

Springs Bible Church Philosophy of Ministry Statement

Introduction

A philosophy of ministry is critical for any church to think through and articulate. It expresses its deep convictions concerning ministry, provides a roadmap, and serves as an ongoing check to see if its convictions hold true or change over the years. A philosophy of ministry should be broader than a doctrinal statement. It should work out an understanding of doctrine and relate it to daily ministry.

The Bible is clear that God has created us first and foremost for His glory. The purpose of every creature is to bring glory to his Creator. Our confession is that the chief end of man is to glorify God. This is what is so clearly articulated in Scripture (1 Chr 16:10; Ps 71:8; Rom 11:36-12:1; 15:5-7; 16:27; 1 Cor 1:31; 6:20; 10:31; 2 Cor 4:15; Gal 1:3-5 Eph 3:21-4:1; Phil 1:11; 2:9-11; 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:20-21; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 4:16; 5:11; 2 Pet 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 14:7; 15:4; 19:1, 7). It should be no surprise then that if our chief end is to glorify God, then the chief end of God is to glorify Himself. The Scriptures makes this clear as well (Ps 23:3; 25:11; 79:9; 115:1; Isa 44:23; 48:9, 11; 60:21; 61:1-3, Jer 14:21, Ezek 36:22).

A philosophy of ministry statement could include many things, but in our day here in America it should include such subjects as corporate worship, men's and women's roles in the church, church leadership, and outreach. The following is MBC's philosophy of ministry statement dealing with issues biblically and then practically.

God is Glorified in the Corporate Worship of His Church

The way we most glorify God is by our worship. This is why God has saved us (John 4:23-24). It's our highest calling in life. God's people glorifying Him through corporate worship is regularly spoken of in His Word (Exod 15:2; Ps 9:1-2; 22:22; 29:2; 34:1; 35:28; 71:8; 95:6; Isa 43:21; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; 1 Pet 2:9; Heb 13:5). With this in mind, several parts should be included in our worship to bring our God the glory He so richly deserves.

Reading and the Preaching of the Scriptures is Part of Our Worship

Worship is giving to God the glory or worth due to His great name. The question then is, how do we glorify God as His people in a local worship setting? Part of our worship together as believers, if not the primary part, is the reading and preaching of the Scriptures. This is replete throughout the bible. Ezra opened the Book of the Law in front of all the people, read it to them, gave the sense of it, and helped them understand it (Neh 8:4-8). This was also the pattern of Jesus' ministry as He went from synagogue to synagogue preaching God's Word. He first read the Scriptures and then preached its meaning to the people (Luke 4:16-30).

Paul followed Christ's example of going to the synagogues, opening the Scriptures, and then explaining them to the people (Acts 17:1-3). He told Timothy to do the same thing in the church's corporate worship saying, "Till I come, give attention to reading, exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim 4:13). Timothy was to first read the Scriptures and then exhort and encourage the people as he preached the Scriptures to them. Finally, he was to teach them the doctrines contained in the Scriptures for their edification. He told Timothy the same thing in 2 Timothy 4:2, "preach the Word!" The Word that he had known from childhood (3:15), the Word that was inspired and was profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction for righteousness so that he would be complete for every good work, he was now to preach to his people so they could have the same benefits. The Bible is clear that the reading of God's Word and the preaching of it is to be the central part in corporate worship, both in the Old Testament and the New.

Music and Singing is Part of Our Worship

Another way we worship God is through our music. Although music in and of itself is not worship, it is used in corporate worship throughout the Bible for God's glory (for music see Exod 15:1-21; 1 Chr 13:8; 25; 2 Chr 5:11-14; Ezra 3:10-11; for song see numerous Psalms, Matt 26:30; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Jas 5:13; Rev 13:5).

But what type of music glorifies God? This is probably one of the most hotly debated issues in American churches today. Yet the answer must be whatever pleases God most. This may sound simplistic, but it is very seldom discussed when music and songs are chosen for corporate worship. It is becoming more of a temptation to select music and songs to please people rather than God. If worship is giving God what is due His great name, however, then our music must be focused at pleasing Him.

And what pleases God most? First, music that is separate from the world. If our music is world-driven we are to avoid it. The Bible is clear on that (1 John 2:15; Rom 12:2). Second, what pleases God in music is what is specifically dedicated to Him. A good question to ask ourselves in choosing our music is, would we present this to our God before His throne in heaven? (Rev 5:8-13) If we can honestly say that we can present our music to our Lord in heaven in worship, we have a good start in establishing music that is pleasing to Him in our corporate worship here on earth. This is one area where Biblical principles especially need to guide each individual church through fervent prayer of the leaders and the people as they seek to honor God.

Concerning what lyrics to pick for our worship songs is not subjective at all. The Bible is clear that we are to sing words that are doctrinally sound (Eph 5:16; Col 3:16). Our words must be Christ-focused, rich in wisdom, biblically instructive, admonishing, and thankful to God.

Prayer and Praise is Part of Our Worship

Praying also needs to be included in our corporate worship. Paul told Timothy this in 1 Timothy 2:1-8. In the Old Testament, one primary example of prayer in the public worship of God's

people was Solomon's petitions at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:12-53).

