



Anthony Viscioni

philosophy of ministry

My approach to ministry comes out of one driving principle. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He replied to the question with a rather extreme answer. Not only did He justify the question that was intended to be a trap, but He answered it directly. He didn't revert to a cryptic answer in the fashion He had been known to do in such situations. Jesus looked at the people and said, "Love God". Don't just love Him, love Him with all your heart, soul and mind. But here is where He took the answer to the next step. He added the second commandment: "to love your neighbor as yourself." - a simple statement that wasn't completely a new teaching. The kicker is His concluding remark: "All of the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:34-40 NIV)

We don't like the comparison, but I think even in the Church today we can sometimes act like the Pharisees. We often can become unsettled with the simplicity that God gave us and feel there must be more to His enormous grace and love. So we often add unspoken rules to define what it means to be a follower of Christ. I believe and approach ministry by simply putting it through the filter He gave us. Is it loving to God and loving to my neighbor? It is that simple, but it isn't easy.

When we start to look at what biblical love really is, we have a hard time measuring up to His standard or example of sacrificial love. Yet we must strive daily to show that kind of love. We need to draw ever closer to God. We need an intimacy with Him that may never be fully achieved this side of heaven, but we must work toward it. Not just with this or that part of life, but with the whole thing. We must be completely sold out to love Him with our complete selves. Leave nothing on the table. Heart, soul and mind.

This document will give an overview of how I see this working out in ministry. I trust it will provide you with an understanding of how God has wired me for ministry and what He has put on my heart.

The Great Relationship

I have heard it said that the greatest gift a father can give to his children is to love their mother. That is a good metaphor for ministers as well. The greatest gift you can give those you serve is to love the Lord your God completely. There is no contribution any believer can make that isn't first based on their growing intimacy with Christ. If this is missing, everything is missing. So much in life is caught, more than taught. For this reason, a strong, growing love relationship with our Creator, Savior and Helper is essential for anyone wanting to assume a spiritual leadership role.

I am not speaking of "having a quiet time". That certainly is a way to be growing and knowing Him more deeply, but this isn't something you can check off your 'to do' list for the day. This is a daily, hourly, constant commitment to put Him first in your life. Having Him dwell in your heart and abiding in Him. Growing in intimacy with God is my first and most important ministry of love. (John 15:1-7; Eph. 3:16-19)

Family First & Always

One of my greatest lessons from seminary wasn't even part of a formal class. A professor and mentor of mine, Dr. Bill Jones, gave me this principle; "If your ministry fails, your family will hold you together. If your family fails, your ministry fails."

With this guidance, I make every attempt to put my wife and children first in my priorities. If they need me I try, not always successfully, to give them my time, love and attention in that moment. God has blessed me with such an awesome family and to neglect this gift of God is not an option. My family comes first. (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:2)

We Are All Ministers

There exists in the mindset of some churches that they pay others to do ministry for them. Their commitment is to see that an adequate shepherd is in place and ensure he fits into the church in a fashion that all the members are comfortable. This is not a biblical model for the role of believers. We all are called to be ministers and work that out in the unique ways that God has equipped and called us.



AS you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:4-5



We are described as a “holy priesthood”. Holy means “set apart”. We are set apart for priestly duties. I hesitate listing the manner or fashion this may take for each person because I think it may be as unique as each one of us. We all have differing passions and gifts to use for the Body of Christ, for building up the Body, for reaching the lost or for worship. The main focus is in how each can be used to show their love to God and others. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:4-5)

Spiritual Leaders Makes Spiritual Leaders

I believe spiritual leaders need to be producing spiritual leaders. In Second Timothy, Paul writes to his student to take the things he has heard and entrust them to reliable men who will then also pass them along. A spiritual leader should always be passing on what he has learned to people who then will also pass along what they have learned.

Timothy and Titus give solid listings of characteristics that are needed in an overseer, elder, deacon – a spiritual leader. However, just possessing these qualities are not enough. They are the baseline on which they can then begin to be transformed by God into the men or women He desires.

