believers, hence the “rather” at the beginning of Ephesians 4:15. O’Brien observes, “As Paul now focuses positively on the ultimate goal towards which he and his readers are moving, he desires that together they may grow up into Christ, who is the head. This growth will occur as they

³² Osborne, *Ephesians*, 49-50; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 159-60.

³³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283.

³⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283.

³⁵ Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission*, 25-26.

³⁶ Bigney and Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” 30.

speak the truth in love rather than being misled by the malicious schemes of the false teachers.”³⁷

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul emphasizes that within the local church, believers are to speak the truth in love.³⁸ Discussions of an accurate translation of “speaking the truth” abound. Arnold prefers the word “confessing” to communicate “maintaining a corporate confession of the faith” among believers.³⁹ Bruce thinks “doing truth” is a better understanding. Grant Osborne prefers “practicing truth.”⁴⁰ Curtis Vaughn is comfortable with a broader understanding: “‘Speaking the truth’ translates a single Greek word that has been interpreted in many ways: holding truth, maintaining truth, living the truth, or speaking truth. It may be that we should understand the word as including all of these meanings.”⁴¹ Compared with Paul’s only other use of the term in the New Testament (Gal 4:16), Paul’s intent in Ephesians 4:15 is for believers to verbally speak the gospel, and that speaking implies a commitment to practice the gospel as followers of Christ (Phil 1:27; Jas 1:22).⁴² Speaking and practicing are two sides of the same coin and need not be viewed as opposing one another. As believers speak the truth of the gospel, the whole body matures and will “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

In Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love” contrasts the cunning schemes of false teachers in the local church. Vaughn aptly notes that “even if deceit is not present, mere doctrinal orthodoxy can be a very cold and lifeless thing.” Therefore, Paul encourages the believers “how” to “speak” the truth. They are to speak the truth “in

³⁷ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 310.

³⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 268.

³⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 268.

⁴⁰ Osborne, *Ephesians*, 50.

⁴¹ Vaughn, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁴² O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 311; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 285.

love.” Arnold says, “The truth of the gospel needs to be proclaimed and upheld within the community of believers. But it needs to be done with a heart that is tender and concerned about the feelings, growth, and well-being of fellow believers.”⁴³ Bigney and Viars state, “Such words must always be spoken in the context of Christian love.”⁴⁴ Bruce observes, “Whether spoken or expressed in action, the truth is never to be dissociated from love.”⁴⁵ O’Brien states well, “The truth as proclaimed should not be dissociated from love or promoted at the expense of love, while a life of love should embody the truth of the gospel.”⁴⁶ The personal ministry of the Word must be exercised as part of believers’ love for one another within the context of the local church.

Paul concludes his admonition for the local church’s growth and maturity into the “unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” by emphasizing the growth of the whole body as every believer contributes by speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:16). The personal ministry of the Word is a responsibility of every believer for the growth and well-being of the entire church body. In Ephesians 4:11-16, the apostle places the personal ministry of the Word in the local church.

The Personal Ministry of the Word Fulfills the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20)

The final words of Jesus recorded in Matthew’s Gospel set the course for the New Testament church. Jesus commands his followers, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:18-20). The mission of every local church is tethered to the Great Commission. “The local church is

⁴³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 269.

⁴⁴ Bigney and Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” 31.

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 160.

⁴⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 312.

where disciples are made. It is where the disciples are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is where Christians are taught to obey everything Christ commanded. And for these glorious ends, Christ has promised us his Spirit and authority until he returns.”⁴⁷ The personal ministry of the Word fulfills the Great Commission when disciples learn to obey Jesus’s commands.

Given All Authority (Matt 28:16-17)

Matthew’s Gospel account of Jesus’s life concludes where it began, when “the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them” (Matt 28:16).⁴⁸ Leon Morris notes that Matthew “has depicted the greater part of Jesus’ ministry as being in Galilee” and that “the disciples were familiar with Galilee.”⁴⁹ The disciples’ response when seeing Jesus follows a similar response by the women who discovered the empty tomb in Matthew 28:9: “when they saw him they worshiped him” (Matt 28:17). “Worship was the natural response to the realization that the Jesus who had meant so much to them throughout his earthly ministry was stronger than death and was alive again.”⁵⁰

Curiously, following the statement that the disciples “worshiped him” (i.e., Jesus), Matthew includes that “some doubted” (Matt 28:17). Scholarly discussion surrounds whether the eleven were joined by other faithful followers of Jesus.⁵¹ R. T. France says that the idea of other followers’ joining the disciples is “improbable in the

⁴⁷ Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission*, 55-56.

⁴⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1037.

⁴⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 744.

⁵⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 744.

⁵¹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1040.

context.”⁵² He further states that the hesitancy is a “counter-current within” the group of the eleven disciples “affecting some but not all of them.”⁵³ How can the “doubt” by some of the disciples be explained? “Perhaps they were not sure that the person they were seeing was the one who was crucified. Perhaps they were not sure that Jesus really was risen; they may have wondered whether they were seeing a vision, not a real person.”⁵⁴ D. A. Carson states, “Other passages show that Jesus in his post resurrection appearances was not always instantly recognized.”⁵⁵ Consider Luke’s account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:16) and John’s account of the disciples meeting Jesus on the beach (John 21:4-14). France concludes well, “More likely [the doubt] indicates that they did not know how to respond to Jesus in this new situation, where he was familiar and yet now different.”⁵⁶ In the text, worship and doubt exist in the same moment for the disciples as “Jesus’ resurrection did not instantly transform men of little faith and faltering understanding into spiritual giants.”⁵⁷

The “new situation” in which the disciples meet Jesus is a result of the resurrection. “He made clear that in his risen state he was in a situation very different from that when he had been the penniless preacher and healer they knew so well.”⁵⁸ What change had taken place? “The Son of Man, once humiliated and suffering, is given universal authority.”⁵⁹ Matthew records, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’” (Matt 28:18). France states, “The

⁵² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1040.

⁵³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1040.

⁵⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745.

⁵⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 593.

⁵⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1040.

⁵⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

⁵⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745.

⁵⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 594

focus falls fully on Jesus himself” in the text and not the disciples.⁶⁰ Carson says that here “marks the turning point in redemptive history” because it is the “climatic vindication of [Jesus’] humiliation.”⁶¹ Jesus received the “fullest possible authority, for it is authority ‘in heaven and on earth’”⁶²

Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus uses the language of Daniel 7:13-14 foreshadowing his future sovereignty, and now in Matthew 28:18 Jesus echoes Daniel 7:14: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”⁶³ Carson clarifies, “It is not Jesus’ authority per se that becomes more absolute. Rather, the spheres in which he now exercises absolute authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e., the universe.”⁶⁴ Morris comments, “Limitations that applied throughout the incarnation no longer apply to him. He has supreme authority throughout the universe.”⁶⁵ It must not be overlooked that Jesus’s supreme universal authority was “given” to him by God the Father. “At the beginning of [Matthew’s Gospel] Satan offered Jesus sovereignty over the whole earth, but his offer was refused (Matt 4:8-10); now, Jesus, going the way of obedience to his Father’s will even to the cross, has received far more than Satan could offer.”⁶⁶

Matthew 28:16-20 culminates with the theme of kingship seen throughout the Gospel.⁶⁷ Jesus is introduced in the royal lineage of David as the Gospel begins, and Matthew’s Gospel ends with Jesus as the Sovereign Ruler with “all authority in heaven

⁶⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1041.

⁶¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

⁶² Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745.

⁶³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1041.

⁶⁴ Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

⁶⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁶⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1042.

⁶⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1042.

and on earth.” Jesus’s universal authority is the basis for the commission he gives his disciples in the words that follow.⁶⁸ The Great Commission given with all authority by King Jesus is fulfilled with the personal ministry of the Word.

Commissioned to “Make Disciples” (Matt 28:18)

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus does not reveal how he exercises his authority; instead, “Jesus goes on to its implications for those who follow him.”⁶⁹ The sovereign rule of Jesus over all of the universe now extends his mission through the work of his disciples. Carson notes two features that connect Jesus’s authority and his commission to the disciples. First, the disciples are urged “forward to a universal ministry [Jesus] himself never engaged in during the days of his flesh.”⁷⁰ The mission of Jesus is no longer limited to the Galilean hills or the areas around Jerusalem; instead, it extends to the ends of the earth. Second, Jesus’s “followers may go in confidence that their Lord is in sovereign control of ‘everything in heaven and on earth.’”⁷¹

Because Jesus is “given” the fullest possible authority, he now commissions the eleven disciples to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). The imperative force of Jesus’s commission falls on “make disciples.”⁷² Morris notes that “go” is a participle in the text linked to the imperative “make disciples.”⁷³ “Jesus was commanding his followers to go as well as to make disciples, though the emphasis falls on the making of disciples.”⁷⁴ France agrees that the main imperative is “make disciples.”

⁶⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1042.

⁶⁹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁷⁰ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁷¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁷² Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁷³ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁷⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

In addition, Carson provides an exegetical argument for imperatival force in the text by noting, “When a participle functions as a circumstantial participle dependent on an imperative, it normally gains some imperatival force.”⁷⁵ Carson also provides a contextual argument for imperatival force: “While it remains true to say that the main imperatival force rests with ‘make disciples,’ not with ‘go,’ in a context that demands that this ministry extend to ‘all nations,’ it is difficult to believe that ‘go’ has lost all imperatival force.”⁷⁶ “‘Going’ refers to taking the initiative in sharing the message of Christ with ‘all nations.’”⁷⁷ Jesus’s commission to the eleven disciples is certainly a universal mission intended for “going” in order to “make disciples.”

France observes, “The commission is expressed not in terms of the means, to proclaim the good news, but of the end, to ‘make disciples.’”⁷⁸ He continues, “It is not enough that the nations hear the message; they must also respond with the same whole-hearted commitment which was required of those who became disciples of Jesus during his ministry.”⁷⁹ Ernie Baker and Jonathan Holmes state concerning the Great Commission, “We are sent on mission to ‘make disciples,’ not just proclaim a message.”⁸⁰ Dale Johnson says, “The Great Commission of our Lord calls us to ‘make disciples.’ We are not charged simply with winning souls, but the growing of souls to stable abiding in the Lord Jesus.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁷⁶ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁷⁷ Kevin Carson and Jeff Forrey, “The Unity of the Trinity,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 64.

⁷⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1044.

⁷⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1044.

⁸⁰ Ernie Baker and Jonathan Holmes, “The Power of the Redeemer,” in MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, 40.

⁸¹ T. Dale Johnson Jr., *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 76.

Jesus's emphasis on "make disciples" naturally begs the question "What is a disciple?" Morris says, "In this Gospel a disciple is both a learner and a follower; a disciple takes Jesus as his teacher and learns from him, and a disciple also follows Jesus."⁸² Considering Matthew 12:46-50, Carson notes, "Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus' teaching."⁸³ In addition, Carson states that Jesus's disciples "make others what they themselves are—disciples of Jesus Christ."⁸⁴ Morris comments that a disciple is ultimately one who has a "whole-hearted commitment to a person," Jesus Christ.⁸⁵ Jesus's commission is universal and includes "all nations." No tribe or people group is excluded from the invitation to whole-hearted commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. In short, the Great Commission is to "make disciples" of all people in all places. The covenant promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) are now fulfilled in the going of Jesus's disciples to "make disciples of all nations."

Baptizing and Teaching Disciples (Matt 28:19-20)

Two participles, "baptizing" and "teaching," follow Jesus's command to "make disciples." France says that baptizing and teaching are the "process of making disciples."⁸⁶ Carson's argument is more acceptable. He explains, "Baptizing and teaching are not the *means* of making disciples, but they characterize it."⁸⁷ Baptism and instruction are a response to repentance and faith.⁸⁸ A follower of Jesus Christ will be baptized and taught to obey Jesus's commands and follow Jesus's example. Carson summarizes by

⁸² Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁸³ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁸⁴ Carson, *Matthew*, 595-96.

⁸⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁸⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1044.

⁸⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 598 (emphasis original).

⁸⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 598.

saying, “The force of this command is to make Jesus’ disciples responsible for making disciples of others, a task characterized by baptism and instruction.”⁸⁹ Making disciples involves no less than going, baptizing, and teaching.⁹⁰

Baptism in Jesus’s command is followed by a Trinitarian formula: “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). There is no doubt that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the work of saving sinners. Morris notes, “This expression has caused endless controversy among exegetes.”⁹¹ Is the expression involving the Trinity a required formula? If so, why are the new believers in the book of Acts baptized in the name of Jesus and not with the formula found in the Great Commission (Acts 8:16; 19:5)? Carson states that the “church was not bound by precise formulas,” and Morris notes that “the words about the Trinity are not necessarily meant to be used as a formula, though in the history of the church they have often been so used and they form a fitting part of baptismal services.”⁹² The formula discussion may have garnered a little too much attention as Jesus notes that disciples are baptized into “the name,” singular not plural. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one and the same God, though they are three distinct persons. Whether a disciple is baptized using the Trinitarian formula from Matthew’s Gospel or using the name of Jesus as in the book of Acts, the most important aspect is the public declaration of whole-hearted commitment to the resurrected and sovereign Jesus.

Proclaiming the good news and baptizing new believers does not complete the Great Commission. The second participle of “teaching” linked to “making disciples” is often overlooked. “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” is no less

⁸⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 598.

⁹⁰ Carson and Forrey, “The Unity of the Trinity,” 64.

⁹¹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 747.

⁹² Carson, *Matthew*, 599; Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 747-48.

than the public and personal ministry of the Word in the local church. In Matthew 28:20, “teaching” is now the responsibility of the disciples.⁹³ Jesus has taught the disciples throughout Matthew concerning the kingdom of God, but now as the disciples “go” and “make disciples,” the responsibility for teaching falls on their shoulders. It must be noted, however, that “they are to teach not their own ideas, but what Jesus has ‘commanded.’”⁹⁴ The focus of “teaching” is Jesus and his words. “Jesus does not foresee a time when any part of his teaching will be rightly judged needless, outmoded, superseded, or untrue: ‘everything’ he has commanded must be passed on ‘to the very end of the age.’”⁹⁵

In the realm of teaching and discipleship within the local church, “Jesus is not speaking about education for education’s sake,”⁹⁶ nor is he promoting an “intellectual education.”⁹⁷ “The simple passing along of information does not create a disciple. Discipleship is a whole-life pursuit, not simply an intellectual one. Discipleship incorporates both hearing and doing from a devoted heart.”⁹⁸ Morris clarifies Jesus’s intentions by saying, “He speaks of the taught as ‘observing’ what Jesus has commanded. In other words, Jesus is concerned with a way of life.”⁹⁹ France states, “To be a disciple is to obey Jesus’ teaching.”¹⁰⁰ Men and women who practice the personal ministry of the Word are involved in making disciples. They understand that they “are doing more than just fixing problem; [they] are making a disciple.”¹⁰¹

⁹³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1046-1047.

⁹⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1046-1047.

⁹⁵ Carson, *Matthew*, 600.

⁹⁶ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

⁹⁷ Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 63.

⁹⁸ Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 63.

⁹⁹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

¹⁰⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1047.

¹⁰¹ Bigney and Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” 27.

Fulfilling the Great Commission in the local church involves a firm commitment to the ministry of the Word.¹⁰² Kevin Carson and Paul Tautges states, “The ministry of the Word is all about applying the truth of the believer’s union with Christ to a life lived in loving relationship with God and others.”¹⁰³ Both the public ministry of the Word and the personal ministry of the Word are essential to fulfilling the Great Commission in “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded” (Matt 28:20). The public ministry of the Word involves the proclamation of gospel truth in the corporate setting.¹⁰⁴ The personal ministry of the Word “includes the one-to-one, face-to-face ministry conversations that take the Word of God and apply it to a specific person’s life context.”¹⁰⁵ The personal ministry of the Word helps followers of Jesus “observe” all that Jesus commanded in their specific life context and struggles (Matt 28:20).¹⁰⁶

In order for the personal ministry of the Word to fulfill the Great Commission, it must be centered on Christ Jesus. The focus of “teaching” a disciple is always on Jesus and his teaching. Practicing the personal ministry of the Word means to “focus on the Bible’s central theme: the Lord Jesus Christ and his life-changing, redeeming work for humanity.”¹⁰⁷ The personal ministry of the Word presents “the incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning, and returning Redeemer who through his Word and his Spirit helps people handle their personal and relational problems.”¹⁰⁸ Considering the personal ministry of

¹⁰² Kevin Carson and Paul Tautges, “Uniting the Public Ministry of the Word and the Private Ministry of the Word,” in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 72-88.

