

# Jesus' Ministry Example / COB / 10.16.16

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- † Did Jesus have a television ministry? No? A radio ministry? No. Did he write articles and books? No.
  - Did Jesus start a synagogue softball team? No. Did he develop programs so the synagogue could expand its ministry? No.
  - Did Jesus need money for his ministry? No. He did sometimes meet in buildings, but were they essential to his ministry? No.
  
- † Jesus did preach to the masses, sometimes thousands at a time. But did he trust that preaching alone would lead to conversions, spiritual transformation, and growth of the church? He did not!
  - Even with his disciples, who were following him from town to town, Jesus knew that many did not have real faith. In **John 6.63-66 NET**, Jesus said to the disciples, **“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe”** ... [then the author, John, adds] **After this many of his disciples quit following him and did not accompany him any longer.**
  
- † Jesus taught in synagogues, he taught in the temple courts, he preached sometimes to thousands on hillsides around the Sea of Galilee. He served the crowd's needs and excited them with miraculous healings.
  - But look at what he said to his closest disciples. **Matthew 9.35-38 NET: Jesus went throughout all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”**
  - When Jesus said this to his disciples, whom did he have in mind as the workers of the harvest? His disciples. Whom did he have in mind as shepherds to the people? His disciples. Who are his disciples today, in this room? All of us; not just me [the pastor], but all of you as well.
  
- † Jesus wanted the unsaved masses to come to faith, he wanted those who came to faith to have a shepherd to help them grow into true disciples, and he wanted those disciples to grow into being shepherds themselves, so the ministry could expand its reach and help more people.
  - And Jesus thought he could do this without tv, radio, articles or books, without fun or fancy programs, even without buildings and money. How did he do it?
  - For Jesus, ministry was relational. He focused on raising up shepherds who would use his methods to guide the masses and reproduce more shepherds from the masses. He invested in people who would become multiplying disciples, who would grow equipped to share the gospel and to mentor the next new believer.
  - We have talked a lot about following the example of Jesus in our study of Philippians, so today I suggest we learn to follow the example of Jesus in ministry.

- † Jesus did preach to the masses. Do you know what he taught them? Mostly about his own identity, his purpose and mission on Earth, and the way of salvation. In other words, he offered them truths they needed so they could accept the gospel promise in faith.
  - We need to offer truth and grace to those who do not know Christ. We might not have the opportunity to teach thousands at a time, but we all have the opportunity to teach one.
  
- † When Jesus ascended to Heaven, 120 people waited on the coming of the Holy Spirit together. **Acts 1.14-15 NET: All these [the apostles] continued together in prayer with one mind, together with the women, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers... (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty people)...**
  - This was the first church, the church Jesus planted in Jerusalem. These disciples had followed Jesus for most of the past three years, learning from him, worshipping and praying together, serving in the ministry, sharing the gospel with others, and learning to do life together, to live out the “one another” commands with each other.
  - We have this local church, and you have the opportunity to live this way together.
  
- † Out of all the disciples, there were twelve with whom Jesus went deeper. What do we call these twelve men? The apostles. **Matthew 10.2-4 NET: Now these are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (called Peter), and Andrew his brother; James son of Zebedee and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**
  - This was Jesus’ small group. Certain disciples were ready for this more intense experience, so Jesus invited them in. Being in a group allowed them to interactively grow through group discussions, and allowed Jesus to mentor and train them more than he could have otherwise.
  - We need to develop into a church of small groups, in which a shepherd invests in growing the others, by teaching and training and by creating a context of strong friendships.
  
- † Even among the apostles, there were three whom Jesus repeatedly isolated for special situations. Do you know who they were? Peter and the brothers James and John. For example, the night of his arrest: **Mark 14.32-33 NET: Then they went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James, and John with him, and became very troubled and distressed.**
  - As he had done before, he led Peter, James, and John into a deeper experience with him, and gave them deeper insights. This is the only way to raise up more shepherds, more multiplying disciples of Christ. We need to do this here.
  
- † I want to be a multiplying disciple of Christ; that means I want to mentor and train people to become multiplying disciples [shepherds] who mentor and train still others to be the same.
  - I need your help with this: why is that? I cannot mentor someone if there is no one to mentor. I cannot offer effective small groups if we have no trained shepherds. I cannot hope to build a strong church, filled with multiplying disciples of Christ, if nobody is interested in living out the great commission.
  - You know about the great commission? This is what Jesus told his small group just before he left them to carry on his ministry: **Matthew 28.18-20 NET: ... “All authority in heaven and on**

**earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

- Those are our marching orders: make disciples, through evangelistic outreach, mentoring and teaching. We are to multiply the image of God throughout the earth, just like God said when he first created people. This is a foundational aspect of our purpose in life. There is no evading it.
- † So how can we do it? I say, let’s do it in a way that is fun, exciting, not frightening, but challenging, a way that will grow us and stretch us, but not wear us out, rather building us up and strengthening us, encouraging us. Sound good? What is this way?
- Here’s the vision. You have a pastor who really believes in the biblical vision of spiritual transformation and spiritual multiplication.
  - This pastor mentors and trains others to become shepherds in the church and then coaches them and supports them. They would meet together weekly for mentoring and training, tailing off to meet monthly once the pastor becomes more of a coach.
  - These shepherds learn how to do with others what the pastor has done with them. They learn by experiencing it but also by studying and talking through the concepts. They grow strong in Bible knowledge and Bible study skills, they learn how to share the gospel, how to teach, how to mentor, how to lead small groups, so that these shepherds not only can serve as small group leaders, they can multiply by developing more shepherds from the people in their groups.
  - Thus we offer people coming into the church a clear path of discipleship. First, you come to church and hopefully become a believer and committed member. Then you join a small group and commit to that fellowship. Then you grow in the group, becoming a stronger Christian, a better friend, and even an assistant shepherd who is getting individual mentoring. Then eventually you multiply out of that group to start your own. