

MINISTRY PROFILE

Life Story and Call to Ministry

I grew up in a conservative, rural Presbyterian Church in central Ohio, an hour from Columbus. Though I made a verbal commitment to follow God in sixth grade, my relationship wasn't my own yet—and there was no connection between my mind and heart. It wasn't until I went down with serious knee problems as a teen that God really shook my world and He became personal to me. Through this trial, the Lord showed me that His unchanging love is the only thing I can put my hope in in this world. He began to affirm my identity in Him and He began to put me in places where I could use my gifts for His glory. God blessed me with an opportunity to serve high school students through the ministry of Young Life. I experienced many first-hand, life-changing accounts of young people meeting Christ for the first time and growing deeper in their faith. I believe that God has specifically called me to be His ambassador and share the Gospel as He reconciles others to Himself.

Through various leadership opportunities within camp (Eagle Lake), Calvin College, Young Life, Reformed Theological Seminary, Fuller Seminary, church ministry, and through many spiritual mentors, God has grown me as a courageous leader, a committed visionary, a student of His Word, and as an effective communicator of His truth. However, my personal relationship with Christ starts with who I am today. I have learned that the most important thing that could happen to me in any given day is that I sit and be still and let the Lord speak to me and work in my life. As a natural response to what God has done for me, I strive to be disciplined in praying, reading, memorizing the Word, and journaling. I measure the strength of my relationship with Him by how I love my neighbor. How easily am I annoyed? Angered? Envious? How do I treat those who I don't like—or who have wronged me? If I am truly committed to taking the life of Jesus as the only and best way to live, then nothing should prevent me from being faithful to the mission that God has called me to. My calling to introduce others to the Lord Jesus Christ and encourage them as disciples is stronger now than ever.

He is consistently teaching me the truth of John 15:5 where Jesus says: *"I am the vine. You are the branches. If man remains in me and I in Him he will bear much fruit. Apart from me He can do nothing."* With His Spirit living in me and through me, I am wiser, more selfless, more patient, more forgiving, less judgmental, more willing to take risks, a better husband and father, more at peace despite tough circumstances, more conscious of those in need, and a more passionate and focused communicator of the Gospel. Thus, I HAVE to preach the Gospel to myself every day. I HAVE to give Him my first fruits, daily denying myself and taking up the cross (Luke 9:23). My sinful nature is way too strong for me not to ask the Spirit to consume my heart and mind every day. God teaches me this through His Word, my mistakes, and through my wife!

I am committed to keeping my life in proper balance. God comes first, my wife comes second, my kids third, and everyone else after that. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, "*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" God has blessed me with a group of guys whom I meet with weekly who help hold me accountable to this. We challenge and encourage each other to be a strong spiritual leader for our families and to live lives of integrity. I also have been able to develop relationships with many non-Christians in my neighborhood and throughout the city. God fuels my passion for Him as I seek to live out and articulate the Gospel in a non-threatening, creative, and authentic way. Having a mature and meaningful relationship with God, my wife, my kids, other believers, and with 'normal' people (non-Christians) is the way I often measure my heart's devotion to Christ.

Types of Supervision I have found helpful in my ministry

Proverbs 27:6 says, "*Wounds from a friend can be trusted.*" Any effective supervision/accountability for me must take place under the umbrella of a relationship. A certain level of trust is paramount in order for growth to take place. I and others respond well to truth and constructive criticism in the context of a relationship. A good statement from a supervisor is, "*I am telling you this because I really believe in you.*"

I have found that any new working relationship must involve strong, consistent, and clear expectations from the very beginning. Nothing can be assumed. As time goes by, however, more can be assumed because there is a mutual understanding and 'buy in' to expectations. As a result, close supervision and accountability can turn into more releasing and empowering because there is trust.

God's method of supervision/accountability is centered on building relationships. Jesus invested in just a few in order to make a deep impact. The disciples watched His works match His words and began to trust Him with their lives. They sacrificed everything for Him because He loved them and cared about them. Because He invested in them, they were willing to invest in Him. He says in John 13:35, "*As I have loved you, you must also love another.*" In my own experience, supervision/accountability driven by love is the only effective way to do ministry.

Leadership Style

Jesus didn't just pass out flyers, sell t-shirts, or yell through a bullhorn. He told the fishermen to follow Him. For three plus years the disciples spent time listening to Jesus, asking Him questions, and observing all that He did. He even washed their feet. Jesus was a relational servant leader. I strive to model my leadership philosophy and style after Christ's—passionately, patiently, proactively, and persistently pursuing others. A relationship is strengthened, trust is built, and a Godly example is observed. I lead others by serving them—always looking for ways to make them feel as though they are the most important person in that moment.