¹⁰³ Carson and Tautges, “Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word,” 72.

¹⁰⁴ Carson and Tautges, “Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word,” 76.

¹⁰⁵ Carson and Tautges, “Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word,” 82.

¹⁰⁶ Carson and Tautges, “Uniting the Public and Private Ministry of the Word,” 82-83; see also Robert D. Jones, “The Counseling Process” (chaps 13-15), in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 157-197.

¹⁰⁷ Robert D. Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” 12.

the Word and the Great Commission, Robert Jones provides helpful insight. As a means of evangelism, Jones sees the personal ministry of the Word as an opportunity for “problem-occasioned evangelism,” but he also asks, “What does the teaching ministry entail?”¹⁰⁹ Jones says that pastors, biblical counselors, and others “not only teach believers *what* Jesus commands and *that* they must obey his commands; [they] also teach them *how* to obey his commands. [They] help God’s people do God’s Word—in detailed practical ways in their specific life situation.”¹¹⁰ In order to fulfill the Great Commission, disciples of Jesus must learn *how* to obey all that Jesus commanded. The personal ministry of the Word complements the public ministry of the Word through personal application of *how* a disciple is to obey Jesus’s commands.

Finally, Jesus says to his disciples, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Carson points out that the Great Commission—and Matthew’s Gospel—“ends, not with command, but with the promise of Jesus’ comforting presence.”¹¹¹ Morris calls it a “breathtaking promise” from Jesus.¹¹² The disciples’ task to “make disciples of all nations” would include the presence of Jesus himself while they obeyed the command to “make disciples.”¹¹³ “Jesus’ physical presence with his disciples was limited to the period of his earthly life-span, but the spiritual presence of the risen Jesus has no such limitations.”¹¹⁴ For faithful and obedient disciples, Morris adds these encouraging words: “The disciple will find that he has a great companion as he goes on

¹⁰⁹ Robert Jones, “Does the Great Commission Require Biblical Counseling?,” Biblical Counseling Coalition, July 17, 2019, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2019/07/17/does-the-great-commission-require-biblical-counseling/>.

¹¹⁰ Jones, “Does the Great Commission Require Biblical Counseling?” (emphasis original).

¹¹¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 600.

¹¹² Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

¹¹³ Carson, *Matthew*, 600.

¹¹⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1047.

his way through life The Jesus of whom Matthew writes is no small Palestinian figure, but a mighty Person who is with his followers wherever they may be.”¹¹⁵

The personal ministry of the Word is an essential element of the disciple-making ministry of every local church. The personal ministry of the Word fulfills the Great Commission as disciples are taught how to obey the commands of Jesus.

The Personal Ministry of the Word Demonstrates Mutual Care (Col 3:12-16)

The personal ministry of the Word incorporates the gospel truth believers are equipped with by church leaders (Eph 4:11-16) and the Christ-centered teaching commanded in making disciples (Matt 28:18-20). Particularly note, “Colossians 3:16 completes the transmission from Jesus to the apostle Paul and then from the apostle Paul to the church members who will teach each other Christ’ words. Jesus teaches his disciples who in turn teach their churches who in turn teach each other.”¹¹⁶ In Colossians 3:12-16, the personal ministry of the Word demonstrates mutual care within the local church.

The Image of Christ and Peace (Col 3:12-15)

G. K. Beale says, “Christians must seek heavenly things as a result of having died to the old world and having been raised with Christ into a new world, they must cloth themselves with the traits of the new world.”¹¹⁷ Robert Jones describes Colossians 3:12-14 as the “God-given attire” that believers clothe themselves with as a result of being raised with and united to Christ Jesus (Col 3:1-4). Jones states, “It is nothing less

¹¹⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

¹¹⁶ Robert D. Jones, “A Biblical-Theological Study of New Testament Church as God’s Designed Agent and Setting for the Ministry of Mutual Care” (ThD diss., University of South Africa, 2015), 104.

¹¹⁷ G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 293.

than the very attire—the exact outfit—that the Son of God wore on this earth and continues to wear each day. It is the clothing of Jesus, and he gives it to us.”¹¹⁸ What Paul encourages in Colossians 3:12-14 is “cultivating grace attitudes” or “Christlike attitudes” that reflect Christians’ union with Christ and displays Christ himself in the lives of believers.¹¹⁹

Richard Melick sees three commands in Colossians 3:12-17. The first is “clothe yourselves with Christian characteristics” (Col 3:12-14).¹²⁰ Melick sees the other two commands to the church: let “the peace of Christ rule” among the believers and “let the word of Christ dwell” in the local church (Col 3:15-17).¹²¹ Both of these latter commands represent significant aspects of Christian living. Consider first the command: “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body” (Col 3:15). Curtis Vaughn says, “For the peace of Christ to ‘rule’ in our hearts is for it not simply to be present but to exercise supreme control within us.”¹²² Bruce says, the “common life of fellow-members of the body of Christ is in view; when differences threaten to spring up among them, the peace of Christ must be accepted as *arbitrator*.”¹²³ As the gospel unites believers from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, believers in the local church will have differences. Considering Paul’s instruction for believers to be ruled by the “peace of Christ,” R. C. Lucas says, “It is inconceivable that

¹¹⁸ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 107.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 107.

¹²⁰ Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 299.

¹²¹ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 299.

¹²² Curtis Vaughn, *Colossians—A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 101.

¹²³ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

those who share with one another the benefits of that great peace-making work of the cross should live with any hatred or contempt for each other in their hearts.”¹²⁴

In Colossians 3:15, “the essential meaning here is that in all inner conflicts as well as in all disputes and differences among Christians, Christ’s peace must give final decision.”¹²⁵ Bruce says, “If the members are subject to Christ, then peace which he imparts must regulate their relations with one another.”¹²⁶ Scholars differ on whether the peace Paul speaks of is individual or corporate. Jones agrees with those who see “this peace as relational and corporate more than internal and individual.”¹²⁷ The corporate and relational nature of Paul’s instructions concerning peace is highlighted by the phrase “to which indeed you were called in one body” (Col 3:15). “The focus of ‘one body’ is the corporate unity of believers as members of one another.”¹²⁸ Peace found in the body among the believers should result in “the response of gratitude for the grace of God.”¹²⁹ Thus, Paul says, “And be thankful.” “The peace to which [the Colossians believers] have been called in one body has not come about through their own efforts but is completely given by God’s grace,” according to Beale.¹³⁰

“The Word of Christ” (Col 3:16)

Paul’s final command in the text is to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16). The personal ministry of the Word is a means of mutual care only when “the word of Christ” is central to the life of the local church. Vaughn sees in this

¹²⁴ R. C. Lucas, *The Message of Colossians and Philemon*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 153-54.

¹²⁵ Vaughn, *Colossians*, 101.

¹²⁶ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

¹²⁷ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 107.

¹²⁸ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 301.

¹²⁹ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

¹³⁰ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 302.

command a focus on “matters which have to do more directly with our personal lives,” though he admits that “the thought of our duty to others is not entirely absent” from the text (Col 3:16-17).¹³¹ Beale observes the mutual responsibility of believers one to another, especially “in teaching and admonishing other believers through Christ’s word.”¹³² William Hendriksen sees an emphasis on “mutual teaching and admonition.”¹³³ Jones correctly summarizes Colossians 3:16 as “a passage that envisions the members of the church communicating the gospel to each other in both speech and song.”¹³⁴

What does Paul mean by “the word of Christ”? If “the word of Christ” should be the “prevailing influence in the believers,” as Beale notes, then a clear understanding of “the word of Christ” is warranted.¹³⁵ Though Ephesians 5:18-21 is similar with differing terminology, an exact parallel is not found in the New Testament.¹³⁶ Some scholars debate whether “the word of Christ” is the “word spoken by Christ” or the “word about Christ.”¹³⁷ Beale believes the text conveys an “intentional ambiguity” to encompass both meanings.¹³⁸ Melick says the phrase is best understood as “about Christ” and states, “The word of Christ was the focus of the congregation Since peace comes from Christ, the word that comes should also be from him.”¹³⁹ Bruce contends, “Christian teaching must be based on the teaching of Jesus himself; it must be unmistakably ‘the

¹³¹ Vaughn, *Colossians*, 102.

¹³² Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 307.

¹³³ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1964), 160.

¹³⁴ Jones, “A Biblical-Theological Study,” 103.

¹³⁵ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 303.

¹³⁶ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 303.

¹³⁷ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 302.

¹³⁸ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 302.

¹³⁹ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 302.

word of Christ.”¹⁴⁰ David Garland best explains, “The ‘word of Christ’ refers to the message about Christ. It contains the wealth of God’s wisdom, which should guide the church’s teaching and admonishing. Believers do not need special visions to enhance the wisdom they already have in the word of Christ.”¹⁴¹ Aligning with the Great Commission, the “word of Christ” can be no less than focusing on Jesus’s life and teachings. Concisely put, “the word of Christ” should be understood as everything contained in the gospel message.

Paul’s instruction is to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16). Lucas says, “As usual in this letter Paul takes every opportunity to stress the centrality and sufficiency of Christ.”¹⁴² The phrase “dwell in you richly” is more than a lackadaisical effort on the part of the individual believer or the corporate church body. Hendriksen says, “The objective, special revelation that proceeds from (and concerns) Christ—‘the Christ-word’—should govern every thought, word, and deed, yes even the hidden drives and motivations of every member, and thus should bear sway among them all.”¹⁴³ Vaughn sees a similar authority over the believer with “the word of Christ.” He writes, “The general sense is that we are to submit to the demands of the Christian message and to let it be deeply implanted within us that it controls all our thinking.”¹⁴⁴ The “in you,” according to Bruce, is best understood as a “collective sense” or corporately within the church body. Mutual care in the church is anchored in the centrality and sufficiency of Christ in the life of each individual believer. “The word of Christ” is abundantly present in the individual and corporately in the whole body.

¹⁴⁰ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

¹⁴¹ David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 153.

¹⁴² Lucas, *The Message of Colossians and Philemon*, 154.

¹⁴³ Hendriksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, 160.

¹⁴⁴ Vaughn, *Colossians*, 102.

Paul encourages two activities that promote the word of Christ's dwelling among the believers. Both activities display mutual care and encourage the personal ministry of the Word. First, Paul instructs believers to follow his own ministry of "teaching and admonishing" (Col 1:28). Paul says, "Him [Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). In Colossians 3:16, the ministry of the apostle Paul is now given by Paul to every believer in the local church. Hendriksen notes, "In both cases the content is the same: admonishing and teaching. Believers, by virtue of their 'office' as believers . . . should do what Paul and his associates are doing by virtue of their office."¹⁴⁵ Jones says of the similarity of Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16, "This implies that the one-another ministry of 'teaching' and 'admonishing' [Paul] enjoins on his readers in Colossians 3:16 is an extension of Paul's own admonishing and teaching ministry in Colossians 1:28."¹⁴⁶

Closely associated with the role of the pastor-teacher and the gift of teaching, as noted above concerning Ephesians 4:11-16, "teaching" is "the orderly arrangement of truth and effective communication of it," says Melick.¹⁴⁷ He adds that "teaching" includes "church members teaching each other in the ways of God."¹⁴⁸ It is the mutual care and responsibility of the whole body, not simply the pastor-teacher or specific individuals. Jones states that "teaching" is "a general word for instruction" that is "used in public and private contexts," similar to Paul's ministry among the Ephesians in the book of Acts (Acts 20:20).¹⁴⁹ Melick states, "Admonishing has the element of strong

¹⁴⁵ Hendriksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, 160.

¹⁴⁶ Jones, "A Biblical-Theological Study," 104.

¹⁴⁷ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 304.

¹⁴⁸ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 304.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, "A Biblical-Theological Study," 104.

encouragement.”¹⁵⁰ Both instruction and strong encouragement are aspects of the mutual care among believers through the personal ministry of the Word.

The phrase “in all wisdom” follows Paul’s instruction for “teaching and admonishing one another.” Scholars disagree as to whether “in all wisdom” should be linked with “teaching and admonishing.” According to Bruce, it makes “better sense” to link the two, though Vaughn believes the meaning is not “radically affected” if they are not linked.¹⁵¹ Paul’s concern for the New Testament churches frequently includes the danger of false teachers. Beale says that “Christ’s own word of wisdom is in [Paul’s] mind in contrast to the pseudo-wisdom of the false teachers who dilute the centrality of Christ” (Col 2:3).¹⁵² It is safe to say that Paul has in mind both his prayer for “all spiritual wisdom and understanding” for the Colossians and “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” found in Christ Jesus (Col 1:9; 2:3). Bruce offers helpful practical consideration: “The Colossians Christians, like those at Rome, should be able to instruct one another; but such instruction should be given wisely and tactfully. If wisdom or tact be absent, the instruction, however well intentioned, could provoke the opposite reaction to that which is designed.”¹⁵³ According to the apostle Paul, mutual care was to be a fundamental aspect of church life at Colossae. Believers taught and encouraged one another from an abundance of wisdom and knowledge of Christ Jesus. Paul describes a clear picture of the personal ministry of the Word that demonstrates mutual care.

The second activity Paul encourages that promotes “the word of Christ” among the believers is corporate worship, specifically “singing.” Paul writes, “singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). The

¹⁵⁰ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 304.

¹⁵¹ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82; Vaughn, *Colossians*, 102.

¹⁵² Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 303.

¹⁵³ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

corporate understanding of “in you” leads Beale to view “singing” as a further influence of the “the word of Christ” among the believers.¹⁵⁴ Bruce says that “singing” might be considered “a means of mutual edification” in the local church.¹⁵⁵ Under the command to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” believers were expected to communicate the gospel and all of their knowledge of Christ Jesus in song.¹⁵⁶ Melick says, “In [Colossians] 3:16, the pastoral function Paul claimed for himself in [Colossians] 1:28 is broadened to include the entire congregation and the medium of music.”¹⁵⁷

Some scholars have drawn firm distinctions between “psalms,” “hymns,” and “spiritual songs.” Beale sees all three as referring to or based upon the Old Testament psalms because they were a part of the Scriptures of the early church and now relate the revelation of Christ.¹⁵⁸ Vaughn says, “Rigid distinctions should not be made between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The language is intended to emphasize rich variety of song.”¹⁵⁹ Melick rightly concludes, “Together, these three terms address the entire scope of musical expression in early church worship”; “there is a consensus that the terms have significant overlap.”¹⁶⁰ Paul envisions the church’s mutual care for one another as including a rich variety of musical expressions steeped in the gospel and the understanding of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

Paul instructs believers to sing “with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Both of Paul’s last two commands end with encouragement toward “thankfulness.”

¹⁵⁴ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 303.

¹⁵⁵ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 82.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, “A Biblical-Theological Study,” 103.

¹⁵⁷ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 305.

¹⁵⁸ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 303-5.

¹⁵⁹ Vaughn, *Colossians*, 103.

¹⁶⁰ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 305.

“Thankfulness” in Colossians 3:16 can be translated as “grace” or “gratitude.”¹⁶¹ Melick explains, “The phrase refers to hearty Christian singing, singing with an understanding of grace because of the working of grace in the life. Grace reminds singers that the message and not the singers bring salvation.” Melick continues, “Nothing else teaches and admonishes others as well as the heartfelt, enthusiastic singing that comes from those who know personally what grace means.”¹⁶²

The personal ministry of the Word demonstrates mutual care in the local church. Believers are instructed to follow the ministry model of Paul by teaching and admonishing one another. As “the word of Christ” dwells among believers, corporate singing adds to the mutual care and encouragement believers need to continue in faith and to mature into Christlikeness.

