

Some Practical Aspects of Ministry

Introduction

At the beginning of ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus announced in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19)

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (NIV)

He also said in John 14:12-13:

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. (NIV)

Prayer ministry, referred to in this and other articles simply as "ministry" involves processes which aim to do for people what the Lord did for people – in short, to set people free to live effective and purposeful Christian lives.

As one would expect, ministry addresses the kind of issues which were addressed by the Lord himself as recorded in the Gospels – and other things too, some of which are listed below.

We are made up of spirit, soul and body and anything which adversely affects one can impact the other. It is well known, of course, that the working of the body can be affected by a person's state of mind, e.g., worry can cause physical pain. We have frequently found it necessary to deal with one or more of the following issues in persons asking for ministry – and the list is by no means exhaustive.

Generational Problems, Occult involvement, Demonic Infestation, Ungodly Ties, Addictions, Curses, Fears, Rejection, Unforgiveness and Trauma. Any of those things can be an underlying cause of sickness in some cases.

When a person initially asks for ministry, one might take a guess at what underlying problem(s) might be on the basis of the behaviour of the person as we see it. However, as we are dealing primarily with spiritual issues in ministry, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit and guesswork is not one of the Gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Preparation for Ministry

Almost invariably, ministry is carried out by a team of, say, three people. For the benefit of the person receiving ministry, the members of the team must work well together and it shouldn't come as a surprise that those who work together frequently can form a strong effective team.

Usually, ministry will take place as part of the work of a church to which the ministry team and the person requiring ministry belong. In such a case, the leadership of the church will normally decide who will be part of the team. In that way there is accountability and the leadership can oversee the ministry so that they know what is going on in their church and who is involved. There may also be times where ministry takes place out of a church setting such as within a Christian organization which offers ministry as part of its work. In such a case, the leadership of the organisation should act in a similar role to church leadership in order to ensure accountability. In fact, these notes are

provided on the basis that those who might use them do so only under the direction of leadership to whom they are accountable.

It can be left up to those who are to minister to make an appointment with the person concerned. After that has been arranged, a number of things can be done and teams may vary in the way in which they work from this point on. For example:-

1 The person can be asked to complete a questionnaire which asks relevant questions about the person and which can help to indicate if any of the issues listed above are present. That can be looked at by the team before the first ministry session. It must be made clear to the person that the answers will be kept confidential. We'll return to that.

2 The person can be asked to list the core issues which are felt to be giving rise to the need for ministry. The list can again be looked at by the team before the first ministry session. Again, confidentiality must be respected.

3 The team members can pray individually or in a group asking the Lord to show them what issues need to be ministered into and what needn't be. The Lord knows all things and if a team can be armed with revelation from the Holy Spirit as to the issues which must be addressed, ministry can go straight to the core. That can mean fewer ministry sessions and significant results early on which will encourage the person concerned. A team member will do well to communicate with other team members any information believed to have been given by the Holy Spirit to enable it to be considered by the others.

4 Note that it isn't possible to put ministry into a box and deal with everyone in the same way. However, a start will need to be made and what follows below may be helpful in that respect. It is based on an approach used by Proclaiming His Word Ministries - an organisation founded by Betsy and Chester Kylstra. Their excellent book entitled Restoring the Foundations contains a wealth of helpful information on the healing ministry.

Broadly speaking, ministry can often be divided into four headings

1 Generational Issues

For example traits such as adultery and other sexual sins and addictions such as alcoholism can pass down the family line and replicate in children of each generation. They can then cause or reinforce problems under the next headings. When praying for a person affected in that way, we found that freedom can be experienced if the person repents of their own involvement in such things and asks for forgiveness and forgives their ancestors for becoming involved in activities which have given rise to the issue in question.