While leading others by serving them will be consistent, I will alter my managerial style for each person depending on what they need to be the most effective. Also, while I am an encourager at heart, I am not afraid to shoot straight with direct hard truth and counsel. To be clear: I am a very relational leader. Common questions I will ask others are, "*How can I help you?*" And, "*Do you need anything from me?*" Before any decisions are made, I try to ask myself the question, "*Whom else does this decision affect?*" I have learned that collaboration and including the rest of the team in a decision creates great unity and team ownership. Another great question is, "*I am thinking about doing this. What are your thoughts?*" I like to use Jim Collins' decision grid questions as well, "*What is the best case scenario here? What is the worst case? Would I be willing to live with the worst case?*"

I am quite conscious of my tendency to confront either indirectly or let the situation resolve itself. Even though it's not natural, I have learned to catch myself in my passive aggressiveness and resist it. I can call my tendency for what it is. In more directly confronting others I have learned to use phrases like, "*Help me understand*". I also use this sequence of statements: "*When people do this...it makes others feel this...so for the sake of the team we need you to...*" I am a middle child and love harmony and reconciliation. I have learned that the best way to achieve this is to more directly and proactively approach others—rather than just hoping it resolves itself.

My Worship Emphases

My preferred preaching style is very Scripture-based (textual, expository). It is whimsical, high on historical/cultural context, filled with personal stories, self-deprecating, humble, high on application, and always points back to Christ. Also, the more visual it is the more memorable. Preaching that involves media or any kind of visual aid is usually more impactful. Whether it is preaching or worship, the church has a responsibility to entertain the hearers, creatively drawing their attention to the most important message in the world. We must leverage our gifts, abilities, talents, resources, music, media, and overall innovation in order to engage people's attention and draw them to the Truth! My preferred worship style is in the realm of artists such as: Jesus Culture, David Crowder, Chris Tomlin, Gungor, and Matt Redman. However, there may be value in implementing a 'secular' song into the worship experience. The church has a responsibility to bridge the 'Christian' and 'secular' gap and claim all truth as God's truth.

Overall, my approach to preaching and worship is unique. I view sermon preparation as an art form. It's all about creating an experience where people walk away and 'feel' something. Hopefully, they are still thinking and talking about their experience as the week goes by. I hope my sermon stirs their critical thinking, urges them to ask questions, and begs them to make a decision. The worship experience is similar. As a church, we have a responsibility to tap into and celebrate artistic expression as a form of worship. Following and believing in God is not a formula and, in a good way, never resolves. Similarly, art is messy, unpredictable, open-

ended, experiential, reckless, and freeing. That said, I always look for ways to implement artistic expression into preaching, worship, and the broad experience.

The goal for each worship experience is to communicate the **Word** (preaching), express our hearts through **worship** (singing), and to share stories of the **works** of the church.

My Ministry Gifts

I am very effective at beginning, developing, and deepening relationships. God has gifted me with the ability to connect and relate well to various kinds of people. I naturally make others feel included, accepted, and comfortable especially if it is an unfamiliar environment (hospitality). I have a knack to recognize someone who is excluded, on the fringe, or an outsider. My supervisor says he loves my heart and passion—and that this surfaces in how I lead others. My ability to connect well relationally, whether it's with staff, volunteers, or first-time guests, tends to 'rally the troops' and creates an atmosphere of excitement.

I am gifted at pastoral care. So much life change can happen in a one-on-one setting. Encouraging, comforting, challenging, advising, and praying with/for others is my calling. I have seen God use me to help others (pornography, marital strife, mourning the loss of loved ones) draw close to Christ in times of trial and suffering.

In addition to being strong relationally, another strength is my ability to communicate and cast vision. Whether it's in the context of one-on-one, a small group, or preaching in front of hundreds, I can communicate effectively and clearly. God has called me to preach the Word! The word 'passionate' is often used to describe my preaching. My strong leadership tends to flow from my passionate preaching.

My Vision for Ministry

I would devote much of my initial time to listening, asking questions, and learning. By no means will I enter expecting 'my' vision to work right away. I have a missional heart passionate about reaching 'normal people', non-Christians. My heart easily breaks and moves towards the lost, the downtrodden, marginalized, disenfranchised, under-resourced, and oppressed.

- A healthy church is an externally focused church.
- A church that is not just IN the city but FOR the city.
- A church that is more into peacemaking than peacekeeping.
- A church that is not reactive but proactive.
- A church that 'exegetes' the city, discovers the greatest need, and engages it head-on.