Conclusion

Within the context of the local church, church leaders teach and equip Christians for ministry. The personal ministry of the Word encompasses “speaking the truth in love” as Paul instructs the believers in Ephesus (Eph 4:11-16). The outcome is the maturing of individual believers and the whole body into the likeness of Jesus Christ. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus commands his disciples to “make disciples” (Matt 28:16-20). The Great Commission involves “going” and “baptizing,” but it is fulfilled when new disciples are taught how to obey Jesus’s commands. The personal ministry of the Word is an essential element of disciple-making that instructs new believers how to obey Jesus commands. As believers care for one another in the local church, the centrality and the sufficiency of Christ is proclaimed through mutual care that involves instruction, strong encouragement, and joyful singing (Col 3:12-16). These three critical passages—Ephesians 4:11-16, Matthew 28:16-20, and Colossians 3:12-16—demonstrate that the

¹⁶¹ Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 306; Vaughn, *Colossians*, 103.

¹⁶² Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 306.

personal ministry of the Word thrives in a fellowship of believers committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and providing mutual care.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

This chapter argues introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word requires an emphasis on the Christ-like steps of entering a person's world, understanding a person's need, and bringing a person Christ and his answers. With the biblical foundation of the personal ministry of the Word established, it is now essential to establish a methodology of implementing the personal ministry of the Word for ministry leaders. To be beneficial in one's everyday personal ministry with fellow Christians, a methodology for the personal ministry of the Word should be easily understood and remembered by ministry leaders.

Over the last fifty years, biblical counseling practitioners developed a logical methodology of key elements for biblical counseling using various acronyms for easy recall. Most methods are related in some manner and follow similar patterns. Paul David Tripp's book *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* sought to systematize the methods and practices of biblical counselors. Tripp's four categories include love, know, speak, and do. Jim Newheiser points out that these four categories correspond to Wayne Mack's popular eight "I"s.¹ Mack's method, a standard in the biblical counseling practice, includes involvement, inspiration, inventory, interpretation, instruction, inducement, implementation, and integration. In more recent years, Jeremy Pierre, in his book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, has contributed a four-task method using read, reflect,

¹ Jim Newheiser, foreword to *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling: Utilizing the 8 "I"s to Promote True Biblical Change*, by Wayne Mack (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2021), 22n1. See also Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002).

relate, and renew.² While biblical counseling goals are similar, the approach of biblical counseling practitioners may “vary in how they describe and carry out the actual counseling process.”³

The Christ-like approach employed in this chapter for introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word follows Robert Jones’s three-step method drawn from the pattern of Jesus’s ministry in Matthew 9:35-36.⁴ Jones attributes the development of the three-step method to the influence of Paul David Tripp. From Matthew’s Gospel, Jones identifies Jesus’s “usual pattern” of ministry:⁵ Jesus (1) enters a person’s world, (2) understands the person’s need, and (3) brings himself and his gospel answers.⁶ In his book *Speaking Truth in Love*, David Powlison notes Jesus’s interpersonal ministry of the Word.⁷ He writes, Jesus “did a lot of talking with people—intentional, honest conversations. He counseled the Word. He conversed the gospel. Jesus dealt with the immediate questions and struggles that individuals put to him. He asked questions of them in turn. He talked the same kinds of issues he preached.”⁸

Jones’s Christ-like three-step process—enter, understand, and bring (EUB)—serves as an effective method for ministry leaders engaged in the personal ministry of the Word.⁹ Ministry leaders confidently replicate the pattern of Jesus’s ministry in the New

² Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 175-239.

³ Robert D. Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One: Enter Their World,” in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 158.

⁴ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 157-97.

⁵ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 158.

⁶ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 158-59, 197.

⁷ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 105

⁸ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 105.

⁹ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 158.

Testament by entering a person's world, understanding a person's need, and bringing Christ and his answers. The EUB method is helpful to a broad spectrum of ministry leaders. Men and women of all ages serving in a variety of ministries in the local church can use this three-step method. As leaders minister the Word using the EUB method, the culture of mutual care in the local church will be strengthened, and leaders will be able to "handle simple counseling situations."¹⁰ Using the EUB method ensures that the personal ministry of the Word thrives in a fellowship of believers committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and providing mutual care.

Entering a Person's World

The Gospels record that Jesus consistently engaged in the lives of those in need and suffering. Jesus had both a public ministry of preaching and teaching as well as an interpersonal ministry of the Word to the world around him.¹¹ Matthew 9:35-36 reveals the first step ministry leaders must take in order to personally minister the Word Jesus displays. Matthew records, "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages" (9:35). God the Son, the second person of the Godhead, took on flesh and human form (John 1:14; Phil 2:8). The incarnation was "history-shattering. But once enfleshed, Jesus didn't remain aloof. He moved among people, interacted with people, and touched people—often literally."¹²

In the world, God incarnate engaged in the lives of people. Though Jesus himself was the Creator of all, he entered their world. It was a world where humanity was

¹⁰ Robert D. Jones, "Who Can and Should Do Biblical Counseling?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 24. See also Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 22; Garrett Higbee, "The Practicality of the Bible for Becoming a Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 231-33.

¹¹ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 106.

¹² Kristin L. Kellen, "Anthropology: How Should We View People?," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 162.

broken and suffering because of the fall. Jesus literally had “personal contact with needy individuals.”¹³ In the Gospels, Jesus met individuals experiencing a host of needs, including grief, physical affliction, isolation, and more. He met desperate parents, grieving sisters, widows, outcast lepers, and children. Ministry leaders in the local church may not find themselves engaged in all of the same ways as Jesus, but ministry leaders will meet people struggling with the effects of the fall. In the brokenness and messiness of life, ministry leaders will enter a person’s world, and on occasion, ministry leaders will encounter divine appointments that lead hurting individuals to experience the saving grace of God. In the personal ministry of the Word, ministry leaders must enter a person’s world the way Jesus entered ours.

Ministering to a Person

Ministry leaders will be tempted to approach the needs of an individual as they would approach solving a problem or accomplishing a ministry task. But ministry leaders enter a person’s world not to accomplish a task but for person-focused ministry. Leaders enter the world of a vulnerable person who is disclosing hurts and heartaches. Bringing help and hope will require “thought, insight, and prayer.”¹⁴

Wayne Mack says, “Effective biblical counselors take a people-centered approach. It’s more about the person than about the problem.”¹⁵ As ministry leaders enter a person’s world, they must do so with the understanding that the personal ministry of the Word is “Christ-like, caring person to person ministry of God’s Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems.”¹⁶ Ministry leaders must push back

¹³ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 158.

¹⁴ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 46.

¹⁵ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 46.

¹⁶ Robert D. Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 20.

the urge to solve a person's problems. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju remind ministry leaders, and particularly pastors, "No one likes to be a project. Be more committed to a person's well-being than to solving a problem. The two are actually not the same."¹⁷ Paul David Tripp says that too much focus on the problem can "miss the person and the struggles within."¹⁸ Ministry leaders must work to keep their focus on the person.

As ministry leaders enter a person's world, they have the opportunity to "incarnate the love of Christ."¹⁹ Entering a person's world means that ministry leaders engage a person as ambassadors of Christ clothed with the character of Christ Jesus.²⁰ Tripp writes, "As Christ's ambassadors, it's not just what we say that God uses to encourage change in people; it's also who we are and what we do."²¹

Entering with Humility and Compassion

The character of the ministry leaders matters when they enter a person's world. In the local church, ministry leaders need to be approachable in order to minister the Word to volunteers, small group members, and fellow church members. Ministry leaders represent Jesus Christ and show themselves as approachable to individuals in need with humility and compassion.

The apostle Paul that notes Jesus entered the world of broken and sinful humanity with humility (Phil 2:5-10). And throughout the Gospels, Jesus enters the world of the hurting with compassion. Matthew records, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them" (9:36). Later, Matthew says that Jesus saw the crowd ashore and had compassion on them (Matt 14:14). In Luke 7:13, Jesus had compassion on the

¹⁷ Jerry Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 61.

¹⁸ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 131.

¹⁹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 133-39.

²⁰ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 134.

²¹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 134.

widow. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus “sympathizes with our weaknesses” (Heb 4:15).²² Jones says, “Compassion is that inward, deeply felt emotional response of pity for a suffering person, coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering.”²³ Humility and compassion are not added bonuses to the life of a ministry leader but needed qualities of Christ to enter a person’s world.

Tripp encourages, “If we follow the example of Christ, the person we are seeking to help should experience in us what real love, compassion, gentleness, forgiveness, forbearance, kindness, and humility are like, even though we are fallen human beings.”²⁴ Although Jesus alone perfectly possesses these qualities, the Spirit is able to mature in ministry leaders these “relational graces.”²⁵ Wayne Mack says that for ministry leaders to enter a person’s world, they should be “mature believers, steadfast in faith, and sure-footed in theology.”²⁶ But he also says that the fruit of the Spirit discussed in Galatians 5:22-23 are “important qualities [that] facilitate the development of good relationships.”²⁷

Ministry leaders enter a person’s world with humility and compassion. Ultimately, as leaders embody the incarnate love of Christ with a warm welcome, they become effective instruments of ministry in the lives of others.²⁸

²² Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 50-51. See also Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 164-65.

²³ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 110.

²⁴ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 137.

²⁵ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 168.

²⁶ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 55.

²⁷ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 55.

²⁸ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One,” 162.

Entering with Hope

One of the essential goals for ministry leaders entering a person's world is to bring hope in the midst of need. Men and women who face struggles or hardships often do so with a sense of hopelessness. Personal struggles leave a trail of hurts and questions that include "misconceptions about God and his promises, ways, and character."²⁹ Hopelessness takes on many forms depending on a person's life circumstances and presenting struggle. Ministry leaders can identify hopelessness in common patterns such as discouragement, fearfulness, despair, giving in to sin and failure, resistance to change, and a lack of commitment to habits of grace, including meaningful church involvement.³⁰

As a believer matures in faith, hope is a growing expression of faith. In the Bible, hope contributes to the ongoing maturity of the believer by producing joy, perseverance, confidence, love, stability, and a greater depth of intimacy with God (Rom 5:2-3; 8:24-25; Phil 1:20; Col 1:4-5; Heb 6:19; 7:19).³¹ Ministry leaders must prioritize bringing hope to a needy individual as they enter his or her world. True biblical change will not happen without hope. Hope "is an expectation of good based on the promises of God,"³² similar to Paul's description of Abraham's hopeful faith in Roman 4:18. False hope is often based on an individual's personal desires or pleasures, but true biblical hope is always rooted in the promises of God and, ultimately, in Jesus Christ (Col 1:25-27; 1 Tim 1:1).³³ "All hope ultimately rests in the finished work of Christ."³⁴

²⁹ Robert D. Jones, "Giving Hope to Those We Counsel," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 199.

³⁰ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 62-63. See also Jones, "Giving Hope to Those We Counsel," 199.

³¹ Wayne A. Mack, "Instilling Hope in the Counselee," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, by John MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty, John MacArthur Pastor's Library (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 114.

³² Mack, "Instilling Hope in the Counselee," 118.

³³ Mack, "Instilling Hope in the Counselee," 119.

³⁴ Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 65.

Ministry leaders can bring hope in a number of ways. Essential to creating hopefulness is communicating a biblically accurate understanding of God’s character and attributes. To experience hope, one must “know and believe what the Bible teaches about the character of God.”³⁵ Ministry leaders must encourage hurting men and women to read, study, and meditate upon the attributes of God found in Scripture.³⁶ In addition, ministry leaders must encourage those struggling to consider the possible good that God can bring from their circumstances (Rom 8:28). “Sometimes people lack hope because they see only the negative side of their circumstances and fail to recognize the potential for good that exists in every situation.”³⁷ By no means does this hopeful expectation imply that all of life’s experiences are good; it simply reminds hurting people that God can bring good out of the most hurtful circumstances. The message of the cross and Christ confirms this very truth. One final means for a ministry leader to bring hope is by excessively referring to the gospel—that is, the saving work of Jesus Christ for sinners. Hurting men and women will not experience lasting biblical change and hope apart from being reconciled to God through the saving work of Christ. Ministry leaders will wisely ensure that the person to whom they are ministering is united to Christ Jesus through saving faith. For those united to Jesus in faith, the gospel brings hope. Ministry leaders must work to expose the grace of God through the saving work of Jesus from every possible angle as they enter a person’s world. When ministry leaders enter a person’s world, one of the best ways they can offer hope is to open their Bible in order to demonstrate that hope truly comes from the God of the Bible who alone can bring true biblical change.

³⁵ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 65.

³⁶ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 65.

³⁷ Mack, “Instilling Hope in the Counselee,” 125.

Understanding a Person's Need

If ministry leaders follow Jesus's usual ministry pattern from Matthew 9:35-36, then the next step in the personal ministry of the Word is to understand a person's need. Matthew records of Jesus, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

Jesus, who was fully man and fully God, perfectly discerned the needs of every individual he encountered. But ministry leaders do not have the same ability. Therefore, they must guard against making quick, unfounded assumptions about those in need.³⁸ Quick assessments and conclusions without a thorough exploration of a person's needs result in ministry leaders' misunderstanding the need. Tripp states, "Quick suggestions, wrong assumptions, and biblical platitudes" provide little help to someone who is facing life challenges.³⁹ Lauren Whitman says that hasty conclusions can lead to false interpretations.⁴⁰ Hence, ministry leaders must seek to comprehend a person's need by understanding the situation, the response, and the heart motive.⁴¹ "Through wise interviewing and skillful listening, we get to know a person—their situation, problems, perceived needs, how they think, and what they feel, value, and desire."⁴² Ministry leaders follow the pattern of Jesus's ministry when they seek to understand a person's need by asking good questions, listening carefully, and interpreting the need biblically in order to provide help.

³⁸ Robert D. Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two: Understand Their Need," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 172.

³⁹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 145.

⁴⁰ Lauren Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process: Guidance for the Beginning, Middle, and End* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 62.

⁴¹ Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process*, 90. See also Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two," 169-70; Jones, "Giving Hope to Those We Counsel," 199.

⁴² Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step One," 159.

Understanding by Listening

Understanding a person's need involves asking good questions and listening carefully. Which of the two is most important in the ministry of the Word? Both. Listening is an essential element to providing wise, God-honoring counsel. Pierre writes, "Listening well involves both letting counselees talk and directing them with questions that draw their attention to important things."⁴³

Ministry leaders demonstrate humility and compassion by listening carefully and attentively to a person's struggles. When ministry leaders listen, they seek to identify the presenting struggle or situation, the person's response to the situation, and the person's heart motive behind the response.⁴⁴ Careful and attentive listening is a skill that must be nurtured and developed. Ministry leaders must avoid talking over or interrupting a person in order to gain a clear understanding of the person's need. As ministry leaders listen carefully, they discover the hurting person's need, working theology, and expectations for help.⁴⁵

Understanding by Asking

Listening is only one side of the coin in the personal ministry of the Word. Ministry leaders need to ask good questions in order to obtain a clear picture of the person's situation, response, and heart motive. Well-positioned questions by ministry leaders will progressively move from clarifying the presenting struggle or situation to ascertaining how the person responded to, ultimately, probing for the heart motive.⁴⁶ But well-positioned questions also need to be well-thought-out questions.

⁴³ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 180.

⁴⁴ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two," 169-70.

⁴⁵ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 96-98.

⁴⁶ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two," 172.

The best questions are open-ended questions that require a person to disclose information about him- or herself or the situation in a more informative manner. Tripp writes, “Open-ended questions cannot be answered without the person disclosing what she is thinking, what she wants, and what she is doing.”⁴⁷ In contrast, closed questions can be answered with a “Yes” or “No” without disclosing many details of the situation, a response, or the heart. Closed questions will force ministry leaders to make assumptions based on their own experience, which may not align with the hurting person’s current situation.⁴⁸

Open-ended questions are posed with “Who,” “What,” “When,” “Where,” “Why,” and “How.” Tripp suggests five classes of questions with helpful explanations.⁴⁹ “What” questions reveal basic, general information. “How” questions target the way a person responded or the way something was done. “Why” questions reveal the purposes, desires, or motivations behind a person’s actions. “How often” and “Where” questions help ministry leaders see patterns or themes. Finally, “When” questions help ministry leaders recreate a timeline of the events. All of these open-ended questions are helpful for understanding a person’s need by revealing more clearly the situation, the response, and the heart.