Those praying then pray along these lines **“In the name of Jesus, we now cut you free from the generational line by which these sins have had power to influence you.”** If any demon spirit is discerned which has used the sin as a means of gaining entry to the person's life it would be commanded to go and we'll look into that more in a while. Finally the Holy Spirit would be invited to come and fill the places that have been “swept clean” and to bring healing and wholeness to any “raw” areas. That takes us to the next heading:-

2 Ungodly Belief Patterns

Beliefs such as “I'm not lovable”, “Nobody will ever want me” “I'll never be any use to anyone” “It's stupid to cry” “I should have been a boy” “I'm not good enough to be used by God” are examples ungodly belief patterns. Often, ungodly belief patterns will have been caused by the way the person has been treated by others and may also be linked to generational

sin. For example, where a man feels rejected and is frequently setting himself up for rejection, it turns out that he was the youngest of four brothers and he knows his parents really wanted a girl. Ministry into such situations will frequently involve the person renouncing the ungodly belief, asking God to forgive them for receiving it and for living their life based on it and forgiving the ones who contributed to the belief being conceived.

3 Deep Emotional Hurts

Such as hurts caused by abuse, divorce, failures, abandonment and so on can be healed in the name of Jesus. Once again, freedom will often involve forgiving those who cause the hurt. In fact, forgiveness of others is a major feature of ministry and comes up time and again. So many problems seem to be exacerbated by holding unforgiveness – and it can be hard for some people to forgive. We have had instances where the need to forgive has been explained to the person receiving ministry who listens and says “fine”. We then get into prayer so they can do it. Time goes by and there’s silence. Finally the person looks up and say “I just can’t do it”. It can be helpful to explain that forgiving a person for something they said or did to cause hurt is not saying that what they did was OK.

4 Demonic Oppression

An example of that is where a demon has taken up residence in a person, sometimes as a result of problems under the other headings, with a view to stealing and destroying Godly virtues, causing general harassment and distress or giving power to addictions and sins such as anger, hatred, or pride.

5 It is essential for each member of the ministry team to be prepared in advance by taking time to pray for the ministry session and for the other team members as well as for the person scheduled to receive ministry.

A Ministry Session

It’s good for the team to gather before the person arrives who is in need of ministry. If the team can get half an hour beforehand to talk and pray together it is good to do so. Prayer for protection of team members and their families is advisable at that time.

When the person arrives, they need to be made welcome and comfortably. Offer the person a drink and make sure that they are in a seat where they can make eye contact with all the team members easily, e.g. without having to look left and right all the time. It’s good not to get too formal but levity will drive away the presence of the Holy Spirit so avoid it.

Soon afterwards, pray for the actual ministry session. After that, make it clear that whatever the person tells you will be kept confidential unless the team deems it necessary to make disclosure to the leadership, for example where it involves disclosure of a criminal act. Thereafter, if the person begins to tell the team about a criminal act such as child abuse, you must break in to what the person is beginning to share and make it clear that in view of the nature of the act, the leadership of the church or organization must be informed. Appropriate action can then be taken by the leadership. However, the principle of confidentiality cannot be stressed enough. You simply must not tell anyone what the person shares unless the person gives permission. If the person wants to tell others outside the team that’s their decision but you must not do so without express permission from the person.

Particularly where a man is involved in a ministry team and the person being ministered to is a woman, make it clear that if she wishes to share something only with ladies in the ministry team she should feel free to say so. That may happen if some sexual issue is involved. The man will then

leave the room for as long as necessary. On his return, the women of the team can then mention in general terms what additional matter requires ministry without necessarily going into details.

Next, invite the person to share with the team why it is they have asked for ministry and, in particular, get them to explain in a few words what they want the Lord to do for them. It is important that the person genuinely wants healing and does not simply want attention. Try not to look shocked about what the person might share and don't be judgmental. Now it's easy to get into that and miss one very important matter, i.e., is the person born again? Make a point of asking when and how the person became a Christian even if you believe that they are. It doesn't say much about our ability to hear the Holy Spirit if we miss the voice of the Spirit prodding us to check that one – but it's possible to miss so don't forget to ask. These notes are based on the premise that the person receiving ministry is a Christian.

