

# THE NATURE OF MINISTRY

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A Public Faith Curriculum  
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## **Purpose**

When we look at work and ministry we can trace a cohesive thread running through the Bible that ties the two together. The Cultural Mandate has been called the first human job description and its parallel to the Great Commission shows the connection between work and ministry. Both can be pictures of Kingdom expansion.

This article is designed to help you understand what it means to labor for the Kingdom from within your profession, to broaden your perspective of ministry and show how ministry fits into everyday life.

## **Overview**

### **Introduction**

**Chapter 1**      *What is the Kingdom of God?*

**Chapter 2**      *What is Ministry and Who is Called to Minister?*

**Chapter 3**      *Structure and Direction*

**Chapter 4**      *Making the Kingdom Come through Redemptive Activity*

### **Conclusion**

## ***Introduction***

“I am so incredibly busy and now you’re telling me I need to have a ministry too?”

You may have thought or asked something like this before. As a working professional, you may be spending an inhumane number of hours at work, with little time for additional commitments. This feeling reveals how deeply divided our view of the world has become. Ministry seems to have nothing to do with everyday life, either at work or leisure, but something to be added into an already crowded schedule.

The comprehensiveness of Christian calling can help to heal the breach between work and ministry. Os Guinness, in *The Call*, says that, “*everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live and act entirely for him.*”<sup>1</sup> Seeing our lives as cohesive and whole can be somewhat liberating as we seek to understand what it means to minister. We aren’t adding to our already busy lives, but we are doing everything differently than we would if we did not know Jesus. As such, our lives are not a set of compartmentalized activities, which need to be separately balanced and managed (such as work and ministry), but one long response to God that causes everything we do to be both worship and ministry, including our work and our leisure.

This is a picture of a seamless life, one in which, because of a drastic re-orientation, we live a “new life” in every arena of our experience: work, leisure, love, etc. Jesus is our re-orientation and in response to him everything in our lives become an act of worship, whether singing a hymn or brushing our teeth. As we live this new-life we take on our Lord’s priorities, his loves, his employments, his life. This is life as it was meant to be. Everything that we do, whether work or leisure, is done by him and for him.

In this article, we will look at the Kingdom of God through the framework of *Creation, Fall, Redemption* and *Restoration* to help clarify what God is doing in the world. Then we will look at three scriptural concepts: the first human job description, the Great Commission and the Hebrew word *avodah* to define what it means to join God in what he is doing. We will conclude with how this practically works out in every aspect of life.

### ***Chapter 1 - What is the Kingdom of God?***

God’s kingdom, like any other king’s realm, encompasses all that he effectively rules. The Bible says that God is sovereign over all of the created order, and yet the Bible also talks about his kingdom growing and expanding (see Matthew 13). How can his kingdom be cosmic in scope, encompassing all of creation and still be growing? This question takes us into the central drama of history as recorded in the four chapters of the gospel – *Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration*.

**Creation:** The scope of God's kingdom parallels the scope of creation. Everything that *is*, apart from the Godhead, *was created* by God and is part of the created order. God created all things, he is sovereign over all things and all things are in glad subjection to him, therefore his kingdom is cosmic in scope.

**The Fall:** Humankind chose to sin and the created order became corrupted. God is still Lord of all creation, both the physical and the non-physical, but what he rightfully rules, is in part, rebelling against his rule. God's kingdom has changed, not quantitatively (it is still cosmic in scope), but qualitatively (it is now corrupt). And if the corruption that entered into creation was not bad enough, sin still had another result. Our disobedience made it possible for Satan to make an untenable and yet very real claim on God's kingdom.

In *Creation Regained*, Albert Wolters describes the radical and universal import of both sin and redemption, "There is something totalitarian about the claim of both Satan and Christ; nothing in all of creation is neutral in the sense that it is untouched by the dispute between these two great adversaries."<sup>2</sup> So, although God's kingdom is cosmic in scope, his kingdom is in rebellion and the people and institutions (or structures) in creation no longer operate as they were intended to.