Other types of questions ministry leaders should consider when endeavoring to understand a person’s need include worldview questions. Four basic questions can reveal a person’s worldview: “Where are we?”; “Who are we?”; “What is wrong?”; “What is the remedy?”⁵⁰ These four basic worldview questions reveal how one interprets a particular situation, one’s response, and one’s heart motive. The answers to each of these questions

⁴⁷ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 175.

⁴⁸ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 175.

⁴⁹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 178.

⁵⁰ Michael R. Emler, *CrossTalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2009), 63.

reveal a person's understanding of life, self, others, beliefs, and more.⁵¹ In addition to worldview questions, ministry leaders should consider "survey questions," seek broad information about a person's life but reveal themes and patterns.⁵² Finally, ministry leaders should also use "focused questions," which narrow the focus to a particular area of a person's life.⁵³

All questions should glean facts about the person's particular need. Questions should be thoughtful, gracious, and relevant.⁵⁴ In addition, ministry leaders should always ask good follow-up questions that narrow the focus of the person's need and clarify details. In the course of the conversation, ministry leaders may need to ask a person to define terms as well as ask for specific examples and explanations of particular responses. Ministry leaders should avoid bombarding a person with too many questions, and they should pay careful attention to non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, sighs, rolling eyes, shifting in the seat, and the like.

Ministry leaders will find that the best questions turn a person's attention to God's sovereign work in his or her life. The following questions are helpful in this way: "Where do you see God in this situation?"; "How do you think God looks at you?"; "What do you think God thinks about what you are doing?"⁵⁵ Pierre writes, "How people respond to God is the most important thing about them."⁵⁶

⁵¹ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 63.

⁵² Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 177.

⁵³ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 177.

⁵⁴ Wayne A. Mack, "Taking Counselee Inventory: Collecting Data," in MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty, *Counseling*, 141.

⁵⁵ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two," 175.

⁵⁶ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 114.

Organizing and Interpreting

After gathering information by asking good questions and careful listening, ministry leaders will then need to organize and interpret the information gathered. Once again, ministry leaders must guard against drawing quick conclusions and making rash assumptions. Understanding a person's need means that ministry leaders take careful consideration of the information revealed within the conversation. After considering the information, ministry leaders organize it biblically to bring help and hope to the person.

Describing a Person in Biblical Categories

Ministry leaders' first and best step in organizing information is to "consider a biblical category that best describes the person."⁵⁷ Mack suggests that ministry leaders consider whether the person is saved or unsaved and whether the person is mature or immature in his or her faith.⁵⁸ An unsaved person will not experience true biblical change as long as he or she is unreconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. In order to determine which of these biblical categories is appropriate, ministry leaders can, in the course of the conversation, simply invite the person to share his or her testimony of coming to faith in Christ and how he or she is continuing to grow in faith in Christ Jesus.

Mack also encourages determining if the person is "unruly, fainthearted, or weak."⁵⁹ He draws these categories from Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (1 Thess 5:14). Jones wisely notes, "While Paul did not design these three categories as some kind of exclusive triad or scientific personality typology, they remind us that people differ from each other and we should minister according to

⁵⁷ Wayne A. Mack, "Interpreting Counselee Data," in MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty, *Counseling*, 150.

⁵⁸ Mack, "Interpreting Counselee Data," 150.

⁵⁹ Mack, "Interpreting Counselee Data," 151.

such differences.”⁶⁰ Ministry leaders must wisely understand that the personal ministry of the Word “to others is much more than correction or reproof. It is also encouragement, vision-casting, and hope-building.”⁶¹ A helpful way to understand a person’s need from the gathered information and to begin organizing the information is to determine whether the person’s need is based on ignorance, unintentional sin, or intentional sin.⁶² Oftentimes in biblical counseling, a mixture of all three may exist in a person’s struggle.

Important to organizing the gathered information is understanding the effects of the fall on humanity. While sin does involve acts of omission and commission by a person, the effects of the fall on humanity also include being sinned against by others and general suffering from living in a broken world. Michael Emlet helpfully identifies two overarching problems to look for in gathered information. The first is “the problem of identity and purpose: who am I and what in the world should I doing?” The second is “the problem of evil: evil from ‘without’ (which corresponds to our experience as sufferers) and evil from ‘within’ (which corresponds to our experience as sinners).”⁶³ Emlet concludes, “The Bible speaks to our experiences as saints, sufferers, and sinners. God’s redemptive words *confirm* our identity as the chosen people of God, *console and comfort* his afflicted people, and *confront* the ways we turn away from his character and redemptive work.”⁶⁴ Ministry leaders will carefully consider a person’s need and thoughtfully categorize the person as saint, sufferer, or sinner. A person’s life circumstances and struggles are not always neatly categorized. Ministry leaders will need

⁶⁰ Robert D. Jones, personal correspondence, July 8, 2023.

⁶¹ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 88.

⁶² Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 110.

⁶³ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 70.

⁶⁴ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 74.

to prioritize which category fits the present need and remember that a person may simultaneously be a saint, sufferer, and sinner.⁶⁵

Biblical Ways to Organize

Organizing and interpreting information gathered from a person in need is not always easy. It is important for ministry leaders to look for key themes that arise in the course of the conversation—because “a person’s struggles typically organize around key themes.”⁶⁶ Listening for and noting what a person repeats will help identify themes.⁶⁷ In understanding a person’s need, ministry leaders will want to “process biblically” the information before them.⁶⁸ One way to do so is to ask, “What biblical language best describes the problems this person is experiencing?” and “What insights does the Bible provide about the proximate causes of such problems?”⁶⁹ Thinking biblically about the person’s need and life circumstances will lead ministry leaders to consider carefully a biblical solution instead of applying their own past successful experiences or a man-centered solution. The following approaches help pinpoint a biblical solution.

David Powlison notes two questions for organizing and interpreting information: “What is this person facing in life?” and “What does the Lord say that speaks directly into what [this person] is facing?”⁷⁰ The goal of ministry leaders in organizing and interpreting information is to wade through all of the information in order to identify the person’s greatest struggle or need in the present moment. Applying Powlison’s second question, ministry leaders will consider who God says he is for this

⁶⁵ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 93.

⁶⁶ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 51. See also Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 61-62.

⁶⁷ Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process*, 50.

⁶⁸ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 177.

⁶⁹ Mack, “Interpreting Counselee Data,” 152-53.

⁷⁰ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 55.

person in this situation, what God is doing in this person's life, what God has promised in his Word, and what ways this person in his or her present circumstances can believe, trust, hope in, and obey God.⁷¹ Ministry leaders are basically answering the person's unspoken question of "Where is God in this?"⁷² As ministry leaders enter a person's world by gathering information, they should begin "thinking biblically about what is going on and how the Lord speaks to that" person's need.⁷³

Another approach for organizing and interpreting gathered information is to reflect on the gospel and how it applies to the person's need. Emlet suggests that while gleaning information, ministry leaders should begin "thinking of alternative values and actions that are in line with the gospel."⁷⁴ A question ministry leaders can reflect on in this approach is "What aspects of the good news bring hope, perspective, and direction to this person's struggles?"⁷⁵ Ministry leaders will want to intentionally look for opportunities to teach the person in need how the gospel changes his or her circumstances as well as his or her responses to those circumstances. Whitman encourages the use of Jesus's two Great Commandments found in Matthew 22:37-40 for interpreting a person's information and living out the gospel. She writes, "We want to journey with people toward wise understanding of how they can love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength as well as love their neighbors as they love themselves."⁷⁶

Tripp offers an approach with four categories that provide "four simple hooks to organize the information."⁷⁷ Tripp titles these categories "Knowing a Person

⁷¹ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 55.

⁷² Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process*, 55.

⁷³ Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process*, 50.

⁷⁴ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 93.

⁷⁵ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 93.

⁷⁶ Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process*, 56.

⁷⁷ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 189.

Biblically,” and the categories include situation, responses, thoughts, and motives. Each category comes with a corresponding question to help organize the information. For “situation,” Tripp simply asks, “What is/was going on?” For “responses,” he asks, “What does the person do in response to what is going on?” For “thoughts,” he asks, “What does the person think about what is going on?” And finally, for “motives,” Tripp asks, “What does the person want out of what is going on?”⁷⁸ With these four categories, ministry leaders are able to understand the person’s need and to begin interpreting biblical the information gleaned.

One final approach is more thorough in organizing and interpreting a person’s information. Based on the work of Powlison, Jones recommends “The Six-Box Model.”⁷⁹ In the first box, titled “Situational Heat and Dew,” ministry leaders identify what is going on in the person’s life with both hardships and blessings. In the second box, ministry leaders identify the “Bad Fruit” or sinful responses to those circumstances from the first box. In the third box, ministry leaders identify the “Bad Roots” or sinful beliefs or motives behind a person’s response. In the fourth box, ministry leaders identify from the Bible “God’s provisions in Christ that the Holy Spirit uses to enable his people to respond God’s way.”⁸⁰ God’s provisions in the fourth box enable the person to move to the fifth and sixth boxes, which are “Good Roots” and “Good Fruit,” respectively. A single interpretative question helps summarize all six boxes: “How and why is this person responding to this situation (in which God has placed them), and what heart and behavior changes are biblically indicated?”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 188.

⁷⁹ Robert D. Jones, “An Overview of the Change Process,” in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 122-26.

⁸⁰ Jones, “An Overview of the Change Process,” 125.

⁸¹ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step Two,” 184-85.

Understanding a person's need requires that ministry leaders patiently and thoughtfully engage with the hurting individual by asking good questions and listening carefully. But once ministry leaders gather the information, they need to organize and interpret the information with a biblical lens in order to bring true biblical change.

Bringing Christ and His Answers

In the final step of the personal ministry of the Word, ministry leaders follow Jesus's pattern of ministry by bringing Christ and his answers. Matthew records that Jesus was "teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction" (9:35). In Jones's words, "Jesus brought [people] God's answers as he taught the gospel and healed people of their diseases and illness."⁸² Ministry leaders "must minister the Word wisely—with confidence, skill, and compassion—not merely dispense it."⁸³

The top priority for ministry leaders is leading the person to please the Lord (2 Cor 5:9).⁸⁴ Ministry leaders will need to empathize with a sufferer, yet they must never minimize a person's sin or be afraid to identify sin in a person's life.⁸⁵ As ministry leaders speak God's Word in love, they will stress personal responsibility for actions and obedience regardless of one's feelings.⁸⁶ Once ministry leaders select a timely, relevant passage of Scripture and shares that passage with the person in need, they will assign "homework" to encourage change and growth. In this step, it is important for ministry leaders and the person in need to apply God's Word to the problem or struggle.

⁸² Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step One," 159.

⁸³ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step One," 159.

⁸⁴ Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: The Layman's Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1981), 32-33.

⁸⁵ Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 34, 37.

⁸⁶ Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 37.

Selecting a Passage of Scripture

With thousands of verses recorded over thousands of years, selecting the most appropriate passage to meet the need of the moment can be quite a daunting task for ministry leaders. A key to effective personal ministry of the Word is selecting a passage of Scripture that is helpful and timely for the person in need (Prov 25:11). Powlison offers wisdom gleaned from extensive counseling experience: “Connect one bit of Scripture to one bit of life.”⁸⁷ He continues by offering two questions to help ministry leaders determine this “one bit of Scripture”: “What is your current struggle?” and “What about God in Christ connects to this [struggle]?”⁸⁸ Powlison also notes how essential it is for ministry leaders and those engaged in the personal ministry of the Word to use the Bible. Powlison states that using the Bible and selecting a timely passage orients the person to his or her life, brings Christ’s grace and truth, and invites change.⁸⁹ Generalities and lofty discussion about spiritual things will not bring about biblical change.

Men and women who minister the Word need to know their Bible well. Ministry leaders will not always have the luxury of “looking” for a helpful and timely passage of Scripture. Many ministry leaders will find that the personal ministry of the Word is more informal than formal. Conversational ministry often takes place before and after worship or before and after other church gatherings, such as small groups. It is important for leaders to be consistent students of the Word in order to be prepared for personal ministry of the Word opportunities.

In most instances, ministry leaders will have an opportunity to reflect on and consider a helpful and timely passage. In some cases, ministry leaders can inquire about the topic of conversation prior to the meeting and prepare ahead of time by reviewing Scripture related to the topic. Pierre and Reju offer the following guiding questions for

⁸⁷ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 62.

⁸⁸ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 62.

⁸⁹ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 64-65.

selecting a helpful passage of Scripture: “What does this person need to see more clearly about the Lord Jesus and his gospel? What does this person need to understand better about him- or herself? What does this person need to hear about how to relate to others? How can this person’s perspective on life be adjusted by a biblical view of suffering?”⁹⁰

For ministry leaders to speak God’s Word in love, their counsel in the personal ministry of the Word must be “biblical in nature.”⁹¹ Ministry leaders must guard against taking Scripture out of context, and they must correctly understand the passage they are ministering. Wise ministry leaders will not bounce from verse to verse or passage to passage; instead, they will minister a single passage well and help the person in need understand how it applies to his or her life and circumstances.

After selecting a passage, ministry leaders should understand the passage in the original context, understand the passage in the larger context of redemptive history, and then move toward application.⁹² The application of the passage should lead the person in need toward concrete steps that reflect a new understanding of life in Christ and how the gospel impacts the person’s circumstances. Emlet says, “Fruitful application warms our hearts toward God and others. It realigns our thoughts and attitudes according to the contours of God’s truth.”⁹³ In order for ministry leaders to effectively bring Christ and his answers, they must first select a helpful and timely passage that addresses the person and the present need.

Sharing the Passage of Scripture

The three-step method of entering a person’s world, understanding a person’s need, and bringing Christ and his answers culminates with communicating a single

⁹⁰ Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 67.

⁹¹ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 113.

⁹² Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 93.

⁹³ Emlet, *CrossTalk*, 97.

helpful and timely passage of Scripture to the person in need. The personal ministry of the Word is incomplete if ministry leaders fail to bring Christ and his answers to the person in need. Several practical steps ensure that ministry leaders speak God's Word in love.

First, ministry leaders need to graciously and patiently transition the conversation to communicating what God says in his Word about the person and his or her situation, response, and heart. Ministry leaders can use questions such as "May I share something from God's Word that I think speaks to your situation?"⁹⁴ With the person's approval, ministry leaders then invite the person to open the Bible and turn to the selected passage. Having the person in need turn in his or her Bible and read the passage for him- or herself helps the person understand the authority and sufficiency of God's Word. It is God's Word spoken in love that comforts or confronts a person, not ministry leaders.

Next, ministry leaders must ensure that the person understands the passage. Ministry leaders should not assume a depth or breadth of biblical literacy from the person in need. Before reading the passage, ministry leaders may engage with the person about his or her understanding of the passage's immediate context, redemptive context, and meaning. Some passages from the Bible will be more familiar than others to the person in need, but both ministry leaders and the person in need should have the same understanding of the selected passage in order for the Word to be ministered effectively.

Once the person in need reads the passage, ministry leaders should gently probe the person by asking, "How do you think this applies to you and your current circumstances?"⁹⁵ Ministry leaders should affirm thoughtful, biblically accurate applications given by the person as well as explore other applications not given. The

⁹⁴ Robert D. Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Three: Bring Them Christ and His Answers," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 194.

⁹⁵ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Three," 195.

personal ministry of the Word at this step should feel more like a conversation, not a lecture. Ministry leaders must continue in humility and compassion as they speak God’s Word in love. Leaders who enter a person’s world effectively will have earned the opportunity to speak God’s Word in love, whether they are offering correction or comfort. Wise ministry leaders will consider the appropriate tone and decide on the best instruction method for the person’s learning style.⁹⁶

With the selected passage and specific applications from the passage related to the person and his or her current situation, response, and heart, ministry leaders now move toward helping the person determine concrete steps toward life change.⁹⁷ Ministry leaders may ask, “What specific steps or changes will you make as a result of what God says in his Word?” In his letters, the apostle Paul encourages believers to “put off” the sinful habits and practices of the old man and to “put on” the habits and practices of the new man that demonstrate a life of faith (Eph 4:17-32; Col 3:1-17).⁹⁸ Jones provides two helpful questions in this regard: “What does God call me to begin to believe and do that I have not been believing and doing (or believing and doing well)?” and “What does God call me to stop believing and doing that I have been believing and doing?”⁹⁹

One additional opportunity for ministry leaders to bring Christ and his answers is to assign “homework” based on the selected passage or other passages that would also speak God’s Word in love to the person in need. Homework, also described as “growth assignments,” is additional study of God’s Word along with specific ways for a person to implement changes based on what God says in his Word.¹⁰⁰ Homework benefits the

⁹⁶ Wayne A. Mack, “Providing Instruction through Biblical Counseling,” in MacArthur and The Master’s College Faculty, *Counseling*, 172-73.

