

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY

Teaching Guide

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This Week's Reading Assignment

The Article, *The Nature of Ministry*, takes a macro look at ministry by considering the pre-fall Cultural Mandate and the post-cross Great Commission in order to define our redemptive responsibilities in the world today.

In our desire to restore all things to the Lordship of Christ our ministry will have three facets; proclamation, social service and cultural engagement.

A Note to the Teacher

This article seeks to do two things; expand our view of ministry to include cultural engagement and social service and to introduce the concept of structure and direction to show how we can act redemptively in the world.

The session's objective is to continue to clarify the implications of a holistic ministry.

Additional Reading

Creation Regained, Albert Wolters

Class Structure

Please plan 2 ½ hours for this session.

20 minutes

Hook: Ministry Cohesion Debate

15 minutes

Lecture: Fulfilling The Great Commission

10 minutes

Reflection: Ministry Cohesion

30 minutes

Discussion: Ministry Cohesion

20 minutes

Project Discussion: Discuss the previously assigned project. Have each person share how they fulfilled the project requirements and what they thought about the process.

Ministry Cohesion Debate

Hook & Discussion

Instructions: Divide your group in half and have one group defend the following statement and the other attack it. Give the groups 10 minutes to prepare and use 10 minutes to present.

“Anyone can engage in social service but only Christians can evangelize, so let the liberals and non-Christians serve and we will evangelize”

Lecture

The Great Commission & Ministry Cohesion

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20

The Great Commission captures Jesus in a state of magnificent Lordship. His authority spans all realms, both heaven and earth. His command to go, takes into account both the past (teach them all that I have commanded you) and the present (make disciples), which indicates both a plan and purpose for the life he lived and our lives. And there is an eternally enduring aspect of his promise to be with us always - even to the end of the age. He is the undisputed master of time and space. The Great Commission, like the kingdom of God comes with authority, purpose and a plan.

As we reflect on the Great Commission, It is important to appreciate it as much for what it doesn't say as for what it does say. Have you ever noticed that we aren't commanded to make converts? We are commanded to make disciples. The concept of evangelism is implied rather than stated. This by no means diminishes the importance of evangelism. It would be impossible to make disciples of all nations apart from the proclamation of the good news. It does however bring a greater depth to the words of Jesus.

Specifically we are commanded to *make disciples, baptize them and teach them to do all that Jesus commanded*. Because Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophets and the law this passage embraces both Old and New Testaments. Consider the command, “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” These words are comprehensive, meant to include both Jesus' words and his deeds. This is no simple task.

When we define ministry in terms of proclamation, social service and cultural engagement* we include acts of service, mercy, justice and compassion that correspond to Jesus' teaching. We train people to do evangelism as well as train them to live the Christian life as Jesus lived it. * (See chapter 4 of *The Nature of Ministry* for definitions of these terms.)

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.”

Teaching *all* that Jesus commanded is essential if we maintain cohesion in our ministry.

But *teaching all* is only part of the command, this is the depth of the command. We are also to *go to all nations*; this is the breadth of the command. Holding the *breadth* and *depth* of the command in tension is essential to fulfilling Jesus' commission.

Teaching Them to Obey Everything...

What does the expression, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" mean? How comprehensive do we need to be in our disciple making? Paul, after all, moved through Asia Minor quickly, leaving fledgling churches with no formal training to take root and flourish, trusting that these new churches were able to spread the gospel.

It is reasonable to conclude that "teaching all" does not mean building each disciple to a point of perfection. More properly it should be understood as a command to teach and disciple in the full context of Jesus' life and death. When the church and individuals live out the full expression of the gospel we are prepared to teach all the Jesus commanded. Our example fills in the gaps in our teaching. We can see the Christina life lived out which will help us comprehend specific theological teaching.

Understanding the life and mission of the Lord in its whole is crucial, the details of each part of our new lives can be figured out as we go. This is not to say that proper theology is not important or that in-depth teaching is wrong. But it is to say that imparting a comprehensive picture or big picture of what our new life entails is an essential part of fulfilling the Great Commission. The full context of Jesus' life, death and resurrection include his teachings and his example as well as the teaching and examples of the Old Testament. Only when we live out both his teaching and his example can we disciple according to the Great Commission.

If in our zeal we equate the fulfillment of the Great Commission with completing the task of world evangelization we will fail to hold the proper tension between the depth and breadth of the command.

Carburetors vs. Cars...

When we view the Great Commission as simply completing the task of world evangelization we run the risk of dichotomizing and compartmentalizing the new life.

We are to live our new lives, the life of Christ, coherently in the world. This is expected of each individual Christian though it is to be done in community. And since each individual is responsible for a certain kind of life we cannot reasonably dice that life up for the sake of ministry; the parts don't make a whole.

We face some problems when we parcel out the life of Christ, because unlike the auto industry we don't have assembly plants, and without assembly plants, carburetors never become part of functioning cars.

There are certain issues that must be carefully thought through in this age of the Para church. Is it possible for one part of the body to take on the responsibility of

evangelism and another take on the responsibility of social service and still accomplish what we as a body have been called to do?

Here are some more questions:

1. If we get to *all* nations at the expense of teaching *all* that Jesus commanded have we fulfilled the Great Commission?
2. Is the Great Commission something to fulfill once and for all or is it meant to be an ongoing task?
3. What has kept us from keeping the right tension between the depth and breadth of the command?
4. How might the gospel spread differently if our disciples are taught to obey all that Jesus commanded, especially his teaching on mercy, humility and service?

Ministry Cohesion Refection

Take 7 minutes and answer the following questions. This reflection time will add thoughtfulness to the following discussion.

- Why is it hard to keep proclamation, social service and cultural engagement together? Consider doctrinal, cultural and worldview reasons.
- What do we need to *believe* and to *do* to maintain a cohesive approach to ministry?
- Assess how you and others in your strategy are doing in this regard.

Ministry Cohesion Discussion

1. *If proclamation, social service and cultural engagement are all important and a necessary part of our new life how does it work out?*

- Is each person responsible for all three out workings of ministry? And if so should each person spend equal amounts of time in each kind of activity? How does gifting fit into the equation?
- Is it possible or best to divide our time equally between the three forms of ministry?
- Is it possible or best to divide the body so that everyone is working in one of the three realms of ministry?

2. *How do proclamation, social service and cultural engagement work out in your actual experience?*

- How are you engage in proclamation, social service and cultural engagement?
- How do these three forms of ministry overlap?
- Is one of the three more natural to you than the others?
- Is one form more prevalent?