**Redemption:** The good news is that the redemption made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ is also cosmic in scope. There is nothing in creation over which God is not sovereign or for which Christ has not died to reclaim. With Christ as King, the Kingdom or his kingship can be understood as saving-sovereignty invading the world; it is Christ pressing his kingship to bring healing and restoration to the world. God will not and has not abandoned the works of his hand. God's Kingdom, though active in the Old Testament, is now present in a new way in Jesus. Satan's claim on the world was utterly demolished on the cross.

This helps explain the tension we feel between the "already" and "not yet." In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus explains to the Pharisees about the coming of God's Kingdom, "*The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.*"

The Kingdom of God is here, it is in our midst in the person of Jesus Christ, but later Jesus instructs his disciples to pray God's Kingdom to come. (See the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13) In these verses, we see that the Kingdom is "already" here but that there is an aspect of it that is "not yet" here.

Wolters explains, "The already and the not yet aspects (of the kingdom) characterize the interlude between Christ's first and second coming. The first coming establishes his foothold in creation, while the second coming accomplishes the complete victory of his sovereignty. In the meantime *his servants are called to honor that sovereignty everywhere*, for it is already true that 'all authority in heaven and on earth' has been given to him. ... Since

his ascension Jesus has continued to make his kingdom come, but now by means of the ministry of his followers empowered by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Did you get that? *Jesus continues to make his kingdom come by means of the ministry of his followers and we are called to honor his sovereignty everywhere.*

**Restoration:** The “already” and “not yet” aspects of the Kingdom tell us that the story isn’t complete and that we still need a final chapter. The Redemption Chapter tells the story of the King working in the created order to redeem all that was lost and to put the world to rights, through healing and judgment. In our final chapter we see that the King is finally and forever placed on the throne, putting away all sin and rebellion, ruling uncontested over all creation.

The process of redemption began immediately after the Fall. Victory was won on the cross and yet all of creation still waits for something more. Romans 8:19-24 says, *“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that, the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”*

The created order is described as waiting eagerly ... needing to be set free from its slavery to corruption. The world was in this condition when Jesus arrived on the scene. Wolters describes the arrival of Jesus beautifully, “In Jesus Christ we witness the long-awaited vindication and effective demonstration of God’s kingship in the world. ... The rightful king has established a beachhead in his territory and calls on his subjects to press his claims ever farther in creation.”<sup>4</sup> We are to work and minister redemptively until the final day when Christ’s kingship is fully restored and the entire creation is *set free from its slavery to corruption.*

**A limited view of redemption** is at the heart of the disconnect between work and ministry. Frequently when we speak of redemption, we acknowledge only the redemption of individual souls and overlook the redemption of the rest of creation. This view of redemption puts limits on the power and value of Jesus’ death on the cross and accepts a partial defeat. Satan may be vanquished in the end but if Christ’s work on the cross is unable to restore all that was corrupted by the fall, then Satan has won a partial victory. In addition to this, if the Kingdom of God is defined as Christ’s kingship invading the world to heal and restore, then limiting redemption to the human soul also restricts the scope of God’s kingdom. The devaluing of the physical creation also devalues your vocation and your work; if the created order had limited or no value, then neither would your work within that order.

Wolters puts it like this, “To conceive of either the fall or Christ’s deliverance as encompassing less than the whole of creation is to

compromise the biblical teaching of the radical nature of the fall and the cosmic scope of redemption.”<sup>5</sup>

The apostle Paul makes the point even more clearly in Colossians 1:12-21, *For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the Church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile **all things** to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross ... .*

Jesus continues to make his Kingdom come through his followers. He is both King and Creator of the entire cosmos, both the visible and the invisible. Through him, all things are being reconciled to God.

### **Chapter 1: Summary Points**

- God's Kingdom encompasses all that he effectively rules.
- Jesus Christ has just claim over all of creation, both the material and the immaterial.
- Jesus' sacrificial death provides for both personal and cosmic redemption.
- When we restrict the scope of redemption, we limit the power of Christ's death on the cross.

### **Chapter 2 - What Is Ministry And Who Is Called To Minister?**

In the above section it was stated that Jesus continues to make his kingdom come through his followers and that through him, all *things* are being reconciled to God. He is invading the world and reclaiming his kingship over the entire created order through healing and judgment.

