

My Brother's Keeper: Personal Ministry in the Local Church

January 14, 2012

I.) Jesus Changes People

a. Many types problems, many types of change. Focus on "sanctification."

- i.** People need food, medical care, practical knowledge, psychiatric care, etc.
- ii.** My brother needs my help in his/her sanctification. And I need his/hers.

b. Change happens at a heart level

- i. Matthew 23:25-28** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

c. Language of the Heart = "Grace", "faith" and "repentance"

(also, "worship", "trust", etc.)

- i. Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
- ii. Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- iii. Romans 12:1-2** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Eph 4:1, etc.)
- iv. 2 Peter 2:1-9** May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue... ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.
- v. Galatians 2:20 - 3:1** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (2 Cor 5:7, etc.)

- vi. **Ezekiel 18:32** For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." (Pro 1:23, Acts 3:19)
- vii. **Romans 2:5** ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (Eph 4:18)

d. Not a System, but a Person

- i. **Hebrews 4:15-16** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (10:19, etc.)
- ii. **John 15:5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
- iii. **2 Corinthians 3:18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

➔ **Therefore.** The key issues is this: If I am seeking change, I have to ask questions of grace, repentance and faith. Such as – *“what does Jesus have to do with my problem?”*

e. Using the Law Three Ways

- i. Not just what to do... but motivation.
- ii. First Use: Natural (Curb)
 - 1. Proverbial Wisdom
 - 2. “Do this and live”
- iii. Second Use: Conviction
 - 1. Law has a ministry of death (2 Cor 3:6)
 - 2. Reveals Sin (Rom 7)
 - 3. School Teacher that brings to Christ (Gal 3)
- iv. Third Use: Guide to Love (Responding to God)
 - 1. I am the God who called you out of Egypt... (Ex 20)
 - 2. Living by faith (Gal 2:20)
 - 3. We love because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19)
 - 4. In light of God’s mercies... (Rom 12:1-2. Etc.)
- v. Examples:
 - 1. Don’t steal. Don’t have premarital sex. Honor authorities.
 - 2. Anxiety. (Example)

f. Processes of Change (“Ministry”)

- i. **We encounter Jesus through the Word.**
- ii. **We encounter Jesus through community.**

II.) **Change in Community: A Closer Look at Ephesians 4**
Personal Ministry “unpacked.”

Ephesians 4:1-32 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call- ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ **And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. ¹⁷**

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that **you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!- ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵**

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ **Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

a. **Principles from Ephesians 4**

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____
- iv. _____
- v. _____
- vi. _____
- vii. _____
- viii. _____

b. Therefore -- we all do “Ministry”

- i. “Speaking truth in love builds up.” “All speech is for building up.”
- ii. We all need help growing in Christ, we are all called to help others.
- iii. We can speak in a way that brings the grace of Christ to bear on the situation of other people and encourages them towards repentance and faith.
- iv. We are called to do this better! (be equipped)
- v. We do this in supportive community!

c. Practically Speaking....

- 1.) We are all called to love each other by using words to help shape people to be more like Jesus.
 - a. Our relationships are the realm in which Christian growth happens. (4:12,16)
Do our relationships promote Christian growth?
 - b. Our words will have an effect. (Eph 4:15,29)
Is the effect “building up in Christ?”
 - c. Change (sanctification) is a process in which we take intentional action.
(Eph 4:22-24, see also Proverbs, Titus 2:3-4)
 - d. When we enter into this process with someone else, we may call this process:
“discipleship, mentoring, personal counseling or personal ministry.” How do we help others do this?

[Note: The challenges of discipleship in a post Christian culture are immense.]
- 2.) These relationships take various forms. (Different components of wisdom and authority imbalance.)
 - a. Recognized Church Leader *and* Church Member
 - b. Parents *and* Child
 - c. Old Christian *and* Younger Christian
 - d. Peer
 - e. Ministry Helper (working with church leaders)
- 3.) A healthy church has an interaction between every member ministry and trained leaders.
 - a. There are many opportunities to change lives, during informal conversations.
 - b. There are more needs than “leaders” can handle. 300 people!
 - c. Working with leaders (people need a friend) – partnerships can be key.

(We have many opportunities for ongoing training – SS, etc.)

III.) 4 Steps to do Personal Ministry (from “Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands”)

Love. - Know. - Speak. - Do.

1.) Love

- a. Change takes time. (“love is patient”, I Cor 13)
- b. We are called to speak the truth... “in love.” (Eph 4:15)
- c. Love means that we care about the person we are helping and want good for them.
-- God must first work in us before we can really minister to others.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you

had become very dear to us. (See also: Gal 4:19, Phil 1:8,2 Cor 12:15,1 John 3:16,Rom 9:1-3)

- d. Ministry can feel overwhelming and shocking. When we bear burdens we feel the burden. (Eph 4:2, Gal 6:2)
- e. Without love we won't be able to take the time to listen.
- f. Love helps us to identify with the struggles of someone else. (2 Cor 1:3-4)
 - i. Example: I have to pray sometimes before I can send an email.

2.) Know

- a. The heart is deceitful and "slippery."
 - i. Knowing takes time.
 - ii. Easy to project ourselves onto others.
 - iii. Assumptions are dangerous!
 - iv. How can we encourage someone to repent and believe, if we don't know them?!
 - v. In knowing someone we learn their story.
 - 1. Example (being sick in Boston)

Proverbs 18:13 If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

James 1:19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

- b. We need to see the heart issues (faith and repentance, worship and trust), not just the circumstances.
 - i. Without knowledge, we can jump to simplistic solutions. (How to "fix" it.)
 - ii. Where is God in the midst of this problem?

3.) Speak

- a. Goal is to speak about faith and repentance, not try to fix circumstances.
 - i. That is we speak of Christ.
 - ii. Talk about – *Where is God in the midst of this problem?*
- b. Words have power.
- c. We can help people:
 - i. ...See sin and unbelief.
 - ii. ...See God's character.
 - iii. ...See their own faith and the fruitfulness of the Spirit in their lives.
- d. Truly loving God and loving others makes us willing to confront in love.
 - i. A blanket refusal to confront is ultimately "unloving."
 - ii. And yet, love is patient.
 - iii. Speak first to God (in prayer), then to your neighbor. (general rule)
- e. Speaking truth in love begins in my own heart. God will deal with my own attitudes as I interact with my brother/sister.

4.) Do

- a. Having insight into the problem is not the end of the road.
- b. Goal is to walk in a different way. (Eph 4:1,17)
- c. Remember, God's timing for change is often slow. (lifetime schedule)
 - i. How patiently is he working in me?