One of the most effective discipleship tools is to get people serving. First, they will connect to Christ on Sundays. Second, they will connect to community during the

week. Third, they will connect to their city with their lives. Like the early church, our people will 'go' and make disciples 'here' (church, home, workplace), 'near' and 'far' (Africa etc.). As we get to 'know' Christ, we 'grow' in Christ and then 'go' for Christ. As we grow in our 'belief' in God (Sundays), we seek 'belonging' (groups), and we find ourselves being a 'blessing' to others (serve). Sometimes though God reverses this order. As we find ourselves blessing others, we strengthen our belonging, and thus grow in our believing.

God placed His people strategically in the land of Canaan. Why? The crossroads of the world, everyone passed through that area and God knew this was an opportunity to show the world His glory. Jesus gravitated to the towns and cities so that His message could be heard by a high volume of different kinds of people. Narrowing our focus, we will deepen the impact. While we will partner with local ministries, our main initiative will be to birth a 'church' ministry--for example adopting a local elementary school. This will create more of a sense of ownership and a deeper, more lasting relationship and impact with those we are serving.

In order to 'go', we need to 'grow'. My vision for ministry consists of a high emphasis on small groups. People 'stick' to the church if they find themselves 'stuck' (in a good way) in community. Clarifying and simplifying how to move people from a 'row' to a 'circle' is of utmost significance. Potentially, much of the 'serving the city' could happen organically and naturally through groups. A high emphasis will be placed on equipping the group leaders and casting vision to them so they are set up for success. The movement and multiplication (splitting) of groups will be key to increasing the quality and quantity of them.

Another part of my vision for ministry involves the importance of the Sunday worship experience. Because this is often our first impression, we must strive for excellence from the 'street' to His 'feet'. The sermon starts in the parking lot right? By the time our guests sit down in their seats, they will have already made a judgment on the church and what she represents. Our message of the Gospel is demonstrated through websites, Facebook, signage, parking attendants, greeters, childcare workers, facility cleanliness, handouts, and ushers etc. The more intentional we are to 'hail the detail', the more available our guests will be to hear and see the Gospel. Much prayer, much creative discussion and collaboration, and much time and resources will be poured into the actual church service as well. The songs will relate to the preaching and the preaching to the songs. Our guests will leave wondering how they can get connected to what God is doing at and through the church.

My Views on Spiritual Gifts and Giftedness

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that "*we are God's temple and that His Holy Spirit lives within us.*" To have His Spirit dwell within us is the greatest gift! Every authentic believer possesses this 'general' gift (regeneration, saving faith, new heart). Every believer without exception is gifted for Christian service. If we

combine the lists in Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, there are roughly ten separate 'specific' gifts listed: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) pastor-teacher (exhortation), (5) leading-administrations, (6) showing mercy-helps, (7) giving, (8) miracles-healings, (9) tongues, (10) interpretation of tongues. When someone demonstrates or claims to have a spiritual gift, ask "*Does this line up with God's Word?*" Also, ask "*What benefit does this gift have to the community?*" If someone's 'gift' is more for themselves and less for His church and His glory, then it is likely not a 'spiritual' gift. This person should be counseled appropriately. Do I believe all of the above gifts (esp. healings, tongues etc.) are still alive and well? Yes. We serve the same God today as existed in the early church. Have you been to Africa lately?

The Charismatic Movement

I am not open to the church being 'Pentecostal'. I am open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the word "charismatic" should not be limited to specific manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues. Nevertheless, "Charismatic" does refer to the fact that every Christian receives a gift, or gifts, from the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7,11). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different forms but of the same substance. I stand in accord with the Westminster Confession that states, "*The Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. He regenerates men by His grace, convicts them of sin, and moves them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith.*" The Holy Spirit (fully God) manifests himself in us in two ways.

First, when we by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9) believe and receive Christ, the Holy Spirit makes His 'dwelling' within us and thus seals our inheritance. Second, as we are sanctified and grow in our fellowship with Him (praying, reading the Word, serving) the Holy Spirit begins to 'fill' us (Eph. 5:18). Though I believe that 'speaking in tongues' may serve as evidence of this spiritual 'filling' and is a way that God manifests His Spirit still today, I don't think it has a place in today's community worship experience. There are too many negative connotations that go along with it and it mostly shifts people's attention from God to others. It usually divides rather than unifies. If someone feels called and led to speak in tongues, they should do it privately but not publicly. An emphasis and celebration of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) is a much higher priority.

Women in Ordained Office

I do not believe that the issue of women ordination is essential to the faith. While some churches may ordain women and some do not, neither position is essential to the existence of the church. Each particular church, through much prayerful guidance and consideration of their specific cultural context, should have the freedom to make this decision. Do I personally believe that a woman may be ordained and serve as a minister? Yes. Like any situation, it depends on the individual and their gifts and calling and what ordination means to that church.

Ultimately, healthy churches expend more energy majoring on the majors and minoring on the minors. *"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."*