A good working definition of ministry might then be *honoring his sovereignty everywhere and making his kingdom come*. Most of the words in scripture related to salvation are “re” words: redemption, reconciliation, restoration, renewal, re-creation and reformation, to name a few. All of these words have an underlying premise of restoring an original good. This happens as Christ's kingship is reclaimed in various arenas, both personal and social. In addition to this, as image bearers we are also sub-creators and we can make his kingdom come in the world through new developments in culture, technology, business or other arenas.

In this section we will use three scriptural concepts as lenses to help us focus on what it means to make Christ's kingdom come: the Hebrew word *avodah*, the first human job description found in Genesis 1 and the Great Commission.

### ***Lens #1 – Avodah***

*Avodah* is a rich Hebrew word that is rendered into many different English words. In Genesis, we see *avodah* as *work*. It can also mean *worship*, *service*, *ministry*, and *craftsmanship*. For example, Genesis 2:15 reads: “The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to *cultivate* it and take care of it.” The Hebrew word for *cultivate* is *avodah*.

*Avodah* as ...

***Craftsmanship*** (1 Chronicles 28:21) – King David tells Solomon, “The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work (*avodah*) on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft (*avodah*) will help you ...”

***Work*** (Exodus 34:21) – Moses says, “Six days you shall work ...”

***Worship*** (Exodus 3:12) – And God said, “I will be with you ... you will worship God on this mountain.”

***Service or ministry*** (Numbers 8:1) – The Lord explains that the Levites will do the service of the Lord.

The use of the word *avodah* in the Hebrew Scriptures gives us insight to how similarly work and ministry (service to God and other people) were originally viewed. One word described both, indicating that there was not a dichotomy between what was done for God in ministry and what was done for God through one’s vocation; both were *avodah*.

### ***Lenses #2 & 3 – The First Job Description and The Great Commission***

When we look at work and ministry we can trace a cohesive thread running through the Bible that ties the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission together. The Cultural Mandate has been called the first human job description and its parallel to the Great Commission help show the connection between work and ministry. Both are viable means to helping make Christ’s kingdom come.

Consider the mandate given in Genesis 1:28. It gives us a picture of what God originally intended for us. *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and **subdue** it. **Rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

Humankind was given the responsibility to develop the world under God’s rule so that it reflects and glorifies Him and so that we can fully enjoy God and His universe. The means to that end is through exercising proper dominion or rule. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary refers to humankind as, “God’s responsible stewards on earth with unbelievable privileges and heavy responsibilities!”

After the fall, the world continued to develop, but because of sin, it has been developed and continues to develop along the lines of corrupted social and cultural structures; even the material universe has been corrupted. The mandate “to subdue and rule,” however, has not been rescinded. But now not only are we responsible to continue to *develop creation* (Cultural Mandate, Genesis 1:28), we have also been enlisted in the process of *restoring creation* (Great Commission, Matthew 28:18) to God’s

rightful rule. Therefore, we can rightly say that both creational development and creational restoration can be forms of ministry or making his kingdom come.

Rooted in the Cultural Mandate, the Great Commission seems to involve far more than simply doing evangelism. In fact, evangelism is implied in the command but not directly mentioned. We are called to make disciples, not simply converts. Our job is not done until our converts are established in the discipleship of Jesus Christ, obeying all that he taught. Our objective is complete when people become effective citizens of the Kingdom and are themselves making Jesus' kingdom come. When we teach our disciples to obey "all" that Jesus commanded we are naturally drawn back to our first job description, the Cultural Mandate.

The parallel of these two passages gives more clarity to what it means to make God's kingdom come. In *Creation Regained*, Albert Wolters says, "God's rule over creation takes place through the mediation of human responsibility."<sup>6</sup> Our rule or dominion is a reflection of God's rule in the world and yet he uses us to expand his rule or Kingdom.

The Great Commission is very similar to the original job description found in Genesis. God's rule has always existed and so in Genesis the Kingdom of God simply is. Today, because of the Fall and the process of redemption at work in the world, the Kingdom of God has an aspect of it that "already is;" but it also has an aspect of it that is "not yet." God's kingdom is being established as sin is defeated. Our job description to *subdue* and *rule* has been expanded to include the work of redemption, meaning that we are to continue to develop the world according to God's creative plan but we are also "defeating sin" as we bring corrupted aspects of creation back to his intended design and under his rule.