⁹⁷ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step Three,” 195.

⁹⁸ Mack (*A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 123) provides a helpful chart for “put off” and “put on.”

⁹⁹ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step Three,” 195.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step Three,” 194.

person in need by establishing “a pattern for action and change.”¹⁰¹ Carefully considered homework will decrease the person’s dependence on ministry leaders, reinforce personal responsibility, develop godly habits, and shorten the length of time needed for counseling.¹⁰²

Bringing Christ and his answers is the culmination of the personal ministry of the Word. God’s Word understood with biblical accuracy and applied carefully to a specific person’s life and circumstances under the power of the Holy Spirit will bring help and hope.

Conclusion

Introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word requires an emphasis on the Christ-like steps of entering a person’s world, understanding a person’s need, and bringing Christ and his answers. This three-step process for the personal ministry of the Word provides a beneficial methodology for the personal ministry of the Word that can be easily understood and implemented by ministry leaders.

¹⁰¹ Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 141.

¹⁰² Mack, *A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling*, 142.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Renewal Church of Anderson was planted in 2014 with a core conviction that “Scripture Reveals Truth.” Since its founding, the church has not wavered on its commitment to the public ministry of the Word through expositional preaching. In order to fulfill Renewal Church’s mission of “making disciples of all people for God’s glory,” the public ministry of the Word needed to be complemented with the personal ministry of the Word among its ministry leaders. The purpose of this project was to introduce ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word in order to strengthen the church’s already present public ministry of the Word. Ministry leaders introduced to the personal ministry of the Word and given vision and training could better assist the pastor in providing Christ-centered biblical counsel to church members, attendees, and other Anderson-area residents. Because Renewal Church enjoys a vibrant discipleship ministry to Anderson University students and has a young demographic make-up, introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word would assist leaders in addressing three common struggles among members and attendees: decision-making, anxiety, and anger. The project was implemented in three stages: (1) selecting ministry leaders to participate, (2) preparing and evaluating the personal ministry of the Word curriculum, and (3) teaching the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course” to ministry leaders in six equipping sessions over a six-week period.

Selecting Ministry Leaders

The “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course” primarily focused on ministry leaders serving at Renewal Church who are already intentionally

engaged in discipling or personal ministry to other church members, attendees, or Anderson-area residents. Several ministry leaders who participated in the course were actively ministering to Anderson University students.

A wide range of ministry leaders completed the “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” and agreed to participate in the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course.” Included among the leaders were men and women serving in children’s ministry, student ministry, worship ministry, and college ministry. The leaders also included men’s and women’s ministry leaders, small group leaders, elders’ wives, and elders at Renewal Church. Among the group were two ministry residents and one summer ministry intern. Four of the ministry leaders who participated in the course graduated from Anderson University within the last two years.

Fourteen leaders in total, with ages ranging from 21 to 52 years old, participated in the course. The average age of all ministry leaders participating in the course was 33 years old. All of the ministry leaders had been Christians for more than a decade. The oldest ministry leader was 52 years old and had been following Christ Jesus for forty-two years. The youngest ministry leader was 21 years old and had been following Christ Jesus for twelve years.

The ministry leaders had a variety of occupations. Included in the group were a physical therapist, local businessmen, a university professor, a public-school teacher, a nurse, an accountant, and stay-at-home moms. In all, these ministry leaders represented a core group of leaders at Renewal Church who significantly impact the overall ministry of the church body. Introducing these ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word would encourage a substantial step forward in complementing the public ministry of the Word at Renewal with the personal ministry of the Word. All of the ministry leaders eagerly participated in the “Introduction of the Personal Ministry of the Word Course.”

Preparing and Evaluating the Curriculum

In order to overcome various challenges for implementing the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course,” I taught six equipping sessions over a six-week period to provide the best opportunity for ministry leaders at Renewal Church to consistently participate and complete the course.

The course curriculum was designed to provide a biblical understanding of the personal ministry of Word, a doctrinal foundation for the personal ministry of the Word, and a practical methodology for the personal ministry of the Word, and it focused instruction on applying the personal ministry of the Word methodology to struggles with decision-making, anxiety, and anger. Along with each session’s instruction, ministry leaders were given two weekly homework assignments: reading an article for supplemental instruction to the topic taught in the session and memorizing a passage of Scripture.

Once the curriculum design was complete, a three-person expert panel reviewed the material and provided feedback that was used for revisions. The expert panel included a pastor from Renewal Church, a professor from Anderson University’s Clamp Divinity School, and a biblical counselor serving in a local church setting.

The Renewal Church pastor evaluating the curriculum wrote in his evaluation, “Comprehensive treatment given in each lesson topic but is appropriate for the setting of training church leaders. Faithful biblical analysis and practical application for equipping leaders to minister the Word to others.” The biblical counselor serving in the local church commented, “This course looks to be a very worthwhile endeavor for anyone interested in learning how to better ‘minister the Word’ in the context of the local church and possibly the surrounding community.” The Clamp Divinity School professor provided excellent detailed feedback to strengthen the curriculum overall. A second Renewal Church pastor also reviewed the curriculum. The expert panel completed the “Personal Ministry of the Word Curriculum Evaluation” to assist me in revising the curriculum. The

rubric to evaluate the curriculum included the areas of biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality.¹ Suggestions and comments were taken into account, and revisions to the curriculum were made accordingly.

Teaching the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course”

Ministry leaders who completed the “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” were invited to participate in the six-week “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course” on Monday evenings.² Because of the introductory nature of the course, each session’s length of time was one hour. Ministry leaders did not feel constrained by the time and engaged in further discussion and questions that exceeded the allotted time. Each week, ministry leaders were provided student notes that included an outline of the session and a list of additional resources related to the three common struggles addressed in the last three sessions.³ At the end of each session, ministry leaders were given an article to read and assigned a passage of Scripture to memorize.

Equipping Session 1: Defining the Personal Ministry of the Word

The teaching objective for the first equipping session was that the personal ministry of the Word is essential to fulfill the Great Commission and exercise mutual care in the local church. The primary goal in the session was to help ministry leaders define and understand from Scripture the personal ministry of the Word and its implications in fulfilling the Great Commission and mutual care within the life of the church. The session began with a brainstorming discussion on what comes to mind when ministry

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

³ See appendix 5.

leaders hear the phrase “ministry of the Word.” For most of the leaders, the phrase brought to mind the public ministry of the Word by pastors in the local church.

To answer the question “What is the personal ministry of the Word?” we began by looking at Paul’s ministry in Acts 20:17-27. In Paul’s words to the elders at Ephesus, he emphasized three key truths to help the Ephesian church leaders understand the personal ministry of the Word: he taught in public (public ministry of the Word), he taught from house to house (personal ministry of the Word), and he taught the whole counsel of God (ministry of the Word). In addition to Paul’s ministry, I drew attention to the ministry of Jesus as noted by David Powlison’s observations derived from Mark 4-7.⁴ I also taught selected Proverbs and noted Nathan’s prophetic ministry to David in 2 Samuel 12.⁵ The ministry leaders were taught that the public ministry of the Word is to speak or proclaim God’s Word generally to the church, whereas the personal ministry of the Word is to speak God’s Word specifically to a person in his or her particular need or struggle.⁶

This introductory session also helped ministry leaders see that the personal ministry of the Word is a form of mutual care and intense or concentrated discipleship within the local church. The illustration by Steve Viars of “The Discipleship River” in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* was used to illustrate the idea of intense or concentrated discipleship.⁷ In the personal ministry of the Word, a person comes out of the normal flow of the church’s discipleship ministry in order to focus on a particular need in his or

⁴ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 105.

⁵ In personal correspondence on May 13, 2023, Channing Crisler, Associate Professor of New Testament at Anderson University’s Clump Divinity School, noted that one could use a Christocentric example of Nathan’s ministry to David while still acknowledging the uniqueness of the prophetic office because many New Testament writers and apostles patterned their ministries after Old Testament prophets.

⁶ Kevin Carson and Paul Tautges, “Uniting the Public Ministry of the Word and the Private Ministry of the Word,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 83.

⁷ Steve Viars, “The Madness of Anger,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 3 (2002): 58-60.

her life for a specific period of time. Most of the ministry leaders participating in the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course” were engaged in some type of intentional discipleship.

The personal ministry of the Word can be defined as concentrated or intense discipleship in its most basic form, but the personal ministry of the Word is best understood as biblical counseling. The ministry leaders were taught Robert Jones’s definition of biblical counseling found in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*. Biblical counseling “is the Christlike, caring, person-to-person ministry of God’s Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems to help them know and follow Jesus Christ in heart and behavior amid their struggles.”⁸ I also pointed out key distinctions of the personal ministry of the Word drawn from the Biblical Counseling Coalition’s confessional statement.⁹

To help ministry leaders see the biblical mandate for mutual care, I discussed specific New Testament passages of Scripture that highlight mutual care among all believers in the early church.¹⁰ To assist the leaders in understanding their role within the local church, I taught them two general categories of biblical counseling: a “formal” category that includes trained one-to-one counselors, and an “informal” category that includes the everyday conversational discipleship ministry of all believers. The first session concluded with applications for fulfilling the Great Commission and engaging in mutual care within the life of the church.

⁸ Robert D. Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 20.

⁹ Biblical Counseling Coalition, “Confessional Statement,” last modified July 2018, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement/>.

¹⁰ Key passages included Rom 15:14, 2 Cor 1:3-4, Gal 6:1-2, Col 3:16, and 1 Thess 5:14.

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned Robert Jones’s chapter “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?” in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives* to read and 1 Thessalonians 5:14 to memorize.¹¹

Equipping Session 2: Theology of the Personal Ministry of the Word

The teaching objective for the second equipping session was that the personal ministry of the Word is founded upon key doctrines established in the Bible. While the personal ministry of the Word is founded upon all that God reveals in his Word, the primary goal in this session was to help ministry leaders understand that the personal ministry of the Word is undergirded by three key doctrines: the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of sanctification, and the doctrine of Scripture.

To begin the second session, we discussed the assigned reading and reviewed the assigned Scripture passage for memorization. Robert Jones’s chapter “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?” helped strengthen the previous session’s instruction and provided an opportunity for follow-up questions. In reviewing the assigned Scripture memorization passage from 1 Thessalonians 5:14, I helped the ministry leaders see the various ways that the personal ministry of the Word is used in the life of the church.

After a brief introduction of the need for understanding the doctrines of sin, sanctification, and Scripture in the personal ministry of the Word, I posed a question to the ministry leaders: “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘sin’?” The discussion led into the first doctrine for this equipping session: the doctrine of sin. I defined sin from Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* and Heath Lambert’s *Theology of Biblical Counseling*. Lambert states, “Sin is a disposition of human beings that leads to a failure to conform to the moral law of God. Notice that sin is a *disposition*. Human beings have a nature that is oriented away from God. Sin does not just describe the bad

¹¹ Jones, “What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?,” 9-20.

things human beings do or fail to do. More fundamentally, it describes who we are as wicked people.”¹² I also taught Lambert’s understanding of the effects of sin on humanity.¹³ To help ministry leaders understand the fuller impact of original sin, I explained the three contexts of sin: (1) we live in a fallen world corrupted by sin; (2) we experience pain in life as a result of our own sin; and (3) we experience pain in life as a result of others’ sin.¹⁴ The ministry leaders were taught to correct and admonish sinful disobedience while encouraging faith and obedience to God’s Word. Leaders were also taught to comfort sufferers, encouraging them to respond to struggles and needs with faith.

The second doctrine taught in this session was the doctrine of sanctification. As an introduction, I provided a summary of the sovereign acts of God in saving sinners, included the gospel call, regeneration, justification, and adoption.¹⁵ Wayne Grudem’s definition of sanctification was used: “Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”¹⁶ With the help of Gregg Allison’s *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith*, I taught the three types of sanctification: positional (past), progressive (present), and perfected (future).¹⁷ Ministry leaders were taught that sanctification is a lifelong process in which Christians strive with God’s help to become more like Jesus Christ. Three keys to the sanctifying work of God include the work of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the local church.

¹² Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 217.

¹³ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 217-25.

¹⁴ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 225-28

¹⁵ These summaries were based on Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 746.

¹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746.

¹⁷ Gregg R. Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 266-67.

Regarding the last of the three doctrines, the doctrine of Scripture, I taught that the Bible is inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. In addition, I explained the clarity of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture. The clarity of Scripture means that we are able to understand God's Word even though we are disconnected from the original context in which the Bible was written. Concerning the sufficiency of Scripture, I relied on Grudem's definition: "The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."¹⁸ In addition, I utilized Jeremy Pierre's chapter "Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?" in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*. Pierre states that "Scripture is both necessary and sufficient for giving you a framework for understanding every aspect of your life."¹⁹

I concluded this session by noting that a right understanding of these three doctrines is essential for a fruitful personal ministry of the Word. The doctrine of sin helps ministry leaders understand the struggles of others; the doctrine of sanctification helps ministry leaders understand that change comes only through God's grace-filled transforming work; and the doctrine of Scripture helps ministry leaders understand that the Bible, along with the work of the Holy Spirit, is the instrument to bring help and hope to people in need.

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned Mike Emlet's article "The *Biblical* in Biblical Counseling?" in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to read and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to memorize.²⁰

¹⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

¹⁹ Jeremy Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 94.

²⁰ Mike Emlet, "The *Biblical* in Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 35, no. 1 (2021): 2-6.

Equipping Session 3: Practicing the Personal Ministry of the Word

The teaching objective for the third equipping session was to apply the usual pattern of Jesus's ministry to the everyday practice of the personal ministry of the Word. In this session, the primary goal was to help ministry leaders learn an easy and practical methodology they could remember and apply to their own personal ministry.

To begin the third session, we discussed the assigned reading and reviewed the Scripture passage for memorization. Mike Emlet's article helped strengthen the ministry leaders' understanding of what is "biblical" about biblical counseling by providing nine ways that Scripture is central to the task of biblical counseling. We reviewed 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which was assigned for memorization. Both the article and the Scripture memory reinforced the doctrine of Scripture. Before I began teaching the methodology for the personal ministry of the Word, I noted Robert Jones's five theological truths that undergird the process of change found in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*.²¹

The Christ-like approach used in this session for introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word followed a method drawn from the usual pattern of Jesus's ministry in Matthew 9:35-36 by Robert Jones.²² These Christ-like steps are entering a person's world, understanding a person's need, and bringing Christ and his answers. One of the leaders read the passage aloud, and the entire group discussed the context of the passage, then I began teaching the first step of entering a person's world.

In discussing the first step, I noted how Jesus entered into people's worlds. Jesus himself was God incarnate who entered our world. I noted how in the Gospels, Jesus engaged with a host of people in need, including the grieving, the physically afflicted, and the isolated. I also noted that Jesus engaged with a variety of people,

²¹ Robert D. Jones, "An Overview of the Change Process," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 119-21.

²² Robert D. Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step One: Enter Their World," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 157-60.

including parents, grieving sisters, widows, outcast lepers, and children. I invited the ministry leaders to consider and share with the group which of Jesus's encounters in Gospels with broken and hurting people was most memorable to them? Then, I presented several key concepts related to the personal ministry of the Word. These concepts included ministering to a person not solving a problem, ministering to a person does not require the same experience, ministering to a person means incarnating the love of Christ, and ministering to a person means to restore and rescue. Ministry leaders were taught to earn trust with a hurting person by exhibiting humility and compassion. In addition, leaders were taught that in order for them to bring about Christ-centered change, the essential step to entering a person's world must include bringing hope.

