



Philosophy of Ministry

Bethel Baptist Church exists to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ for the glory of God



Introduction

When Alice approached the Cheshire cat seeking for directions, he asked her where she was going. When she replied that she wasn't sure, he wisely replied, "Then it doesn't matter how you get there." Much of what is called ministry today is carried out with no clear biblical goal in mind, and therefore there is no clear direction for what we should do and how it is to be done! It is my understanding that this is methodology for ministry is totally contrary to how God intends for ministry to be accomplished. God has a goal that He established for the Church, and consequently, there are biblical methods and directions for how that purpose is to be accomplished!

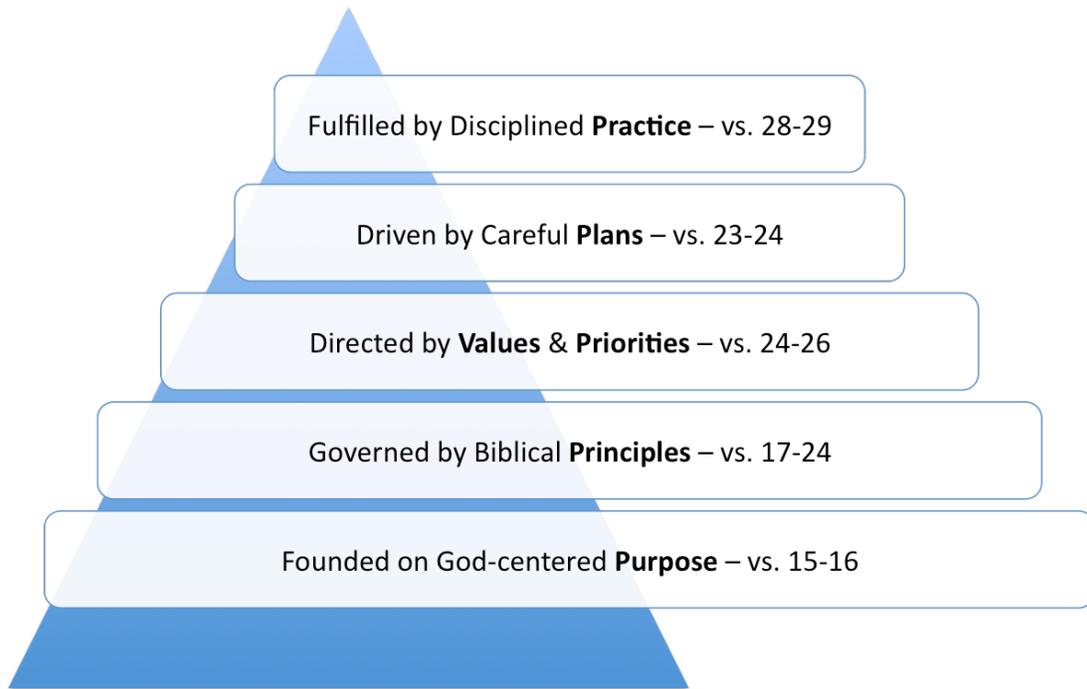
The topic at hand is in reality the theology of ministry. It essentially is the "how - to" of ecclesiology. We believe that man is saved on purpose with a purpose. There is something more to the salvation of man than simply a pitying God taking mercy on helpless humans to keep them from eternal damnation. God created mankind in His image, for having an image bearer brought glory to Him. When Adam disobeyed God, he and all mankind fell and the image of God in man was marred. At the fall, man was made subject to spiritual death and a process of decay began in man that led Him to physical death. Mankind was subject to total depravity. At conversion, through the judicial acts of justification, adoption, redemption, and Spirit Baptism, God begins a work in every new believer that is a process of restoring the image of God in Him. That act begins in Salvation, continues in progressive sanctification, and will one day be completed in future glorification. It is in the restoration of the image of God in man that God is glorified. This is the purpose of God in salvation.

It is this mission that has been passed on to the Church by way of the great commission. The great commission is the passing of the mission of the Son of God on to those who perform His will in the Church age. That mission is the making and maturing of Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Glory of God. If this is the Mission of the Church, then everything that the Church does both in form and function must not only be connected to this mission, but most grow out of this mission and be driven by this mission. Just as we have been saved on purpose with a purpose, and as God has given to us the mission of carrying out His purpose, the Church must carry out its ministry on purpose and with a purpose. This is intentional ministry.

Our Pattern

In Romans 15, the Apostle Paul lays out for his readers the process that he was going through in making his life and ministry decisions. Paul clearly points out what his desires were, but he elaborates on what was required of him, what was priority for him, what guided him in making his decisions, and ultimately, what he would do. If we look carefully at the passage, Paul lays out a pyramid process that guided him in making right choices. This is the philosophy that the Apostle Paul used in determining where he would go and what he would do in serving the Lord and fulfilling the mission that was given to him as an Apostle to the Gentiles.