This "developing" and "restoring" is to take place through our dominion, which is our rule, what we effectively have control over. We properly exercise dominion when we bring those things that we control under God's control. In doing so we extend his kingship and make his kingdom come in various arenas.

What do you have control over? Where in this world do you rule? At the very least, you have rule over yourself, but most likely, you also have control of things at work or in the home, through social or civic clubs and in the community. Beyond dominion or control, you also have influence. Influence is part of your dominion and this too is to be used to develop and restore God's kingdom.

It is important to emphasize the supremacy of Jesus Christ in the exercise of our dominion. A.W. Tozer states in *The Pursuit of Man*, "We need to have restored again the lost idea of sovereignty, not as a doctrine only but as the source of solemn religious emotion. We need to have taken from our dying hand the shadow scepter with which we fancy we rule the world."<sup>7</sup> We must not forget that ultimately this is God's world and his rule. We are sub-rulers. *In our dominion, we are still subjects.*

Consider the parallels between the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate:

<p><b>Genesis 1:26-28</b>  Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."</p> <p><b>"Then God said ..."</b>  <i>God speaks</i></p> <p><b>"Then God said, "Let us ..."</b>  God's name is "Elohim" – plural of majesty  <i>Trinitarian God is implicit</i></p> <p><b>"Then God said ..."</b>  <i>"Elohim" means "Sovereign without beginning or end"</i></p> <p><b>"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ..."</b> (Genesis 1:1)  <i>God as Creator is authoritative over all creation</i></p> <p><b>Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our Image ..." and God said to them, "Be fruitful and Multiply ..."</b>  Humankind is unique because we <i>know</i> what we are called to be <i>doing</i> (Moral responsibility)</p> <p><b>"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."</b>  <i>Reproduction and ruling of all creation mandated (commanded)</i></p> <p><b>"Let us make man in our image ..."</b>  <i>Humankind is identified with the Trinitarian God</i></p>	<p><b>Matthew 28:18-20</b>  And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."</p> <p><b>"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying ..."</b>  <i>Jesus (God) speaks</i></p> <p><b>"the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"</b>  <i>The Trinitarian God is explicit</i></p> <p><b>"... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."</b>  <i>Sovereign God without beginning or end</i></p> <p><b>"All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth"</b>  <i>Jesus is authoritative over all creation</i></p> <p><b>"teaching them to observe (do) all that I have commanded (know) you"</b>  Humankind is unique because we <i>know</i> what we are called to be <i>doing</i> (Moral responsibility)</p> <p><b>"... make disciples of all the nations"</b>  <i>Reproduction and ruling of all creation mandated (commanded)</i></p> <p><b>"... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"</b>  <i>Humankind is identified with the Trinitarian God</i></p>
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Let's look back over our discussion so far and see if a clear picture of ministry might begin to emerge. We have looked at the word *avodah*, which can be translated as *ministry, service, worship, and work*, suggesting that our lives are to be an un-dichotomized and cohesive response to God. We have also looked at the connectedness of the Cultural Mandate found in Genesis and the Great Commission found in Matthew, which show that we are to be developing and restoring the created order to Christ's kingship. How can these three scriptural lenses help bring the meaning of ministry into better focus?

*Making the Kingdom come through work.* We can rightly say that through our *avodah* we help develop and restore the created order. *Avodah* in this sense can be translated both work and ministry simultaneously. How so? Before the fall, humankind was responsible for developing creation. With Christ, the element of restoration was added to our job description. So now through our work we are not only developing the world according to God's design, we are also restoring parts (and people) of the world that have been corrupted by the fall. So when you go to work you can be involved in making the Kingdom come by either developing your work along the lines of Kingdom principals or restoring your work to those same principals.

