

As Christians we have been given the privilege of the ministry of reconciliation. What an awesome responsibility it is to serve in the Kingdom of God. This week we will look at some practical steps to help us be effective in the glorious mission of bringing others into the kingdom and serving in the kingdom.

Day 1

Vision

John 9:1-41

Throughout scripture, vision is an important aspect of being a human in both a physical and a spiritual sense. Scripture tells us that without vision, the people perish. But from a spiritual perspective, what is vision? Vision is the ability to see the immaterial spiritual reality that makes up the kingdom of God. It is an ability to see the hierarchy of God's kingdom in all that exists physically. In the story of John 9 it appears that Jesus physically heals the man that has been blind from birth, but he is also healing a spiritual blindness of the people around him. We see this in the question that is posed by the disciples as they encounter the blind man, "who sinned?" They were not able to see how to fit something like blindness into the hierarchy of the kingdom. Could it be that something like blindness has a purpose that can glorify God? Can something tragic ultimately fit into the hierarchy and glorify God? In order to be useful in helping to fit other people into the hierarchy of God's kingdom it is first necessary that we see that hierarchy and how we fit into it ourselves. Pray this week that you would have your eyes opened to areas that you may be blind to.

Day 2

Our Place

Ephesians 4:11-16; Jeremiah 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Romans 10:14-15

What place has God given to you in the hierarchy of the Kingdom? What has God gifted you with and how can that be given meaning and purpose in the world God created? This involves all aspects of our lives from our jobs that we go to each day and get paid for, to our hobbies and interests, and it even includes our mental and physical gifts and talents. How can you bless the world and the people around you with those things? How can you inspire and equip others to do the same in their own lives? Like a body, God has made each part with unique capabilities that gives each a unique contribution to the blessing of the whole. Each day we go to work and get paid to contribute to the whole, but every other aspect of our life can also be brought into the meaning and purpose of the kingdom. What parts of your life do you have a hard time seeing as part of God's kingdom? What parts of your life can you bring into alignment with God's desire to bless all of creation? How can you be more intentional about being a blessing to the world around you?

Day 3

Joyful Service

Psalm 4:7; Psalm 5:11; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 20:5; Psalm 21:6

I once knew a woman that would go around her house muttering angrily as she did the chores that all households require to be maintained as safe and healthy places to live. This impressed two things upon her family. The first, that she got no joy from serving those to whom she was closest. The second, that if serving those you love is distasteful, serving those you don't love couldn't possibly be any better. Now I don't believe that she intended to communicate these things, but they were implicit in her endless low decibel monologue. She was, also, far from unique in her assessment of the enjoyment of service. Most

of us just want to be done with service so we can relax. When we take joy in service, however, everything gets reversed. We use our rest to gather strength for future service rather than seeing service as an unwelcome break in rest. We also tend to use rest as a celebration of service rather than an avoidance of it. In the end, we tend to have a much more joyful and productive life and at the same time we make service attractive to others. What areas in your life need to have a joy-overhaul (joyoverhaul)? What is standing in the way of your joy? What untruths have you believed? What areas of your attitude need to be evaluated? What is holding you back from enjoying the ministry that God has given you?

Day 4

Body Building

Ephesians 4:1-16, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3

Ministry is the bringing of people into the kingdom of God or manifesting the blessings of God's kingdom to those already in it. We see that everything we do can be done in the will of God, therefore everything we do can be a manifestation of the kingdom of God in the world. When we live this truth out in our lives, we bring the blessings of kingdom life into the lives of those we encounter. Take the human body as an example. When the lungs function as a part of the body they bring the blessing of oxygen to the whole body. When we do our part in the body, we help build up the body. It grows and matures, receiving the blessing it needs to do so. You may think that it doesn't matter if you do your part, but it makes all the difference in the world. You may think that it doesn't matter if you attend services, attend bible studies, take an interest in those around you or pray for the members of the church. You may think it doesn't matter if you exercise your spiritual gifts. It matters far more than you know. Take some time today to pray that God would show you opportunities to build up the body. Look for opportunities to encourage others, to make them feel like they belong. Set up a prayer list of people in the congregation that you can make a habit of praying for. Seek ways to bless and be united to those who are part of our church by exercising your spiritual gifts.

Day 5

Works of Service

Hebrews 2:17; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:13; Matthew 14:22-33

God has called all of us to the administration of his grace through his kingdom. This takes so many forms that it is impossible to name even a small fraction of them. From the way we do our paid jobs at our places of employment, to working in the children's ministry at church, to making sure to greet all those we see come in the door on a Sunday morning, there are more ways to be of service in the kingdom than any of us could explore in a lifetime. How do we know where to start? What needs do you see around you? Who needs someone to talk to? What tasks around the church need to be done? What do you see that you could contribute to? All of us see things that need to be done from time to time or people that need to be spoken to, but most of the time we doubt our capabilities to fill those needs or we believe that someone else will do it. When we doubt our capabilities, we are forgetting some important points. First, you have been given the vision of what needs to be done, not someone else. Second, when God commands, he also equips. The reason Peter asks Jesus to command him to walk on water is that Jesus will also make it possible for him to do so. Third, we often worry about what people think and equate that with success in ministry. If you noticed the first four verses at the top of this day 5 study, it is God who we serve. God alone determines the success or failure of our efforts. In the parable of the talents the servant who was afraid and did nothing was the only failure. Fear Not.