

“Primary Source Ministry”

Part 1: Connection More than Preparation

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

Backdrop

Our vision is to have a church with no ministries - just ministers. The Lord has been speaking to me about decentralization that's happening in the world. Air B&B is the biggest hotel chain yet they don't own a property! Do you see the connection? A church with no ministries ... only ministers. Air B&B is a hotel chain with no buildings - only hotel-owners basically.

Is the Lord foreshadowing something that He is doing in the church? I believe that He is. I believe that what we are seeing of decentralization pales in comparison to what we are going to see in the Body of Christ because Isaiah 60 says that we are going to shine so bright that the Gentiles are doing to run to us with the wealth of nations.

I believe that we are currently in a season of reformation in the church. What it looks like we don't know, but it is a new wineskin. It's a very exciting time in the church!

Empowering Ministers

At the end of the last message, Bryan got up and said “this really puts a lot of personal responsibility on us, doesn't it?” For many of you, the last message maybe opened up a whole line of questions and Bryan was speaking to that.

So how do you step into that place of ministry?

I've personally been crying out to the Lord about “God how do I empower the body to step into the place of ministry?” I don't want engagement; I want empowerment. There's a difference. Engagement is about a centralized church model. “Here's what we have going on at Agathos this week ... would you like to engage with it?” Engagement is good but it is not empowerment.

The Lord began showing me that empowerment comes through ownership. You need to have personal ownership; that's where empowerment comes from. So I was crying out to God “Lord, how do I teach, how do I preach such that empowerment and ownership get released?” Sometimes it's not just what you say but how you say it. Jesus said the corollary of that “take heed what you hear and how you hear.”

All empowerment comes from personal, one-on-one intimacy with the Lord. This series is going to be called “primary source ministry.”

Do you remember your history papers from school? There are secondary sources “so-and-so said this-and-that about the Battle of Gettysburg.” Primary sources are not commentary on what others saw or experienced. Primary sources are “I was there ... this is what happened.” No commentary. Photos of the battle, diary entries from Generals. These are primary sources.

All ministry is going to come from getting connected to the primary source! We do not get empowered for ministry through a secondary source. If what you hear from those who are equipping you in the Lord doesn't lead to your own encounter with Jesus then you won't get connected to the Vine and there won't be ministry. Yet in John 4, the most unexpected woman - who was afraid to be seen in public - became the one shouting from the rooftops of what Jesus had told her in private. How did it happen? She had a one-on-one primary source connection to her Savior. Everything changes when you get connected to Him.

You might say “well I'm a believer; I am connected to Him.” Yes, but how tangible is His pleasure on you right now? Do you see what I am saying? As we go through the day is His pleasure tangible? I've been in both places.

As we go through the day, and we have a moment free, do I want to run to the Word, run to worship, and run to prayer? Or do I want to run to look at fly fishing stuff? (And by the way, God LOVES fly fishing :) So there is a place for that. 100%. He is just as much in that). But I am saying it's the status of my heart. Are my affections for Him so current that I am hungering and thirsting for more of Him ... or do I have a taste for something else? Take heed what you hear and take heed how you hear for to him who has more will be given.

What you set your affections on you will get more of.

Have you ever wondered how some people eat such terrible quality, unhealthy food meal after meal? (I am not a perfect health food eater or something so there is no judgement here.) You are thinking “I think I would become ill if I tried to eat what they are eating.” Their body has simply adjusted to eating JUNK. If you don't taste and see that the Lord is good you'll settle for mediocre food.

I know that we all have A connection with God, I'm saying “how current is our connection with God?” That's the source of all ministry confidence.

That's what this series is about. I have the impression that it's going to be like we are circling the walls of Jericho for a while and then some things are going to fall down for some of us - things that have been restrictive for some of us being able to step into ministry.

Preparation and Connection: Not “either or” but “one’s MORE!”

I’m saying we are going to be a church of ministers, but I am not telling you to “prepare for ministry.” I’m telling you to “connect for ministry.”

I have 10 shifts in thinking about ministry I plan to share. Maybe 5 of them will really speak to you. Maybe it will be 3 of them, or 8 of them, or 10 of them. Maybe it will be 12 of them ... “I just need to hear those 2 twice!”

These 10 shifts in our thinking about ministry will produce dramatic results with tremendous joy and greatest ease in your life.

The first shift is the shift from preparation for ministry —> connection of the minister. Our connection to the Father is the bigger deal than “preparation for ministry.”

I am not saying to not prepare to minister. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* I take that seriously. I minister to myself the Word of God such that I have the Word of God in me to minister!

You will do more good out of connection to the Father than you will out of preparation for ministry.