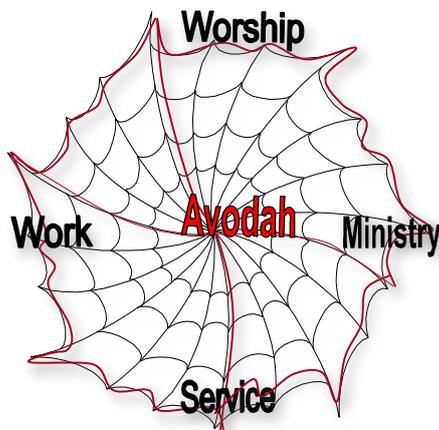
*Making the Kingdom come through evangelism and worship.* In the Psalms, worship and proclamation (another form of ministry) are clearly linked. Both are means of glorifying God, in that both bring attention to or reveal God's nature and his works. Consider the words of worship in Psalm 145:1-4, culminating in, "*One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.*" Or look at Psalm 78, a passage about teaching the next generation the ways of the Lord. Verse 4 says, "*We will not hide them [the things of God] from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.*" When we teach or proclaim (evangelism) the ways of God we are worshipping him. When we glorify God, we reveal him. Both evangelism and worship are *avodah*, both make his Kingdom come.

*Making the Kingdom come through service.* Neither ministry nor worship are mere words. Ministry is also service. In this, Jesus is our exemplar. "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*"<sup>8</sup> We are instructed to follow his example throughout the Bible. Consider the following: Galatians 6:10, "*... as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people.*" Hebrews 10:25, "*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*" First Peter 4:10, "*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*"<sup>9</sup> The concept of "administering God's grace" takes us back to the Cultural Mandate, because in so doing we are acting as "God's responsible stewards on Earth." *Avodah* is both service and proclamation and means of making his kingdom come.

*Making the Kingdom come in the public eye.* In Matthew 5:14-16, we are told that we are the light of the world. Light reveals or glorifies, a concept that encompasses both worship and proclamation. "*You are the light of the world.*"

*A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*" Notice how our good deeds or service, essentially our behavior, is linked to a public understanding of God. In this passage, the concepts of service, worship (revealing God), and proclamation (also revealing God) are all linked.

Our *worship, work, service, and ministry* are all intended to be part of a seamless response to God. *Avodah* is an inner-connected web of activity finding proper expression through obedience to both the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission, resulting in his followers pressing the claims of Christ's kingship farther into the world.



Our lives are both rounded out and filled in with *avodah*. *Avodah* becomes the framework for the public expression of our faith, forever linking who we are with what we do, our inner piety with our public behavior.

As we focus the three lenses of *avodah*, the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission, we begin to see that ministry involves revealing God to the world around us and making his kingdom come through developing and restoring the created order (both people in the created order and creation itself).

Ministry is a natural and necessary part of our new life, just as work, worship, and service are. All citizens of the Kingdom are responsible and capable to minister as a part of the "normal Christian life."

So far, we have determined that ministry involves revealing God and making his kingdom come and that we engage in kingdom expansion by either developing creation according to God's intention or restoring creation back to what God intended. This includes but is not limited to ministry to the human race. Evangelism is a very crucial redemptive activity.

**What is Ministry? Summary Points:**

- *Avodah*, the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission help us define ministry.
- Ministry is *honoring Christ's sovereignty everywhere and making his kingdom come*.
- *Avodah* becomes the framework for the public expression of our faith.
- Ministry is a natural and necessary part of our new life.

### *Chapter 3 - Structure and Direction*

To more fully understand the nature of ministry or how we help make his kingdom come we need to introduce another concept, that of *structure* and *direction*.

*Structures* are non-physical aspects of creation, inherent in the created order and thus inherently good. A structure is the creational constitution of any given thing. We have the physical world and non-physical social or cultural structures; both are part of the created order.

Some creational structures include marriage and family, business, government and community. The non-physical structures in creation compare to the same aspects of a human being. People have physical bodies like the physical earth and stars; but we also have non-physical aspects to us, such as our minds, emotions and will.

*Direction* represents the pull between sin and redemption exerted on a given structure. Any structure can be directed towards or away from God.

When we look at life in the real world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can see that it is made up of both good and bad. How does this fit with The Kingdom Story? If everything in the universe flows from the creation event and creation has been declared good, then we would expect the world to be completely good. On the other hand, if the Fall, being just as comprehensive in nature, corrupts everything in creation then we would expect the world to be completely bad. But this doesn't correspond with our experience. In our daily lives, we see both good and bad; this is because both the Fall and Redemption are at play in the world.