In discussing the second step, I taught ministry leaders to understand the person's need. Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, perfectly discerned the needs of every individual he encountered, but ministry leaders do not possess the same ability. Leaders would need to guard against quick, rash assessments and counsel for a person in need. I taught the leaders the importance of understanding the person's need by understanding the person's situation, the person's response, and the person's heart motive.²³ Wise ministry leaders who follow the usual pattern of Jesus's ministry will seek to understand the person's need by asking good questions, listening carefully, and interpreting the need biblically.

Leaders were taught that good questions include open-ended questions that allow a person to disclose more information rather than closed questions. In addition, ministry leaders were taught to avoid asking too many questions and to watch for non-verbal communication. One of the most important questions that ministry leaders were taught in understanding a person's need is to ask, "Where do you see God in this

²³ Lauren Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Process: Guidance for the Beginning, Middle, and End* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 90. For similar discussion, see Robert D. Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Two: Understand Their Need," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 169-70.

situation?”²⁴ This question helps ministry leaders move the conversation from details about the need and situation to how the person thinks biblically about his or her need. Several Proverbs (18:13, 15, 17) were noted concerning careful listening, and leaders were encouraged not to talk over the person.

Next, ministry leaders were taught that after they ask good questions and listen carefully, they must consider the spiritual condition of the person in need. Leaders can better minister the Word by understanding whether the person is a Christian or non-Christian or whether the person is mature or immature in his or her faith.²⁵ Leaders were taught to listen for key themes and to organize the information gleaned into biblical language, categories, and solutions. Ministry leaders were taught four approaches of determining a biblical solution for the person’s need: (1) considering what God says about this person and his or her need, (2) considering how the gospel changes this person’s view of his or her circumstances and responses, (3) considering the application of the two Great Commandments in this person’s circumstances, and (4) considering the person biblically with questions from Paul David Tripp’s *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*.²⁶

In discussing the third and final step, I taught ministry leaders to bring Christ and his answers to the person in need. Here, I taught them the importance of helping a person in need apply God’s Word to life. I explained to them the importance of selecting a passage of Scripture that is helpful and timely. Lofty discussions and generalities

²⁴ Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step Two,” 175-76.

²⁵ Wayne A. Mack, “Interpreting Counselor Data,” in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, by John MacArthur and The Master’s College Faculty, John MacArthur Pastor’s Library (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 150.

²⁶ For considering what God says about the person and his needs, see David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 55. For how the gospel changes a person’s view of his circumstances, see Michael R. Emlet, *CrossTalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2009), 93. For applying the two Great Commandments, see Whitman, *A Biblical Counseling Approach*, 56. For Paul David Tripp’s questions for seeing a person biblically, see Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hand: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 188-89.

concerning Jesus, the gospel, and the Bible will not help a person in need. Leaders were encouraged to remember David Powlison's words "Connect one bit of Scripture to one bit of life."²⁷ I also taught the ministry leaders four questions posed by Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju in *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* so that they would be better equipped to select a helpful and timely passage of Scripture when ministering to a person in need.²⁸ I cautioned them not to bounce from verse to verse but to minister a single passage of Scripture while keeping in mind the original context and the larger redemptive context before moving toward personal application for the person in need.

I instructed ministry leaders that as they move toward sharing the passage with the person in need, they should simply ask, "How do you think this passage applies to you and your current circumstances?"²⁹ Ministry leaders were taught that as they help a person develop appropriate applications to the passage, they will also need to identify concrete steps of faith and obedience to establish new patterns and habits. Ministry leaders were encouraged to remember the apostle Paul's instructions to believers about "putting off" and "putting on."³⁰ Ministry leaders were taught that in developing concrete steps of faith and obedience, they should help the person in need determine, according to Scripture, what he or she needs to believe and do or needs to stop believing and doing.³¹

In addition to discussing homework, I taught ministry leaders that concrete steps of faith and obedience are not always easy, but God promised in his Word to help

²⁷ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 62.

²⁸ Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 67.

²⁹ Robert D. Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Three: Bring Them Christ and His Answers," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 194-96.

³⁰ See the apostle Paul's instructions to the New Testament churches in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3.

³¹ Jones, "The Counseling Process, Step Three," 196-97.

the Christian in need (see 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 4:14-16). And lastly, I encouraged ministry leaders to include prayer in their personal ministry of the Word, for prayer models for the person in need a dependence upon Christ for the one hurting and the one helping.

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned Tim Lane and Paul David Tripp's article "How Christ Changes Us by His Grace" in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to read and Matthew 9:35-36 to memorize.³²

Equipping Session 4: The Personal Ministry of the Word and Decision-Making

The teaching objective for the fourth equipping session was to introduce ministry leaders to specific passages of the Bible and applications of the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with decision-making. The primary goal for this session, and the two sessions that followed, was to help ministry leaders apply the personal ministry of the Word methodology to common struggles at Renewal Church. This session focused on helping Christians use wisdom in making decisions that honor and please the Lord.

To begin the fourth session, we discussed the assigned reading and reviewed the Scripture memorization. Tim Lane and Paul David Tripp's article "How Christ Changes Us by His Grace" helped ministry leaders understand "The Three Trees" taken from Jeremiah 17:5-10 as a model for Christ-centered change. We reviewed Matthew 9:35-36 as the foundational passage for the personal ministry of the Word methodology introduced in the last session.

In this session, we began by brainstorming decisions that are common among the church body at Renewal Church. With a young demographic, Renewal Church members and attendees experience many decisions in life—such as decisions related to

³² Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, "How Christ Changes Us by His Grace," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 15-21.

vocation, marriage, buying homes, moving, having children, and schooling children. Ministry leaders were taught that even among Christians, unbiblical methods are used to make decisions. In order to help someone struggling with decision-making, ministry leaders need to identify and be familiar with unbiblical methods of decision-making. Three general categories for unbiblical methods of decision-making were taught: (1) a personal sense of God's leading (subjectivity and mysticism), (2) missing God's best (seeking God's "perfect" will), and (3) the influence of others (fear of man). In order for ministry leaders to know how to help someone struggling with decision-making, I taught them four ways to wise decision-making: (1) Scripture over subjective feelings, (2) the sovereign and revealed wills of God, (3) guidance by the Word and the Spirit, and (4) seeking godly, biblical counsel from others.

To apply one passage of Scripture to the struggle of decision-making, we studied Proverbs 2:1-6, a passage highlighted by Kevin DeYoung in his book *Just Do Something*.³³ Ministry leaders were taught three simple steps to wisdom for decision-making from the Proverbs passage: (1) reading and searching Scripture, (2) listening to biblical counsel and wisdom, and (3) praying for God's wisdom in deciding. I provided some practical tools to help ministry leaders who come alongside a person struggling with decision-making, including making a list of godly people to seek counsel from, identifying what God commands and forbids in Scripture, making a list of pros and cons to decisions, and applying the "G-Test."³⁴ Ministry leaders were taught that as a person

³³ Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 88-91.

³⁴ For identifying what God commands and forbids, see the "Three Circles" in James C. Petty, *Step by Step: Divine Guidance for Ordinary Christians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999), 103-31. For a discussion on listing pros and cons for decisions, see Sinclair Ferguson, *Discovering God's Will* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 35-36; Robert D. Jones, "Guidance and Decision-Making," in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 429. For understanding the "G-Test," see Vaughn Roberts, *Authentic Church: True Spirituality in a Culture of Counterfeits* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 131-32.

struggling with decision-making applies the wisdom of God from Scripture, he or she can make a decision in good conscience and trust the Lord with the results of the decision.

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned David Powlison’s article “Think Globally, Act Locally” in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to read and Proverbs 16:9 to memorize.³⁵

Equipping Session 5: The Personal Ministry of the Word and Anxiety

The teaching objective for the fifth equipping session was to introduce ministry leaders to specific passages of the Bible and applications of the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with anxiety. Among Christians, anxiety is one of the most common struggles.

To begin the fifth session, we discussed the assigned reading and reviewed the Scripture memorization. Powlison’s “Think Globally, Act Locally” helped ministry leaders by reminding them to “connect one bit of Scripture with one bit of life.”³⁶ Ministry leaders benefited from reading the case study included in the article. We reviewed the assigned verse—Proverbs 16:9—for memorization and discussed how we could use this single verse in a conversation with someone struggling to make a decision.

In this session, ministry leaders were taught the differences between good anxiety (concern for others or awareness of danger) and bad anxiety (sinful lack of faith in God) evident in Paul’s epistles (2 Cor 11:28; Phil 2:20; 4:6).³⁷ In order to help ministry leaders distinguish between good and bad anxiety, I taught them Rob Green’s four sinful indicators as discussed in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*. Green suggests that sinful

³⁵ David Powlison, “Think Globally, Act Locally,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 1 (2003): 2-10.

³⁶ Powlison, “Think Globally, Act Locally,” 3.

³⁷ For further discussion on the biblical understanding of “concern” in place of “good anxiety,” see Robert D. Jones, *Why Worry? Getting to the Heart of Your Anxiety* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018), 4-5.

anxiety can be characterized as a person (1) focused on the future and not living according to what is true, (2) failing to rely upon God’s grace with prayer and by believing that God is working, (3) refusing to accept that God allows suffering and hardship, and (4) neglecting current God-given responsibilities.³⁸ Leaders were also taught three ways that Green encourages helping the anxious person: (1) encouraging godly fear, (2) supporting biblical concerns, and (3) helping address sinful anxiety.³⁹

While ministry leaders may desire to change a person’s circumstances in order to help eliminate anxiety, they were taught that it is best to identify the ruling desires of the person’s heart that lead to anxiety. Identifying ruling and controlling desires of the heart helps ministry leaders understand the cause of the anxiety—something in the person’s life has become greater than God. Ministry leaders were taught to consider three questions that can help identify the ruling desire of an anxious person’s heart: (1) What is this person trying to control in life but cannot? (2) What is this person valuing most in life? and (3) What is this person most fearful of losing in life? Ministry leaders were taught that most anxiety in a person’s life is related to money and people.⁴⁰ Sinful anxiety replaces trust in God. Ministry leaders were taught that in ministering to a person struggling with anxiety, they should consider other aspects of a person’s life that could contribute to anxiety—aspects such as discontentment, lack of gratitude, and perfectionism. Ultimately, a person who is struggling with sinful anxiety will need to repent and, with God’s help, learn to trust him in anxious circumstances.

To apply one passage of Scripture to the struggle of anxiety, we studied Matthew 6:25-34. One of the leaders read the passage aloud. Together, we discussed the

³⁸ Rob Green, “Worry, Anxiety, and Fear,” in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 275.

³⁹ Green, “Worry, Anxiety, and Fear,” 275.

⁴⁰ Edward T. Welch, *Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2007), 41.

context of the passage situated in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel account of Jesus’s life. I taught the ministry leaders that when considering this passage for someone struggling with anxiety, they should look for the indicatives in the passage first. In other words, what does Jesus say is true about God, and what is true for those who are united to Jesus Christ by faith? Once ministry leaders identified the indicatives, I asked them to identify the imperatives of the passage. Leaders quickly noted Jesus’s instruction not to worry or be anxious. I highlighted for the ministry leaders that the imperatives in Matthew 6:25-34 are founded upon the indicatives. Then, we discussed ways to apply the text to a person struggling with anxiety.

I encouraged the ministry leaders to consider using some tools when helping a person struggling with anxiety, such as making a list of today’s responsibilities, drawing two circles to identify areas to trust God and personal responsibilities, studying the attributes and promises of God, and developing habits of thoughts that please the Lord.⁴¹ Anxious people can often focus on the most tragic outcomes. Ministry leaders were taught to help a person identify thoughts that please the Lord and ways to renew the mind (see Isa 26:3-4; Lam 3:19-24; Rom 12:1-2; Phil 4:8). Ministry leaders found it helpful to use a single passage of Scripture to help a person struggling with anxiety.

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned Ed Welch’s article “Bible Basics for the Fearful and Anxious” in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to read and Matthew 6:33-34 to memorize.⁴²

⁴¹ For an explanation of the use of two circles, see David Powlison, *Overcoming Anxiety: Relief for Worried People* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 17-19. See also the appendix in Tripp’s *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* for the development of concentric circles for “Clarifying Responsibility.”

⁴² Edward T. Welch, “The Bible Basics for the Fearful and Anxious,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 34, no. 3 (2020): 69-79.

Equipping Session 6: The Personal Ministry of the Word and Anger

The teaching objective for the sixth equipping session was to introduce ministry leaders to specific passages of the Bible and applications for the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with anger. Anger among Christians is not uncommon. This session assisted ministry leaders in applying God’s Word to the struggle with anger among men and women at Renewal Church.

To begin this last session, we discussed the assigned reading and reviewed the Scripture memorization. Welch’s “Bible Basics for the Fearful and Anxious” reenforced the instruction in the previous session concerning anxiety. Ministry leaders considered Welch’s two reoccurring themes that help fight fear and anxiety: (1) “the Lord is near” and (2) “attend to today and leave tomorrow to him.”⁴³ We reviewed the assigned Scripture passage—Matthew 6:33-34—for memorization and discussed how we could use this passage in conversation with Christians who are struggling with anxiety.

I began this session by leading the ministry leaders to discuss situations in which they observed anger and the ripple effects of anger in relationships. Together we read three key Scripture passages related to anger (Matt 5:21-24; Jas 1:19-20; Eph 4:26-27). From these three passages, I established a biblical understanding of anger and its effects. I taught the leaders Robert Jones’s definition of anger from his book *Uprooting Anger*: “Anger is our whole-person active response of negative moral judgment against a perceived evil.”⁴⁴

Ministry leaders were taught the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger. Leaders were taught that when ministering to a person struggling with anger, they must understand that most people will consider their anger as righteous anger. I described for the leaders righteous anger as exhibiting the following characteristics:

⁴³ Welch, “The Bible Basics for the Fearful and Anxious,” 70-71.

⁴⁴ Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 14-18.

desire for God's will, seeking to honor God, God-focused action (not self-focused), controlled (not out of control), and acting in love (not sin). I then described unrighteous anger, also known as sinful anger, as exhibiting the following characteristics: demanding one's way, explosive, reactionary, uncontrolled, yelling, cursing, and throwing objects. Leaders were taught that sinful anger is not always seen; unrighteous, sinful anger can also be hidden. Leaders were also taught the various faces of anger from Ed Welch's article "The Madness of Anger" in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Some of these faces included desire for revenge, cursing, jealousy, grumbling, cynicism, and general indifference.⁴⁵ It was helpful for ministry leaders to consider the various dangers of anger we find in Scripture: anger destroys, gives the devil opportunity, and is contagious, to name a few (see Prov 22:24-25; Matt 5:2; Eph 4:26-27).

To apply Scripture to the struggle of anger, we studied two passages in the book of James. Leaders read and focused on James 1:19-20 and 4:1-3. While not connected, these two passages found in the same book of the Bible helped ministry leaders address the struggle of anger. Leaders can use the two passages together, or they can use them separately in conversations. James 1:19-20 provides can serve as a foundational passage that ministry leaders can use to teach the two types of anger found in the Bible. From this passage, ministry leaders can help the person struggling with anger understand how his or her anger may be unrighteous, sinful anger. James 1:19-20 also provides concrete steps toward faith and obedience when struggling with anger. James encourages his readers to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. The ministry leaders were taught to discuss with the person struggling with anger specific applications to his or her life from James 1:19-20.

⁴⁵ Edward T. Welch, "The Madness of Anger," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 4 (2006): 29-31.

Concerning James 4:1-3, ministry leaders were taught to identify the heart motive behind the anger. Regarding this passage, Robert Jones says that James roots anger in the desires of the heart: “James’s point is simple yet profound: you cannot get what you want so you’re angry Desire lies at the base of every angry feeling, word, and action.”⁴⁶ I taught ministry leaders Jones’s four-step process to change sinful anger found in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*. I encouraged ministry leaders to think of them as the “Four R’s” that help with anger: (1) recognizing the source of anger, (2) repenting both in heart and behavior, (3) refocusing on God’s grace and promises in Christ Jesus, and (4) replacing sinful anger with Christ-like attitudes and actions.⁴⁷

In addition to studying the two passages from James, ministry leaders were taught to memorize other key passages and to help the person struggling with anger to develop better communication based on Ephesians 4:25-32.⁴⁸ Ministry leaders were also taught to use the Proverbs to minister to a person struggling with anger.⁴⁹

For homework, ministry leaders were assigned Ed Welch’s article “The Madness of Anger” in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to read and Ephesians 4:32 to memorize.⁵⁰

Conclusion

“The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” introduced ministry leaders at Renewal Church of Anderson to the basic biblical counseling concepts for the personal ministry of the Word. These six equipping sessions helped ministry leaders understand

⁴⁶ Robert D. Jones, “Anger, Resentment, and Bitterness,” Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 264-65.