The Pattern for an Intentional Ministry from Romans 15



Our Purpose

Bethel Baptist Church Exists To Make And Mature Disciples of Jesus Christ For The Glory Of God.

Matthew 28:18--20 “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

Our Principles

The second level of our philosophy pyramid concentrates on the biblical principles, which form the governing values of the church. We believe that our God-given mission is to bring honor to God by making and maturing disciples who are becoming like Jesus Christ. We also believe that we can only truly accomplish this mission if we carry it out according to God's will. Bible principles form the values that govern the way we do ministry. Values are beliefs, which motivate behavior. The manner in which ministry is done flows out of the prevailing value system.

No list of values itself can provide the dynamic necessary to be a transforming force in our church's life. Values come to life when everyone is aware of them and why they are important. The values must be widely held to make a difference. At BBC we believe that the following biblical principles are values that should govern how we fulfill the mission that God has given to us.

We believe in God-centered vs. Man-centered Ministry

- A commitment to being a Word-centered fellowship.

We believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word and is the sole authority for the faith and practice of God's people. The Bible is fully sufficient for making and maturing disciples who live like Jesus Christ in every area of personal, social and family life (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Therefore, we are committed to building up God's people by concentrating on the communication of biblical truth with relevant application to every area of life.

- A commitment to prayer.

We believe that God has commanded the local church to be engaged in fervent and persistent prayer (I Timothy 2:1-7, Luke 18:1-8).

We believe that, as a loving Father, He desires to answer the prayers of His children (Matthew 7:7-11).

Therefore, we are committed to regular times of corporate prayer (Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Acts 4:23-31, Acts 13:1-3), and to praying for the advancement of the Gospel and salvation of the lost (II Thessalonians 3:1, Romans 10:1).

- A commitment to glorifying in God through purposeful excellence.

We believe that God's glory deserves to be honored by the determined effort to reflect that glory clearly (I Corinthians 10:31, Col. 3:23). We recognize that excellence is not simply being the best or doing our best, but that genuine excellence is using our God-given resources effectively to accomplish the right mission (cf. Matthew 25:14-30).

Therefore, we are committed to intentional ministry, which sets clear standards and seeks to achieve them by utilizing our resources effectively.

We believe in People-oriented vs. Program-oriented Ministry

- A commitment to gift-based ministry.

We believe that every believer has been equipped by God with the abilities needed for fruitful ministry within the local church (I Corinthians 12:7, I Peter 4:10). The gifts are given for building up the body (I Corinthians 14:12), and for use in service to others (I Peter 4:10).

Therefore, we offer regular and systematic teaching about gift-based ministry and we seek to place believers into areas of ministry according to their God-given gifts and abilities.

- A commitment to Spirit-motivated ministry.

We believe that the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers to move them into ministry for God's pleasure (Philippians 2:13, Psalm 37:4, Nehemiah 2:12).

Therefore, we are committed to placing the priority on people, not programs. We also encourage freedom in ministry with responsibility, and the bottom-up development of ministries.

- A commitment to an equipping ministry.

We believe that the ministry of the local church belongs to every member, not only those members who in engage in vocational ministry (Ephesians 4:12). The purpose of vocational ministers is to equip and empower church members for effective ministry so that the body of Christ may be edified (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Therefore, we strive to place the ministries of Bethel Baptist Church into the hands of non-vocational ministers.

- A commitment to servant Leadership.

We believe that God establishes clear positions of leadership within the local church (I Timothy 3:1, I Timothy 3:10), but we affirm that genuine spiritual leadership is servant leadership, which seeks the good and development of those who are served (Matthew 20:20---34; I Peter 5:1---4).

Therefore, we honor Christ like meekness and strive to forge consensus among God's people through diligently teaching biblical principles.

- A commitment to mentoring spiritual leaders.

We believe that God calls on present spiritual leaders to cultivate intentionally future spiritual leaders (II Timothy 2:2).

Therefore, we honor the ministry of the Word, call believers to serious ministry commitment, and invest our lives into the mentoring of spiritual leaders who can rise to fill our place of ministry.

We believe in Process--focused vs. Event--focused Ministry

- A commitment to providing accountability in the context of loving relationships.

We believe that God's people are called on to encourage and exhort one another toward faithful obedience to Christ (Romans 15:14, Hebrews 3:13, Philippians 2:3---4).

Therefore, we structure opportunities for believers to develop loving relationships which cultivate openness and mutual accountability.

- A commitment to training believers for effective Life stewardship.

We believe that all believers have been entrusted by God with life, abilities, material assets, and relationships and that they will be held accountable by God for their stewardship of these trusts (I Corinthians 4:5, II Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:12).