I am big on preparing. For instance in prepping for a sermon I often spend hours upon hours. So that’s good. But I know from experience, that once you are standing in front of someone or a group of people, all of your preparation is going to come down to your connection. You will do more good out of connection than you will out of preparation. I am not saying “either-or” I am just saying “one’s more.”

In order to show you that I was not saying “either or” I wanted to show you 2 Timothy 2:15. But I discovered something in the Greek of that verse in preparing this message ... I’ve been misquoting it for years! I was quoting out of the KJV but it turns out the Greek doesn’t support the King James Version. They use a down-the-list definition of a Greek word instead of the obvious 1st definition of the word and it totally changed the verse for me.

Here’s how I had normally been reading it “STUDY to show yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” But the Greek actually reads more like this: *“Be DILIGENT to stand beside God as one approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* So the Greek is not “study” but “be diligent.”

What are we supposed to be diligent about? To stand beside God as one approved! Be diligent to stand beside God - as ONE APPROVED! Be diligent to stay in close connection to the Father according to your status of not being rejected by Him AT ALL with the grace of our Lord Jesus

covering over anything you have ever done! Be diligent to stand next to Him, in connection with Him - knowing your status with Him as a New Covenant saint!

Paul was telling Timothy “if you are diligent in order to stand next to Him in this way - to remain in connection with Him in this way, you will be a worker who after you’ve done the work will not be ashamed. You won’t be worrying what other people think of you because you only did what was coming out of connection. You won’t be going back to God to see what He thought about what you did because what you did came out of His thoughts originally! It wasn’t you! It was you by your choice to remain in Him, but it wasn’t you!”

So you are doing these things out of connection and you have no need to be ashamed then as a worker. This mentality (of being one who is a New Testament saint completely in right standing with God where you’ve been diligent to stand beside God as one approved) is what causes you to rightly divide the Word of God.

The division in the Word of God is the New and the Old Covenant. The Cross is the division - the dividing point. There is Old Covenant inside the Gospels. He had not yet died. If you read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, there are a number of Old Covenant things that are still imprisoning people under sin. He’s telling them “you think you’ve solved the Law, but you haven’t solved the Law ... you looked at her with lust buddy!” He’s imprisoning further under sin. As a tutor, the Law bringing us to the Savior - Christ - so that in the fullness of time we could come into fullness of life!

We’re supposed to be diligent for something. I thought I was going to go to 2 Timothy 2:15 so I could say “I know you are supposed to diligent to study.” And there is that part. That’s why I read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The scripture is what makes you equipped as a minister - but it’s not the same as connection. It’s not the same as connection.

We have unthought of expectations about ministry. God is moving us from an expectation. If I tell you we are going to be a church full of ministers then we tend to immediately think “I’ve got to prepare.” I’m saying “connect.” Connect.

This is why I went after that fear of rejection to start. If we have that fear of rejection we are saying “God I know you’ve forgiven me of everything. I know I’m good in Christ, but I really don’t want to talk with you about THAT. So I just hold myself at arm’s distance from You. We can talk about ministry. We can talk about theology. God, I want to hear what you have to say. I can prophecy, but please don’t look me in the eyes.”

I’m saying we want that intimacy and connection. Where we know the heartbeat of our Father and we can feel His pleasure.

You know I heard this for the first time this past week from Bill Johnson. Paul knew this. He said “do not grieve the Holy Spirit.” Do you know that you can feel the mood of Holy Spirit. Have you felt that little weight on your heart. It’s not quite a sadness. It’s like “ohh.” That’s Holy Spirit’s mood on the inside of you. This is the intimacy that Father has with you - that you would know His moods. That you would know His heartbeat. You would know where His eyes are looking.

It’s not preparation for ministry so much as it is connection for ministry. All of ministry is coming out of connection.

Activating Connection for Ministry

Everything in the Kingdom is voice activated. It’s like Alexa! You’re going to have to use your voice.

We’ve not conceived of ministry as connection to the Father. I don’t think so.

I think we consider ministry more like “we’ve got to go do something.” Whereas God’s thinking more like “no, it’s about Who you are with!” Follow Me (be with Me) and I will make you fishers of men (ministers)!

Because if ministry is something you need to go do, instead of Someone you need to be with - it’s a very different thing. And if ministry is the goal for believers and it is something you have to do not someone you have to be with you now have a new God. Because the pinnacle of what you are reaching for is an action instead of a Person.

I have a sign above my desk in my woodshop. It reads “Peter - Agathos = Peter.” This is only part of my ministry and my ministry shouldn’t even affect me. It’s just something I’m doing with my Father. Then you get done ministering and it’s like “I’m still with my Father ... the best part of the day still exists.”

Some of us need to make a trade. Trade-in ministry as you’ve known it. Trade it in! Ministry is not “something to do.” Trade that notion of ministry in!

Look, it’s like you have a junker car that’s no fun. It takes all your money all the time. It wastes your time. it’s no joy to be in. And God is saying “you could just ride with Me and call it ministry!” That would be an upgrade!

It’s time to make a trade! Ministry is not “what you do” it’s “Who you are with.” That’s a new definition of ministry - a new facet of understanding what ministry is.

If you are with Him, you are a MINISTER on fire! You will do more through being with Him, joined at the hip, yoked with Him, identified with Him, connected with Him, the branch in the

Vine! Apart from that you can actually do nothing, but if you'd like to keep thinking of ministry as something to do because that's what's been taught to us or that's what we've presumed ...

I'm saying you need to make an exchange. Raise up your voice. Or say it with your whole heart. Whatever you need to do. But I want to encourage you to declare something like this "Father, ministry is no longer what I do ... I just want to be connected with You! I trade out ministry for doing and I just want to be connected with You."

If ministry is a "doing" then you are going to constantly try to light new matches to get yourself on fire. But I saw a vision of this and the Lord told me "not more matches - more oxygen!" Your connection with Him will breathe oxygen upon the flame that's already in your heart! It's the oxygen.

You don't need to keep lighting matches. You don't need to keep stirring yourself up for ministry. You don't need to keep trying to engage yourself in what's going on. You don't need to keep measuring yourself. "I don't measure up. I don't quite measure up." Stop measuring yourself. Stop.

It's not OK to measure yourself. That's the knowledge of good and evil. I'm serious. You're just supposed to know Him. They knew Him and they traded that in for the knowledge of good and evil. If you think you know something you don't yet know as you ought to know because we are not supposed to know a Person! Truth is a person. His Name is Jesus! (Jn. 14:6)

I'm telling you that God's freeing us up! Make that exchange. Trade that junker in. Ministry is not something to do; it's Someone to be connected to.

I'm not trying to engage you in some ministry here. I am wanting to connect you to the Vine and you will bear fruit!

Declare this: "If I'm connected to Him I will bear fruit and my joy is going to be full!"

Amen - your joy is going to be full!

Afterword: Look at our Example (from Brad)

Jesus is our Example. As Bill Johnson says, Jesus is perfect theology! If you're concerned or questioning any theology, look at Jesus. Watch what He does and go "that's it; that's perfect theology."

As it relates to what Peter is saying right now - that our ministry comes from our connection ... Is study of the Word important? Absolutely. But if all you do is study, study, and study and you don't have that connection you end up becoming actually a little bit dangerous because your message isn't with the Spirit of the Lord on it and it becomes more the letter of the law instead of the Spirit of the law. So you can be correct and completely wrong in your ministry.

So, looking at our Lord, how did He operate? You can read through the New Testament and watch this pattern: Jesus went from a place of prayer to a place of ministry. From a place of prayer to a place of ministry. He would minister and He would leave and go up on the mountain. He would come down and minister and he would leave and go up on the mountain. He kept doing that. Oftentimes when it was dark, Jesus would go pray and be there all night long and then He would come down the mountain, grab His disciples and go and minister. Then He would leave them and go back up on the mountain.

It was that connection. That's what Jesus was ministering from. He studied the word. He knew it inside and out. He knew it better than the Pharisees. He would constantly correct their theology. He would ask them "does the Word of God not say ...?" He knew the Word, but He didn't rely on that for His ministry. He said "I want to watch the Father move. He moves in My heart and He's moving Me over here now ..." Jesus was moved by the Father and ministered from that which was inside through His study, but the Father would move Him. When Jesus would minister and heal the sick you will often see this phrase "and being moved with compassion" He would heal the sick. That was the Father moving in Jesus saying "go minister to this person."

When I (Brad) go into the streets and minister and lead people to Christ, I pay attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I learned that from Him years ago when I was in my early years. I would sometimes run into these heavy walls with people wanting to argue with me about the Lord and I didn't want to argue with them - I just wanted to love on them. And I found myself resisting wanting to minister the gospel and I stated backing away a little bit and I didn't want to be hesitant! So I went to the Father and said "speak to me Father."

I said "Your word says go into all the world and preach to every creature" but He said to me "but I also said that as many as are being led by the Spirit of God these are the children of God. Let Me lead you."

So now when I go to minister I listen to the Holy Spirit "should I minister to this person or that person?" because some people are ready. The Father has prepared them; they are ready. Others are not.

Just look at Our Lord. A place of prayer to a place of ministry. A place of prayer to a place of ministry. We have to constantly keep going back and connecting to the Vine and getting filled up and then it is easy. Ministry becomes even beyond easy - it's a joy. When you are ministering strictly from you, it's exhausting. It's difficult. It's hard. When you are ministering from what you've received from Him you are like "I just want to share this with somebody!" It's a joy! Amen!