*Structure* and *direction* in the context of our "ought, is, can and will" framework will help us sift through the "goods" and "bads" of the world we live in and help us understand how to engage in these arenas of life.

*Ought*—God created and it was good. This applies to the material world as well as the cultural and institutional structures that God designed for the material world. Structures are therefore inherently good and represent the "ought" chapter of our story.

*Is*—Because of the Fall, every part of creation has been, in part, corrupted. This includes each and every creational structure, both the physical world and the non-physical. God's creation is inherently good but now it is deformed, corrupted.

*Can*—If the Fall was the end of the story, we could only account for the "bad" in our lives, because the corruption in the world would be unmitigated. Redemption makes it possible for deformed creational structures to be re-formed or moved back toward God's intention. Therefore, it is the chapters of Fall and Redemption, which determine in what *direction* creational *structures* are moving. *Structures* refer to

creational intent, whereas *direction* refers to the effects of Fall and Redemption on those structures.

*Will* – Eventually all of creation will be restored and the direction that any given structure is moving will no longer be in question. At that time all structures will be fully redeemed and restored.

As an example, the created structures of sex or government are good. But the direction in which those structures are moving may be either toward further corruption, resulting from the Fall, or toward redemption, resulting from Christ's death on the cross.

Sex, in the context of a loving marriage for the purpose of pleasure and intimacy, is good and reflects the God-intended nature of that structure. Business and trade are also part of the created order and have an intended structure. Prostitution however, is a corruption of both the creational structures of sex and business. Prostitution has a corrupt *direction*, taking sex and business away from their God-intended state.

When, as "God's responsible stewards"<sup>10</sup> we engage in redemptive activity, which moves God's creation back toward its original intent and back under Christ's kingship, we are engaging in ministry. We are making his kingdom come in the given arena. This may involve bringing either institutions or people back under God's rule because redemption applies to both the human realm with its structures of intellect, emotion, and body as well as the physical universe with its social and cultural elements.

#### **Structure and Direction Summary Points:**

- When God declared his creation good, that declaration included the immaterial as well as the material.
- Structures are those immaterial parts of the created order that govern culture and society. They are by nature good.
- Because of the Fall, all of creation has been corrupted, including the immaterial; therefore all structures are corrupted.
- Direction refers to how a given structure is moving, either toward further corruption because of the Fall or redemptively backs toward God because of Christ's death on the cross.

#### ***Chapter 4 - Making The Kingdom Come Through Redemptive Activity***

If ministry is *honoring God's sovereignty everywhere and making his kingdom come*, then how does ministry take shape in everyday life?

Structure and direction provide the framework for redemptive action. We act redemptively when we move people and/or societal structures in redemptive directions, helping to restore the kingship of Christ in a given area. This is as true for the hearts and souls of individuals as it is for immaterial creational structures.

There are four primary modes of ministry, through which we are able to act redemptively and make his kingdom come. It is essential that these aspects of ministry be cohesively represented in your view of the world if you are to minister effectively.

- *Proclamation*, which includes evangelism, discipleship and teaching, has to do with our message. This message is preached in both word and deed (the living out of our new life). The goal of evangelism and discipleship is to expand God's rule or reign in the lives of individuals.
- *Social service* is love for love's sake. It is expressed by living our new lives for the benefit or relief of those whom Christ loves. This love is often, but not always, underscored and aided by words. However, the goal of service is love not conversion.
- *Cultural engagement* involves bringing aspects of culture back into alignment with the Creator's will by shaping how society understands and responds to various social structures. This includes both restoring and developing those structures. Corrupted structures are often the cause of the misery we see in the world and often result in people being held in bondage to the ways of corruption. Social service and cultural engagement are distinguished by the purpose and breadth of our actions. An act of service may involve feeding the poor, while through cultural engagement one might seek to limit poverty.
- *Exercising Dominion*, either at work, in the family or through civic activities is a means of making the Kingdom come by shaping all that falls under your control according to Kingdom values.

These four modes of ministry are interconnected and inseparable. Each element is required to expand the Kingdom of God when "expanding the Kingdom" is equated with restoring Christ as King over all of creation.