Now, watch out for incessantly talkative persons. It has been known for demons to prefer the person to talk for a whole session rather than have the team get into prayer and minister. Even if they're not demonized, remember this principle, "The sooner you get into prayer the better". Yes you need to listen carefully, and do give the person space to share, but use wisdom. Don't let the session slip away. If you suspect after prolonged unfocussed talking that there is resistance to getting into prayer then, at the next appropriate break in the flow of words, suggest that it would be good to get into prayer and do so.

At that point, some teams like to break, go into another room and talk about what to do. Others like to move straight into ministry. Use discretion. Some people may find it odd to be left alone knowing that they are being talked about in another room. Others won't find it a problem. Just be wise. Don't leave the room because "That's what we do". If it's essential; fine. If not, don't do it as it will take up time which can be spent in ministering. Remember the principle again, "The sooner you get into prayer the better".

Moving into ministry, sit the person on a chair so that the team members can stand spaced apart around it. Then, make proclamations out loud, for example proclamations based on Philippians 2: 9-11. Proclamations should exalt the name of the Lord Jesus and the power in His blood. To do that makes it clear to demonic forces that you know who is Lord - and it reminds you that Jesus is Lord too.

If what a person has told the ministry team can be divided up under the four headings mentioned above, then beginning at the first one and working through can provide a starting point and a continuing sense of direction. There will invariably be overlap. Also, the Holy Spirit may intervene and move the ministry along another path and the ministry team must be prepared for that.

Let the team member who feels moved to open the ministry (and once you get into prayer, you will get the sense of who that should be) stand in front of the person and pray into the issue concerned. The rest of the team can then position themselves around the person accordingly. When the next issue is addressed, the person who feels moved to address it should ideally take the place of the one in front and so on. With experience, you will begin to know when your direct involvement should begin and when it should end. There's no place in ministry for raising your profile or seeking prestige by being the one in front doing it all. In some sessions, your role may be to provide back-up and agreement and that's just as important. It's team ministry and all that matters is that God receives glory and the person receives freedom.

If the Holy Spirit has highlighted some core issue then deal with it early on. Although peripheral issues may be dealt with at some point, it's much better to deal with core issues at the start and sometimes it will only be the Holy Spirit who knows the difference. Having said that, some

peripheral issues may never be dealt with in ministry. In such cases, God may use them to mature the person, for example to keep them humble. Our dependence on the Holy Spirit to highlight the relevant issues cannot be overemphasized.

Get accustomed to praying with your eyes open during ministry. It's wise to see what's happening. In that way, if any demonic manifestation causes, for example, the person to flail around with his or her arms or to begin slipping off the chair, you will be aware of it.

Suggest that the person shares anything that he or she feels the Lord is revealing to them and which could be relevant to the ministry. Guidance sometimes comes during the ministry time via the person being ministered to.

Don't go on so long that the person and the team become exhausted. What isn't dealt with this time will usually wait until next time. Again, let dependence on the Holy Spirit prevail and you will get a sense of when to finish the ministry session.

As the ministry time draws to a close, remind the person that it is necessary to walk in the healing they have received. God does lovely things in the lives of people during ministry and puts them in a position where they have the opportunity of walking free of things which once bound them. So, where a gambling problem has been dealt with in the ministry, the person now has a wonderful opportunity to walk free of it. To do that, the person must not get involved with it again as to do so would provide an opening for the problem to return.

At the end of the ministry session, some teams choose to anoint the person. Use discretion. Ask the person if they are happy with that. Ask the team if they feel it is good to do so at that point. Never reduce anointing to "This is the way we end ministry sessions". It is an act having spiritual significance.

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These ministry notes should be regarded as a guide only to ways of approaching ministry. Qualified medical, psychiatric or legal advice may need to be sought in certain situations and nothing in the notes must be taken as a substitute for such advice. Moreover, the way in which the notes are used is beyond the control of the writer and Mannawords. All those using the notes and those receiving ministry do so of their own volition and on the basis that all such ministry is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and neither the writer nor Mannawords can offer guarantees with respect to any particular person receiving healing in any particular area of his or her life. All those using the notes and those receiving ministry do so on the condition that they waive all rights to claim liability.