⁴⁷ Jones, “Anger, Resentment, and Bitterness,” 267.

⁴⁸ Poor communication often causes conflict and results in anger.

⁴⁹ Key verses from the book of Proverbs for this discussion on anger included Prov 14:17, 29; 15:1, 18; 16:32; 19:11; 22:24-25; 29:8, 22.

⁵⁰ Welch, “The Madness of Anger,” 26-35.

the personal ministry of the Word and apply a methodology to three common struggles within the church body. All of the ministry leaders expressed how helpful the course was for their personal ministry, and all of the leaders expressed a desire for further training related to biblical counseling.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word at Renewal Church strengthened the overall ministry of the Word by complementing the church's commitment to the public ministry of the Word and by equipping ministry leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and to exercise mutual care for the church body. In addition, the project expanded the gospel influence of a healthy church body in the community and on the local university campus. While ministry leaders are most familiar with secular counseling practices and concepts, "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course" introduced leaders to a Christ-centered biblical counseling approach and focused application on common struggles in the church and in the community. At Renewal Church, ministry leaders better understand the personal ministry of the Word and how to practice the personal ministry of the Word.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to introduce ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word at Renewal Church in Anderson, South Carolina. The project originated from a desire to see Renewal Church's public ministry of the Word complemented by a robust and faithful personal ministry of the Word among ministry leaders. A robust and faithful culture of the personal ministry of the Word would contribute to Renewal Church's fulfilling its mission of "making disciples of all people for God's glory." In addition, it would promote a culture of mutual care in the local church taught in the New Testament. Renewal Church enjoys a healthy culture of discipleship that includes ministry to university students. Introducing ministry leaders to

the personal ministry of the Word would expand the gospel influence of the church as leaders put into practice the personal ministry of the Word.

I fulfilled the purpose of this project with a six-week introductory course for ministry leaders at Renewal Church titled “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course.” The six-week course introduced a biblical understanding of the personal ministry of Word, a doctrinal foundation for the personal ministry of the Word, and a practical methodology for the personal ministry of the Word based on Matthew 9:35-36, and it focused instruction on applying the personal ministry of the Word methodology to the common struggles of decision-making, anxiety, and anger. Though introductory in nature, the course improved each leader’s personal ministry at Renewal Church and equipped leaders to assist the Lead Pastor with pastoral care.

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

The project included three goals that were used to determine its effectiveness. The first goal was to assess and analyze the current knowledge, understanding, and application of the personal ministry of the Word by ministry leaders at Renewal Church. The goal would be accomplished when ten ministry leaders completed the “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” (PMWI) and committed to participating in the six-week introductory course. A total of fourteen ministry leaders completed the PMWI. The inventory asked ministry leaders what ways they were currently serving at Renewal Church. Among the fourteen ministry leaders, nearly every ministry of the church was represented. Men and women serving in children’s ministry, student ministry, worship ministry, college ministry, men’s and women’s ministry, and small group ministry participated. Also participating in the course were three elders’ wives and three elders at Renewal Church. Two ministry residents and one summer ministry intern participated as well.

Ministry leaders were asked, “How often do church members come to you for help with spiritual (non-physical) problems, struggles, or decisions?” Leaders were given four possible responses to choose from: daily, weekly, monthly, and seldom. No ministry leaders responded “daily,” but three leaders responded “weekly.” Only two responded “seldom.” Of the fourteen ministry leaders, nine leaders responded that church members seek them out for help with spiritual problems, struggles, and decisions on a “monthly” basis. Sixty-three percent of the ministry leaders who participated in “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” are engaged monthly in counseling others. The group of ministry leaders participating in the course represented an influential group of leaders who impact the lives of many Christians at Renewal Church and in the Anderson community.

On the “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” that leaders completed, I posed eighteen survey items with a six-point Likert scale.¹ On the item “I know how to apply the Bible to problems and struggles of other Christians,” ten of the fourteen leaders, which represents 71 percent of all ministry leaders participating, answered “disagree,” “disagree somewhat,” and “agree somewhat.” Overall, ministry leaders exhibited a low level of confidence in using the Scriptures to help a fellow Christian with a problem or struggle. Similarly, 57 percent of ministry leaders displayed a low level of confidence in “using the Bible to help a fellow Christian struggling to make a decision.” When asked if they could “confidently” help a fellow Christian struggling with anxiety, only half of the ministry leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they could confidently help a fellow Christian. And only half of the leaders were confident to use the Bible to help a fellow Christian struggling with anger.

The second goal was to develop a six-session introductory curriculum on the personal ministry of the Word for Renewal Church’s ministry leaders. The curriculum

¹ See appendix 2.

introduced ministry leaders to a biblical understanding of the personal ministry of Word, a doctrinal foundation for the personal ministry of the Word, and a practical methodology for the personal ministry of the Word, and it focused instruction on applying the personal ministry of the Word methodology to the common struggles of decision-making, anxiety, and anger. A three-person expert panel reviewed the curriculum using the “Personal Ministry of the Word Curriculum Evaluation.”² The rubric to evaluate the curriculum included the areas of biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality. Ninety percent of all of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the “Sufficient” level by the expert panel.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge and practice of the personal ministry of the Word among Renewal Church’s ministry leaders by implementing a six-session introductory course for the personal ministry of the Word curriculum. I taught the curriculum in “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” over six consecutive weeks in six one-hour-long sessions. The sessions were held on Monday evenings at 6:30 pm. I administered the PMWI before and after the course to measure the knowledge and practice of the ministry leaders in order to determine whether the course produced an increase in knowledge and practice of the personal ministry of the Word among participants. The t-test was selected for this analysis as it compared the means of the scores from the PMWI administered before and after the course. “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” made a positive statistical difference, resulting in an increase in knowledge and confidence to practice the personal ministry of the Word among Renewal Church’s ministry leaders ($t_{(17)} = -5.280, p < 0.0001$).³

On the PMWI that leaders completed after the course, for the item “I know how to apply the Bible to problems and struggles of other Christians,” 87 percent of ministry leaders agreed or strongly agreed compared to 28 percent of the leaders who

² See appendix 1.

³ See appendix 3.

completed the PMWI before the course. After the course, 92 percent of ministry leaders indicated “I can confidently use the Bible to help a fellow Christian struggling...” with making a decision, anxiety, and anger compared to 68 percent prior to the course. The course introduced ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word and gave them confidence to offer care and counsel to church members and attendees at Renewal Church.

The PMWI administered after the course included several short-answer questions to provide feedback were a similar course taught in the future at Renewal Church or other likeminded churches. One participant noted that the most helpful aspect of the course was the “concise methodology that can be implemented by any Christian regardless of their level of training.” Several leaders noted their appreciation for the various “tools” provided when applying the Word to common struggles. One leader stated, “Overall, I feel after each session you could walk away with tools you could implement that day at the next available opportunity.” Other leaders said the course was “very engaging and very practical.” Leaders mentioned how Scripture memory verses helped with applying specific passages of the Bible. One of the elders participating said, “The course was excellent. I look forward to using the principles in future conversations in and outside the church context. I look forward to how those involved will impact our church.” When asked if they would be interested in further training and equipping for biblical counseling, all of the ministry leaders responded, “Yes.”

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of the project was the commitment to the ministry of the Word. “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” introduced ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word, which complemented the already existing commitment to the public ministry of the Word at Renewal Church. Now that ministry leaders have been introduced to the personal ministry of the Word, the church can better fulfill the Great

Commission and exercise mutual care. In addition, now that ministry leaders have been introduced to the personal ministry of the Word, Renewal Church expands its ministry of the Word beyond the Sunday worship gathering where the church experiences the public ministry of the Word. The ministry leaders' receptivity to the introductory course and their receptivity to strengthening their personal ministries and their ongoing intentional discipleship ministries demonstrates their commitment to the doctrine of Scripture and their desire help people in need apply God's Word to life's struggles and challenges. The project's commitment to the ministry of the Word in the local church was a strength.

The second strength of the project was the strategic six-week design of the course. While the course content is limited by six one-hour sessions, the design of "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course" provides an excellent structure and curriculum for an equipping class or multiple seminars for the entire church at a later date. Because "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course" was limited to six weeks, ministry leaders were willing to commit to the short timeframe. Likewise, for Renewal Church's young membership demographic, the short six-week course will be appealing to other church members or attendees who desire to grow in their understanding of biblical counseling. Also, the six-week course fits well in a fall or spring semester timeframe for college students. The course can also serve as a template for other biblical counseling training courses at Renewal Church in the future. In addition, the course design included relevant homework assignments that enhanced the lecture and discussion portions.

The third strength of the project was the timely solution to the need for ministry leaders to assist the Lead Pastor with pastoral care in a growing church body. Renewal Church is a nine-year-old church plant with a single full-time paid pastor. While the church's unpaid pastors assist with pastoral care, the Lead Pastor and the unpaid pastors are not able to handle the multitude of pastoral care questions and concerns among a young and growing church body. "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course" introduced ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word and equipped them with

the basics of biblical counseling. The course focused on three common struggles in the life of the church and common struggles among college students who attend Renewal Church. Having ministry leaders with an understanding of the personal ministry of the Word and the basic skills to apply the Bible in order to bring Christ and his answers provided a timely solution to the need for additional ministry leaders to help the Lead Pastor with pastoral care.

The fourth strength of the project was introducing female ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word and strengthening their existing ministry to other women at Renewal Church. Over half of the ministry leaders participating in “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” were female ministry leaders at Renewal Church. Introducing spiritually mature female ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word equipped them to assist the pastor, elders, and church staff with a Christ-centered biblical counseling approach for women at Renewal, including many young female college students. Now, the female ministry leaders at Renewal are better equipped to help address specific struggles among female church members and attendees. While “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” did not address specific female struggles, the Christ-centered methodology taught from Matthew 9:35-36 provided a methodology to employ with any struggle or need.

The fifth strength of the project was the increase in confidence by ministry leaders at Renewal Church in the sufficiency of the Word to minister and care for fellow Christians. Many Christians will express a commitment to the doctrine of Scripture but will waver on its sufficiency when they experience difficulty in addressing common struggles. With the best intentions, some ministry leaders may resort to counseling others with their own life experiences. “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course” not only introduced ministry leaders to the basics of biblical counseling but also strengthened their confidence in the sufficiency of the Word. When ministry leaders gain a biblical understanding of the personal ministry of the Word and when they are personally able to

apply God's Word to struggles and needs of fellow Christians, their confidence in the sufficiency of God's Word grows. Among the leaders at Renewal Church who participated in "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course," the post-course inventory indicated an increase in their confidence to help others with God's Word.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project was successful in meeting the goals established at its beginning, but the project had some weaknesses. The first weakness was the limited number of ministry leaders available to participate in "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course." While the goal of the project was a minimum of ten ministry leaders participating, many more leaders would have benefited from the course. Because this course was taught on a weeknight without childcare, many of the young leaders in our church family were prohibited from participating. Had the course been taught on Sunday mornings prior to worship with childcare, more leaders could have participated. Also, were the course open to the entire church body and taught prior to worship on Sunday mornings, other church members could have participated and benefited from the course.

The second weakness was the overly ambitious content created for one-hour equipping sessions. The designed six-week timeframe corresponded well to the past and present culture of ongoing discipleship ministry at Renewal Church, but in the one-hour sessions, discussion and interaction was limited by the lecture content. Homework assignments supplemented each session's instruction, but participants needed more time to apply the Christ-centered methodology and to consider applying specific Scripture passages to the common struggles in the curriculum. Parts of the curriculum need modifying in order to provide more time for participants to discuss and practice what they learn in each session. Some portions of the curriculum will need to be edited to eliminate excess or repeated material while retaining the necessary content for a strong biblical understanding of the personal ministry of the Word.

The third weakness was the absence of specific case studies for individual participants to practice with outside of the weekly sessions. Ministry leaders indicated that having specific case studies to practice with would help develop their personal ministry of the Word skills. The group discussed general case studies together in the session, but participants desired a specific case study for practice on their own outside of the session. One leader suggested assigning a practice case study and then discussing it together at the beginning of the next session. With the three common struggles addressed in “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course,” an easy modification for the course would be to create three simple case studies for practicing the personal ministry of the Word.

What I Would Do Differently

After reflecting on the project and the feedback from the ministry leaders who participated in “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course,” I would make a few adjustments to strengthen the project. First, I would move the course to Sunday mornings during Renewal Church’s traditional equipping time prior to worship. Teaching the course during the equipping time would require additional preparation by securing childcare workers and delegating other responsibilities, but offering the course during the equipping time would greatly benefit the ministry of the Word at Renewal Church. In addition to moving the course to Sunday mornings, I would open the course up to all members and attendees. If the course were opened to all members and attendees, those participating would gain a biblical understanding of the personal ministry of the Word, which in turn would foster greater opportunities to fulfill the Great Commission and to exercise mutual care within the church body.

Second, I would modify the curriculum content in order to allow time for participants to engage in more discussion concerning the material. Because many of Renewal Church’s members are theologically astute, some aspects of “The Personal

Ministry of the Word Course” curriculum could be modified to summarize already existing convictions and practices. In addition, modifying the material would include creating simple case studies for practice outside of each session to discuss in the next session with the whole group. I believe these modifications to the curriculum would strengthen the course for all of the participants.

Finally, I would create a course booklet for student notes and the practice case studies for “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course.” Each week, ministry leaders were given student notes that included an outline of the lecture for the session. I believe students would benefit from having all the materials needed for the course in a booklet format. The booklet would provide ministry leaders with a tool to use and refer to for future ministry opportunities. In addition, I believe creating PowerPoint slides to help participants follow along during the session would benefit the use of the course booklet.

Theological Reflections

As I assess the project at this final stage, I find that my commitment to the personal ministry of the Word has grown. Along with the ministry leaders at Renewal Church, I have gained a greater confidence in the sufficiency of God’s Word to bring Christ and his answers to bear on life’s struggles. Teaching the personal ministry of the Word to ministry leaders at Renewal Church provided an opportunity for me to grow in my knowledge of the Scriptures and the practice of the personal ministry of the Word. As I have grown in my understanding of the sanctifying work of God through his Word, I have a greater commitment to the sufficiency of God’s Word. I often recall Wayne Grudem’s words that Scripture “now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”⁴ In like manner, I often rejoice in the words of the psalmist in Psalm 19:7-11 and the words of the apostle

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 127.

Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Not only have I gained a greater confidence in the sufficiency of God’s Word, but I have also grown in my understanding of the necessity of God’s Word for the Christian to continue to mature to the “fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Kevin Carson’s words linger in my heart: “The Bible is necessary because God calls us to glorify Him by becoming like Christ. It is in the pages of Scripture where we learn who He is, why we need Him, and how to be like Him. When learning about Christ, we learn who we are, what we could be, and what we will be.”⁵

Second, I find in myself not only a greater commitment to the personal ministry of the Word as a result of this project but also an increased love for and awe of Jesus and my union with him by faith. True biblical change comes only through the transforming work of Christ in us. God’s transforming work is an incredible grace to redeemed sinners. It is a mistake for pastors and biblical counselors to credit the sanctifying work of God in biblical counseling to carefully chosen passages of Scripture and well-crafted applications. Certainly, the pastor or biblical counselor ministers the Word under the enabling power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, but it is Christ Jesus who lives in us and transforms us into his likeness for the glory of God (1 Cor 3:18; Gal 2:20). The credit is not mine for any fruit derived from the personal ministry of the Word; instead, the credit for transformation in the life of the believer solely belongs to Christ Jesus (Heb 7:24-25). Robert Jones reminds me, “True biblical counseling is fixed on Jesus and propelled by Jesus.”⁶ As much as systems and methods are helpful, even for those who use the Bible, we must remember that it is Christ Jesus who transforms and changes. Paul David Tripp says, “We must not offer people a *system* of redemption, a set of insights and principles. We offer people a *Redeemer*. In his power, we find the hope

⁵ Kevin Carson, “The Richness and Relevance of God’s Word,” in *Scripture and Counseling: God’s Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 34.