I have read many leadership books, both secular and sacred and have found what I feel are four foundational principles for every spiritual leader. In no particular order, a spiritual leader needs to pray, love, have vision and integrity. These four pillars will keep the leader strong and courageous no matter the situation. Let me share just a bit more on each.

Prayer – As a spiritual leader we are to point people to God, the author of everything. He is our commander in chief; we need to be connected with Him constantly to receive our marching orders. To do this we need to have the proper perspective on prayer and understand the proper purpose of prayer. Our perspective must be that prayer is not a one-way communication (us talking to God) but that we are in a continual conversation with Him, two way. We need to learn how to hear His still, small voice - to listen.

Love - As spiritual leaders we must know how to love. We must love people for who God has uniquely created them to be and utilize them for His service through that uniqueness. We are not all the same and God never intended us to be cookie cutter Christians. We need to become a student of people. Learn about personality differences and respect those differences. Don't try and conform everyone into a preconceived model. God has proven through history that He can and does use all kinds. We need to identify and acknowledge that uniqueness and encourage, empower and release them to live that out.

Vision - Without vision the people will perish (Prov. 29:18 KJV). This is about a divine revelation of where God is taking His people. A leader needs to know where he is leading or the people will not get anywhere. So, as spiritual leaders we need to have a vision for the future, God's desired future.

Integrity - This one cannot be overstated. A spiritual leader first, second and foremost must have integrity. They need to be people worth following. We do this by being a follower of the only One worthy, Jesus Christ. No matter how humble the leader, people want to put their trust in the tangible human form. For this reason, we need to make sure we are living a life that points people to the One we serve and not to our own glory. We also need to have someone to follow and it need not be Paul, or Apollos, but rather Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:12-17) - Our perfect example, tempted in every way, yet blameless.

Being Relevant

Worship, I believe, is far more than just music. It is an attitude, a posture, a place to meet God. It is less a style issue and more one of relevance. We should seek to connect with those we are ministering to in a way that they can relate to and which will lead them closer to the One who promises life everlasting. If this is not happening, no high tech, fancy show will make it happen. It is a heart issue. Being relevant is more important than being contemporary, edgy, trendy or “cool”.



I have focused primarily on music above, but this translates to any element of ministry we are embarking on. We must never forget the goal, purpose and Person for which it is all done. It's not about us. Let me say that again. It is not about us. It is about giving glory to God. Worshipping God, becoming more intimate with God, loving God and loving our neighbor.

Major on the Majors

Unity in our world today, not unlike many times throughout history, is often elusive. However, God has called His people to stand out among those that fight and squabble over less than meaningful issues. Christ's Bride, the Church, has got to be unified. It isn't a matter of compromise, but instead one of compassion, of caring for one another. What this comes down to is making sure we have a focus on the major tenants of our faith which are indisputable, as opposed to ones that are merely tradition.

I in no way advocate comprising on the truth of the Gospel, it is the foundation of the Christian faith and it is without error in its original writing. But so many minor doctrines or traditions have stood in the path of Christians worshiping or even working together in a united fashion to reach their communities with the love of God. I believe whole-heartedly that those divisions grieve God and are to be broken down whenever possible.

Excellence in Servanthood

All service for the Lord should reflect the "WHO" we are doing it for. Perfection is not the goal, but excellence should be because of the "WHO".

Excellence for one person may look very different than for another, but it really becomes a heart issue. We need to maintain in our relationship the enthusiasm of our first love in our ministry. It can be a battle, just like it is in a marriage relationship. It is easy to take our loved one for granted and become complacent in how we serve and show love to them. From those who lead to those on the front lines, the heart always needs to be giving its best, individually and corporately.

The core for everyone serving is to ensure that you are being real and transparent. One of the reasons nonbelievers don't step foot into a church is because they worry about being judged for their lifestyle or behavior. No Christian is perfect, only forgiven.