Therefore, we are committed to providing biblical teaching and practical equipping on all stewardship issues.

- A commitment to relational evangelism.

We believe that God has placed every believer within a relational network which is to be his/her primary evangelistic focus. We believe that Christ's commission to His disciples is to develop redemptive relationships (John 17:18, John 20:21) so that they may give a clear verbal witness about Christ and the Gospel (Romans 10:9---15)

and live out the Christian life so that non-believers may see it (Matthew 5:16, John 13:34-35).

Therefore, we encourage intentional interaction with, not imitation of or by, the world; we seek to train believers to communicate the gospel; and, we provide opportunities to introduce non-believers to the fellowship of our church.

Our Values and Priorities

The combination of our purpose and principles produces a clear set of priorities for our ministry. Success in accomplishing the mission demands investing our energy, time, and resources into meeting the following nine priorities captured around our four core values.



Loving – Thoroughly loving God with our entire being

- Adore God – Mark 12:30, Psalm 29:2

To be a place where God's presence is tangible so that believers are transformed and unbelievers are converted.

- Continue in fervent prayer – James 5:16, Philippians 4:6

To be a people who rest with submissive faith upon the will of God, and reach with obedient faith to do the will of God, by reverently communicating with God

Growing – Continuously pursuing conformity to the likeness of Christ

- Honor the Scriptures in belief and action – Hebrews 4:12, II Corinthians 3:16---17, Joshua 1:8

To exalt the Word of God by preaching, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating and heeding it.

- Disciple members to spiritual maturity – Ephesians 4:11---13, II Timothy 2:2

To enable every member of our church family to be active in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Building – Spiritually edifying one another through true fellowship

- Encourage accountable relationships through fellowship – Hebrews 10:24---25, II Corinthians 13:5

To build a community of faith where believers are protected and edified through loving relationships.

- Involve members in gift---based ministry – I Corinthians 1:7, I Corinthians 7:7, I Corinthians 13:2, I Peter 4:10

To equip believers to do the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body.

Reaching -- Compassionately taking the gospel to the lost

- Bring people to faith in Christ – II Corinthians 5:20---21, Matthew 28:18---20

To go and present the Gospel with boldness and clarity, and to provide events and programs that can be used by our church family as evangelistic tools.

- Facilitate global missions – Isaiah 45:22, Isaiah 52:10, Acts 13:47

To promote the spreading of the gospel around the world through encouraging our own people to be willing to go and providing for those who already are.

- Give the right opinion of God in our community – I Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17

To be recognized as a place where God and His Word are taken seriously as the key to a life of joy—now and eternally.

Our Plan

There are usually three elements involved in a plan: strategy, structure, and resources. Developing a strategy answers the question, What is the most effective path to fulfill our mission? Structure answers, How must we organize ourselves to implement the strategy and complete our mission? The question of resources is, What do we need to carry out the strategy and fulfill our mission?

Our Strategy

The nine priorities of our church actually serve as our strategy statement. We believe that we will honor God by making and maturing disciples if we adore God, bring people to faith in Christ, continue in fervent prayer, disciple members to spiritual maturity, encourage accountable relationships through fellowship, give the right opinion of God in our community, honor the Scriptures in belief and action, and involve members in gift based ministry.

Prayerful and persistent effort will be poured into designing and implementing specific programs that will enable us to reach these nine priorities. Programs are applications of biblical principles. We should expect to create new programs regularly. Programs which become ineffective should be changed or discontinued. We never surrender the biblical principles upon which a program is built, but we must from time to time give up a program!

Our Structure

We believe that the ultimate human authority within the New Testament church is in the congregation. The congregation is responsible for the election of its officers (pastor and deacons). The pastor is called by the church to be the overseer of the church's ministries, the shepherd of the flock of God, and the spiritual leader of the congregation. In our church, the senior pastor has been given authority by the congregation to enlist the assistance of other pastors and staff people in order provide leadership for the church and to carry out the specific functions of the church's agencies. Whether senior or assistant pastor, the biblical role of pastors is to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the edifying of the body. In order to fulfill our mission by effectively implementing our strategy, our church ministry is organized according to specific discipleship commitment.

Our Resources

Bethel Baptist Church exists by the work of God in the hearts of His people moving them to give according to the principles found in Scripture (I Corinthians 16:1---4).

The stewardship of these gifts is directly supervised by the Assistant Pastor under the leadership of the senior pastor. A detailed report is examined by the deacons and presented to the congregation. The Annual Business Meeting provides an opportunity for

the church leadership (pastors and deacons) to make a report on the church's financial condition and to propose the new budget to the congregation. Since the Bible teaches congregational church government, this meeting is a necessary part of fulfilling God's will for our church. The Business Meeting is the place where we seek to demonstrate our faithfulness to biblical principles of stewardship.