⁶ Robert Jones, “The Christ-Centeredness of Biblical Counseling,” in Kellemen and Forney, *Scripture and Counseling*, 110.

and help we need to defeat the most powerful enemies. Hope rests in the grace of the Redeemer, the only real means of lasting change.”⁷ It is my prayer that in my own life, I will always find Jesus as my all-satisfying and greatest treasure, and I will look to him in my own struggles and needs. For those whom I seek to minister the Word, may they find me holding out Jesus as their greatest helper in life’s struggles. Jones’s prayer is worth repeating here: “May God help each of us to use our Bibles and our own deepening love for our Savior to radiate Christ and to bring Him skillfully and lovingly to those we counsel.”⁸ Amen.

Lastly, God’s transforming work takes place most often in the context of the local church. Though the project’s focus was primarily on God’s Word and the ministry of the Word, I would be remiss not to mention the incredible gift of the local church to Christians who are struggling with sin and suffering in our broken world. In a world where hurts and hardships abound because of sin’s devastating effects, in the local church not only do we find men and women who compassionately minister the Word, but among God’s people we also find the living God himself. And “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). The Holy Spirit is present in the believer, and the Lord is omnipresent throughout his whole creation, but the Lord promises his presence to those who gather in his name (Matt 18:20). The local church is where we are reminded of the Almighty God who is our God by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. The local church is God’s “place” for those in need both because he is present when the church is gathered and because his people minister his Word. Tripp says, “If you followed the Lord for a thousand years, you would still need the ministry of the body of Christ as much as you did the day you first believed.”⁹ The local church is needed now more than ever for

⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 8.

⁸ Jones, “The Christ-Centeredness of Biblical Counseling,” 125.

⁹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, xi.

the public and personal ministries of the Word. In and through the church, the personal ministry of the Word fulfills the Great Commission and exercises mutual care within the body (Matt 28:19-20; Eph 4:15). The local church is a gift of grace to all who eagerly wait for that Day.

Personal Reflections

As I reach the conclusion of this project and my doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I am filled with gratitude to the Lord for this season of learning and growing. My own ability to faithfully minister God's Word has grown beyond what I anticipated. In God's providence, my doctoral studies came after twenty-five years of ministry, and for this I am thankful—because of the contributions of so many men and women in the biblical counseling movement in the years prior. I have reaped a portion of the harvest of their faithful labors in sowing the seeds of Christ-centered biblical counseling over the last several decades. As a result of preparing and teaching “The Personal Ministry of the Word Course,” I have sensed a greater calling to biblical counseling beyond Renewal Church and to equipping the next generation of ministry leaders for the personal ministry of the Word.

The focus of this project came from a desire to strengthen the ministry of the Word at Renewal Church, but in the shadows were a few secondary aspirations. Under the wisdom of faithful biblical counseling scholars, I desired to solidify my own understanding and practice of the personal ministry of the Word. The choice to study under these respected scholars and practitioners at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was driven by my desire to serve other likeminded pastors and churches, particularly those in The Pillar Network. As the next generation of pastors shepherd, plant, and revitalize churches, some pastors will need care and counsel themselves, and others will need help to care for the flocks entrusted to them. I want to be available to serve God's kingdom beyond Renewal if so needed and called by God to do so.

In addition, I experienced the grace-filled sanctifying work of God in my life through the local church as a college student at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. Since that time, the Lord has given me a love for college and university students. In addition, the Lord has allowed my wife and me to disciple and minister to college students for nearly all of our twenty-five years of ministry. This project has strengthened our ministry to students as well as Renewal's ministry to students. I hope the Lord will grant me and our church family many more opportunities to minister to and encourage students to continue in faith in college and beyond.

Lastly, I often imagine overhearing Paul say to the Ephesian elders, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). I pray that when my ministry ends, I can declare words similar to Paul's. With God's grace, may I confidently declare that I "testified to the gospel of the grace of God" and that I "did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:24-26). All that Paul testified to and declared centered on the resurrected and living Jesus. What a privilege to spend this season studying God's Word and to bring Christ and his answers to others.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to introduce ministry leaders at Renewal Church to the personal ministry of the Word. The project was implemented in the spring of 2023 at Renewal Church of Anderson, South Carolina. The purpose and goals of this project as set forth from the beginning were measured and determined as successfully achieved. This project was the culmination of three years of study, planning, and preparation. The project benefited ministry leaders of Renewal Church who participated in "The Personal Ministry of the Word Course."

Furthermore, this project has strengthened my public and personal ministries of the Word as a pastor and biblical counselor. After discussing the project with other

pastors, several expressed interest in introducing their ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word. It is my prayer that God uses this season of study in my life and this project to bring glory to himself for many years to come. I am eager to see the future fruit of this project. While this project ends, I am keenly aware of its shortcomings and mine. I trust that my beliefs and practices in biblical counseling will continue to mature with God's help. In words adapted from an old Anglican prayer, I believe I can humbly ask, "Lord, what I know not, teach me"—for your glory. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel consisting of one elder of Renewal Church, one faculty member of Anderson University's Clapp Divinity School, and one biblical counselor serving in a local church context. This panel evaluated the curriculum to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Personal Ministry of the Word Curriculum Evaluation					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 2

PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD INVENTORY

The following instrument is the “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory” (PMWI). Included in the inventory are general questions followed by an eighteen-question survey with a six-point Likert scale.¹ The instrument’s purpose is to assess each ministry leader’s overall awareness and confidence to help a fellow Christian with the personal ministry of the Word.

¹ I created this inventory based on Roger Edward Bayramian, “Introducing Leaders to Biblical Counseling at Mount Ararat Bible Church in Northridge, California” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 89-90, and Thomas Kenji Sugimura, “Equipping Members of the New Life Church in Woodland Hills, California to Counsel Biblically” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 28-32.

PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

“Making disciples of all people for God’s glory” is the mission of Renewal Church of Anderson. Introducing ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word is essential to fulfilling the church’s mission.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to collect data concerning your understanding of the personal ministry of the Word as a ministry leader at Renewal Church. This research is being conducted by Stephen Watson for the purpose of a doctoral ministry project. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions before and after the course titled “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word.” Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name be identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this “Personal Ministry of the Word Inventory,” you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Section 1: Demographic Information

Name: _____ **Email address:** _____

Date: _____ **Gender** _____ **Age** _____

Section 2: General Questions

1. How long have you been a believer? _____
2. How are you currently serving at Renewal Church? _____
3. How often do church members come to you for help with spiritual (non-physical) problems, struggles, or decisions?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Seldom

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

- SD = strongly disagree
- D = disagree
- DS = disagree somewhat
- AS = agree somewhat
- A = agree
- SA = strongly agree

1. Only pastors and professional counselors should care for and counsel Christians with life problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2. Only Christians with big life problems need counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3. All Christians counsel other Christians.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4. Counseling is a form of discipleship that fulfills the Great Commission.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5. It is my responsibility to care for and counsel my brothers and sisters in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I feel equipped to counsel other Christians from the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. I know how to apply the Bible to problems and struggles of others Christians.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. The primary source of sin and suffering in life is other people.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. Sin is the ultimate source of struggles and problems in life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. Suffering is never God's plan for Christians.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. The heart is the source of the Christian's response to life's struggles and problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

12. After becoming a Christian, no one struggles with sin or suffering.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. The Bible has the answers to help Christians with sin and suffering.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. It is important for the local church to provide care and counseling to those suffering and in sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I want to grow in my ability to care for and counsel others with the Bible in our church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I can confidently help a fellow Christian struggling to make a decision.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I can confidently help a fellow Christian struggling with anxiety.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I can confidently help a fellow Christian struggling with anger.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 3

T-TEST RESULTS FOR PERSONAL MINISTRY
OF THE WORD INVENTORY

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test Total</i>
Mean	69.05555556	77.88888889
Variance	98.40849673	31.63398693
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.713867737	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t stat	-5.279850782	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00003064	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00006128	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

APPENDIX 4

PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD
INVENTORY RESULTS¹

Survey Questions	Pre-Course Survey	Post-Course Survey
1	74	84
2	80	83
3	60	75
4	75	81
5	73	81
6	62	63
7	56	73
8	69	75
9	78	81
10	73	78
11	57	68
12	84	84
13	80	82
14	82	82
15	68	81
16	56	76
17	60	77
18	56	78

¹ Questions 1, 2, 8, 10, and 12 were inverted in both the pre-course survey and the post-course survey for calculating the positive statistical difference in the t-test. Results are found in appendix 3.

APPENDIX 5

EQUIPPING SESSIONS STUDENT NOTES

The following student notes were provided to each participant in the “Introduction to the Personal Ministry of the Word Course” at Renewal Church of Anderson, South Carolina.

EQUIPPING SESSION ONE: DEFINING THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Teaching Objective: The personal ministry of the Word is essential to fulfill the Great Commission and exercise mutual care in the local church.

I. Defining the “Personal Ministry of the Word” (1 Thess 5:14, Rom 15:14)

1. Ministry of the Word in the Bible
2. Characteristics and description of the personal ministry of the Word
3. Definition of the personal ministry of the Word

II. Distinctions of the Personal Ministry of the Word

III. Who should counsel in the local church?

IV. Types of Personal Ministry of the Word

1. Formal (one-to-one, trained)
2. Informal (everyday, conversational, discipleship)

V. Personal Ministry of the Word fulfills the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20)

VI. Personal Ministry of the Word Exercises Mutual Care (Eph 4:11-16, Col 3:12-16)

Homework assignment: Read “What is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?” by Robert Jones and memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

EQUIPPING SESSION TWO: THEOLOGY OF THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Teaching Objective: The personal ministry of the Word is founded upon key doctrines established in the Bible.

I. Doctrine of Sin (Gen 6:5, Rom 3:23, Rom 8:12-39)

1. Defining Sin
2. Where sin come from? (Gen 1:31, Gen 3, Rom 5:12-14)
3. What are the effects of sin on humanity?
4. Sin in our lives. (Gen 2 and 3, Rom 8:22-27, Titus 3:3, Gal 6:6-10)

II. Doctrine of Sanctification (John 17:17, Rom 6:1-14, 2 Cor 3:18)

1. Defining sanctification
2. Observations of sanctification
3. Three key aspects of God's sanctifying work

III. Doctrine of Scripture (Ps 19:7-14, 2 Tim 3:14-17)

1. Inspiration of Scripture
2. Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture
3. Authority of Scripture
4. Clarity of Scripture
5. Sufficiency of Scripture

Homework Assignments: Read “The *Biblical* in Biblical Counseling” by Mike Emlet and memorize 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

EQUIPPING SESSION THREE: PRACTICING THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Teaching Objective: Applying the usual pattern of Jesus’s ministry to everyday practice of the personal ministry of the Word.

The Method of Jesus’s Usual Pattern of Ministry (Matt 9:35-36)

Step 1: Entering a Person’s World (Matt 9:35)

“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages...”

1. Ministering to a Person Not a Problem
2. Incarnational Ministry of Presence
3. Entering with Humility and Compassion
4. Entering with Hope

Step 2: Understanding a Person’s Need (Matt 9:36)

“...saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

1. Understanding by Listening
2. Understanding by Asking (Prov 20:5)
3. Organizing and Interpreting (Ps 119:2, 1 Cor 10:31, 2 Cor 5:9)

Step 3: Bringing Christ and His Answers (Matt 9:35)

“...teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.”

1. How to Bring Christ and His Answers
 - a. Selecting Scripture to minister
 - b. Sharing a passage of Scripture
2. Starting Change with homework
3. Praying in the personal ministry of the Word

Homework assignment: Read “How Christ Changes Us by His Grace” by Tim Lane and Paul David Tripp and memorize Matthew 9:35-36.

EQUIPPING SESSION FOUR

THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND DECISION-MAKING

Teaching Objective: Introducing ministry leaders to specific passage of the Bible and applications of the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with decision-making.

I. Unbiblical Methods of Decision-making

1. Personal sense of God's leading (subjectivity and mysticism)
2. Missing God's best ("God's perfect will")
3. Advice and influence of others (fear of man)

II. Ways to Wisdom in Decision-making

1. Scripture over Subjective Feelings (Ps 37:3, 2 Tim 3:16-17, Ps 119:105)
2. Sovereign and Revealed Wills of God (Deut 29:29, Eph 1:11, Prov 16:9)
3. Guided by the Word and the Spirit (Prov 12:12, 15:22; John 14:16)
4. Seeking Godly, Biblical Counsel (Prov 12:15, 15:22)

III. Bringing Christ and His Answers: Proverbs 2:1-6

IV. Other Passages to Consider for Decision-Making

V. Tools to Help with Decision-making

Homework assignment: Read "Think Globally, Act Locally" by David Powlison and memorize Proverbs 16:9.

Resources:

1. *Just Do Something* by Kevin DeYoung
2. *Discovering God's Will* by Sinclair Ferguson
3. *Step by Step* by James C. Petty

EQUIPPING SESSION FIVE

THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND ANXIETY

Teaching Objective: Introducing ministry leaders to specific passage of the Bible and applications of the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with anxiety.

I. Defining anxiety

II. Identifying ruling desires of the heart (Prov 4:23, Mark 7:20-23, Luke 6:43-45)

III. Repentance for Anxiety

IV. Bringing Christ and His Answers: Matthew 6:25-34

1. Indicatives

2. Imperatives

3. Hope

V. Other Passages to Consider for Anxiety

VI. Tools to Help with Anxiety

Homework assignment: Read the “Bible Basics for the Fearful and Anxious” by Ed Welch and memorize Matthew 6:33-34.

Resources:

1. *Running Scared* by Ed Welch
2. *Overcoming Anxiety* by David Powlison
3. *Anxiety and Panic Attacks* by Jocelyn Wallace
4. *Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace* (30 Day Devotional) by Paul Tautges
5. *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety* by Elyse Fitzpatrick
6. *The End of Anxiety* by Josh Weidman

EQUIPPING SESSION SIX: THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND ANGER

Teaching Objective: Introducing ministry leaders to specific passage of the Bible and applications of the personal ministry of the Word to help Christians struggling with anxiety.

I. Defining anger (Matt 5:21-24, James 1:19-20, Eph 4:26-27)

1. Righteous Anger

2. Unrighteous Anger

II. Unbiblical Causes for Anger

III. What Does Anger Look Like?

IV. Effects of anger

V. Bringing Christ and His Answers: James 1:19-20; 4:1-3

1. James 1:19-20

2. James 4:1-3

VII. The Heart of Anger (Prov 4:23, Mark 7:20-23, Luke 6:43-45)

VIII. Tools to Help with Anger

Homework assignments: Read “The Madness of Anger” by Ed Welch and memorize Ephesians 4:32.

Resources:

1. *Uprooting Anger* by Robert Jones
2. *Pursuing Peace* by Robert Jones
3. *Keeping Your Cool (Teenagers)* by Lou Priolo
4. *How Do I Stop Losing it with My Kids?* By William P. Smith
5. *Angry Children* by Michael Emlet

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCING MINISTRY LEADERS TO THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT RENEWAL CHURCH IN ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

George Stephen Watson II, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert D. Jones

This project introduces ministry leaders at Renewal Church in Anderson, South Carolina to the personal ministry of the Word. Chapter 1 presents the context of Renewal Church and the goals of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical foundation for the personal ministry of the Word in the context of the local church by exploring three passages of Scripture (Eph 4:11-16; Matt 28:16-20; Col 3:12-16). Chapter 3 presents the Christ-like biblical counseling steps for the personal ministry of the Word. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of “The Personal Ministry of the Word” curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project introduces ministry leaders to the personal ministry of the Word at Renewal Church in order to strengthen the overall ministry of the Word in fulfilling the Great Commission.

VITA

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