John Stott says that social action and evangelism "... belong to each other and yet are independent of each other. Neither is a means to the other, or even a manifestation of the other. For each is an end in itself. Both are expressions of unfeigned love."

Civic action, or as Stott says, *social action*, includes both *social service* and *cultural engagement*. These go hand-in-hand with one another and with evangelism. The point is that as citizens of the Kingdom we represent Christ in all respects. We must carry his message (in word and deed) to those whom he wishes to speak. We must love those whom he loves. Moreover, we must bring the created world back under his rule where we have been given dominion.

Stott refers to both civic action and evangelism as expressions of unfeigned love. He is exactly right when he says that these elements of ministry "belong to each other." When action and words are torn apart what is left is less than love.

Consider 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, *"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."*

In recent years there has been a breach within the modern church with people on each side criticizing the other. On one side we have churches that have developed an outward focus. They are committed to "doing good." The assumption is that working for social change is what is important. Doing good deeds fulfills any requirement for personal piety.

On the other hand there are those who are focused more on inner piety, or "being good," accusing the other group of reducing the gospel to mere social justice and forgetting the need for evangelism and discipleship. This group has discounted any need for cultural engagement, forgetting that it is impossible to "be good" and not "do good."

The expressed fear that when we take up social issues we neglect evangelism is valid. Others may fear that when we take up evangelism we neglect social issues. How can we avoid the pitfalls of both of these traditions? First of all, we need to fear the right thing. A more appropriate fear might be failing to be biblically faithful. We are not seeking to balance our concern for people with our concern for society. We are concerned for both people and society because God is concerned for both. We want to live out our faith in such a way that we live out the whole truth of the gospel.

How can we care about people and ignore the world they live in? If it isn't our responsibility as believers, whose responsibility is it? It is our Savior who lays claim to the world; and so, as his "responsible stewards," it is our responsibility to bring this world back under his reign. This is unfeigned love. On the other hand, is it possible to really love our neighbors and not tell them about the God who loves them? Proclaiming the gospel is also unfeigned love.

#### **Making the Kingdom Come through Redemptive Activity Summary Points:**

- The four modes of ministry—proclamation, social service, cultural engagement and exercising dominion—are interconnected and inseparable.
- Our words for the Kingdom must be linked to our actions for the Kingdom.
- As citizens of the Kingdom we represent Christ in all respects.

#### **Conclusion**

Living all-out and in every arena for Christ and his kingdom means bringing everything over which we have influence or control under the kingship of Christ. This is what it means to *honor God's sovereignty*

*everywhere and make his Kingdom come.* Work can no longer be disconnected from ministry. Work is ministry when done for Christ. But ministry can not be disconnected from proclamation, social service or cultural engagement either; each belongs to the other.

Our moral conscience (our responsibility to God) must inform (or shape) our duty in the world. In love and with purpose God has created and redeemed us. He has made us and re-made us his “responsible stewards on earth with unbelievable privileges and heavy responsibilities.” He has given us dominion and the ability to respond to him and make his kingdom come.

William Wilberforce, one of the greatest Christian reformers of all time, has been described as, “profoundly aware that true and lasting reform took place in the hearts and minds of individuals, one person at a time. Each of these persons then became an agent of change and renewal in his or her own right. Wherever they found themselves within society—rich, poor, or middle class—and with whatever gifts or talents they had been given, they could and should unite their energies with those of their fellow citizens and follow through on their duty to work toward making the good society. *The change in individual hearts and minds was what created the underlying and indispensable moral consensus that informed such a duty.*”

## **The Nature of Ministry**

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<sup>1</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call*

<sup>2</sup> Albert M. Wolters *Creation Regained*, William B. Eerdmans, 1985, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 60

<sup>3</sup> *Creation Regained*, p. 63

<sup>4</sup> *Creation Regained*, p.61

<sup>5</sup> *Creation Regained*, p. 71

<sup>6</sup> *Creation Regained*, p. 81

<sup>7</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of Man*, Christian Publications, Camp Hill, PA, 1978, p. 41

<sup>8</sup> Mark 10:45

<sup>9</sup> The Wycliffe Bible Commentary

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*