II Corinthians 8:19---24 offers valuable insight about how God's people should administer His resources. Paul is describing his principles for the supervision of the funds given for the saints in Jerusalem (cf. Romans 15:26). Vs. 19---24 contain four principles that govern wise supervision of funds. These principles govern our thinking regarding the stewardship of the money the Lord gives to us through His people.

- First, our top priority is expressed in the words, "for the glory of the Lord Himself" (vs. 19). As in everything else, God's glory should be our highest concern.
- Second, we must exercise reasonable precautions so "that no one should discredit us" (vs. 20). It is not enough to just do things right, we must take every step needed to avoid any appearance of impropriety.
- Third, we should follow practices that "have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (vs. 21). This is why we use standard accounting practices, produce our reports in keeping with accepted accounting form, etc. It is important to us to make sure that we are doing what is right from anybody's perspective.
- Fourth, this passage teaches us two things about the personnel who administer the funds. They should be people who have been examined ("we have often tested and found diligent in many things," vs. 22). They should be elected by the church ("they are messengers of the churches," vs. 23; cf. vs. 19 "appointed by the churches").

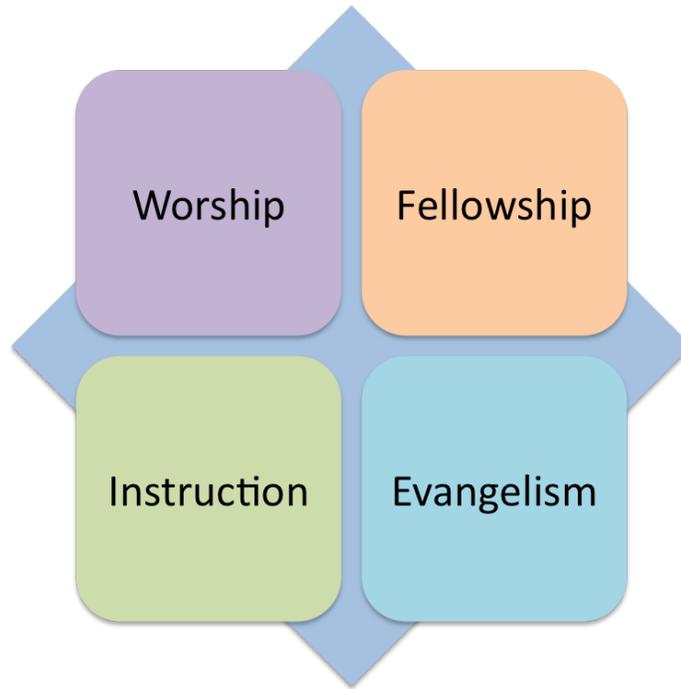
That is why our church deacons are responsible for examining the monthly financial reports, and recommending the new budget each year.

God has graciously supplied for His work in this place, and we praise Him for it. We believe that resources entrusted to us should be used for the fulfillment of our God---given mission. To that end we pray and work—may God be glorified by and through His people here at Bethel Baptist Church!

Our Practice

Acts 2:41---47 “So **those who received his word** were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and the **prayers**. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**”

In this passage of scripture we see four major areas of emphasis in the practice of the first generation Church. Taking them as a model for ministry emphasis, we desire to categorize the practice of our ministry according to these four areas. They are as follows:



We will endeavor to select one of these areas as a major ministry wide emphasis each year. With each emphasis we will begin with people, trying to assess the giftedness of our people for ministry. As we determine the people who are available to minister, then we will design programs to facilitate their ministry. In light of new programs, we will then evaluate our plant to see if there are facility changes that we need to make in order to house the new programs. Finally, in light of those new programs, we will analyze personnel to see if there needs to be any additional staff added to direct the new ministry.

Taking each ministry emphasis one year at a time allows us to have a biblical methodology for our program. We become intentional and purposeful in how we do ministry, and keep in constant touch with the principles and priorities of our philosophy. Rather than just wanting to build a new building or start a new program, we are more driven by our purpose. This methodology also keeps us from the “tyranny of the immediate,” where we do things because we have to due to poor planning.

We will have a particular ministry emphasis each year. The fifth year will be a year of review or a reemphasis of an area of particular need. This will give us a five---year plan, which will encompass people, program, plant, and personnel.

Conclusion

In Ephesians. 3:14---21, Paul, the servant of the Lord, passionately stated, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

This passage of scripture from the book of Ephesians, which is the Epistle of the Church, fully captures the whole of our philosophy of ministry. This passionate prayer of the Apostle Paul is the heart---cry of this body for one another. We rest in God to do His mighty work in us, that He might do His great work through us so that we, His people in this place, may give the right opinion of Him to a watching world. May God grant us the grace to do His work in His way for His glory alone. It is our desire to find grace from the Word, that we might take grace to the world, and do it for His glory!