The assembly of God's people in worship must also include praise. In the Old Testament God's people who were gathered together for worship were told to praise Him (1 Chr 16:4; 29:13; 2 Chr 20:19, 21; Ps 21:13; 22:25; 57:9; 100:4; 107:32; 116:19; 135:21; 147:12; 148:14; 149:1; 150:1). This is also true of New Testament worship (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 19:5).

God is Glorified in the Complementary Serving Roles of Men and Women in His Church

The Scriptures tell us that both women and men are equal before God. They are created equally in the image of God and, therefore, they both enjoy equal standing and benefits from Him in salvation (Gal 3:28). The Bible also tells us that even though men and women are equal as individuals before God, there are God-designed differences in their roles within the church. In worship, men are to "pray" while women are to "learn in silence with all submission" and are not "to teach or have authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:8, 11-12)

So we do not misunderstand this passage and think that this was only a cultural issue in Paul's day, he tells us that his instruction is based on the created order, not a cultural situation. He says that "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (13). So then headship is not a result of the sinful order, nor a result of a cultural situation, but God's design from the beginning of creation in a perfect sinless world. And what we learn from other parts of Scripture is that in God's order, not only is man the head of woman, but Christ is the head of man, and God the Father is the head of Christ the Son (1 Cor 11:3).

The difference in roles of ministry within the church between men and women then should complement each other. While men are called to specific ministries designed by God for them, women are equally called to ministries specifically designed by God for them. One area designed for men is in the leadership and care of God's entire flock as elders and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-10, 12-13), while their wives complement them through their faithfulness (1 Tim 5:1-2). Women are also called to minister very uniquely according to Proverbs 31:10-31 and Titus 2:3-5.

In summary then, when the roles of men and women are clear in the church, God is glorified and God's people are blessed for their love for Him and love for each other.

God is Glorified in a Biblically Functioning Leadership of His Church

Biblical leadership through the elders is essential for the growth and health of Christ's church. God's plan for this is found throughout Scripture. When Moses was overwhelmed with judging the people in Israel, he was to choose leaders to help him (Exod 18:13-27). Later, God took the Holy Spirit that was on Moses and put it on seventy elders to confirm them before the people and enable them for ministry in leading His people (Num 11:24-30).

The New Testament continues the role of elders in leading God's people. Paul tells Titus to "appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). This was Paul's practice as he "appointed elders in

every church” (Acts 14:23). The elders were responsible for the church’s monetary receipts (Acts 11:29-30), they were chosen by the Holy Spirit to oversee and shepherd God’s precious flock, the flock He purchased with His own Son’s blood (Acts 20:28), and they watched over the flock, protecting it from false teachers and their destruction of the church (Acts 28:29-30). The writer of Hebrews tells us we are to obey the God-centered teaching of our elders because they will one day give an account to God for the souls under their care; and God wants them to be able to give this account with joy (13:17). Peter says that the elders are to serve willingly, honestly, selflessly, and as examples (1 Pet 5:2-3).

The ministry qualifications for elders are specified in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The pastoral letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are the manuals for elders as they shepherd God’s flock. Concerning the distinction between elders and pastors, the terms are interchangeable. In the New Testament there was not one man called a pastor and other men called elders; all elders are pastors and all pastors are elders. There are, however, leaders among equals. Just as Peter was the leader of the Twelve, and yet equal among them, so it is in the church. One elder (today generally called the senior pastor), who is equal to the rest, leads and disciplines them so that they can all equally lead the flock of God.

When the elders of a local church function according to the God designed pattern set forth in Scripture, God is glorified and the people grow in a healthy loving spiritual environment.

God is Glorified in the Outreach of His Church

The church of Jesus Christ has a primary mandate to fulfill from her Lord: Make disciples (Matt 28:19-20). This mandate should be the mission and permeate every ministry of every local church. How do we make disciples? As we go through life we are to preach the gospel, win souls to Christ, baptize them, and then teach them everything Jesus commanded.

John lays out the pattern of discipleship in his first letter. He says that all of God’s children have been forgiven by Him (1 John 2:12). Then he says that there are three stages in a Christian’s growth. In reverse order there are little children, young men, and fathers (13). We begin as little children in the faith, only knowing our heavenly Father (13c). After we have been disciplined, we become young men able to overcome the wicked one (13b). Eventually we are to become fathers, deeply knowing Christ and being able to produce spiritual children ourselves (13a). This model should be the goal of every church in their discipleship.

Concerning the broader outreach of the church, not only are we to evangelize and bring people in to be disciplined, we should also reach out to any believers in the community in need of a good church family and discipleship. How this outreach is done may differ significantly from church to church. A plan to reach its community should be developed by every local church, beginning with the leadership and then all the people.

When a community is being reached for Christ, both in new converts and Christians needing a good church home, God is glorified.

Conclusion

It should be clear that a philosophy of ministry statement is a general but essential roadmap for ministry to guide the church in a biblical direction that glorifies God. It should be somewhat of a standard to gauge the church's success in the areas of corporate worship, the roles of men and women in the church, leadership in the church, and outreach. Other subjects can be added to this ministry statement, and as current issues develop in the church, it may become wise and necessary. The overarching principle in forming a ministry statement is the glory of God through a clear interpretation of His Word. "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph 3:21).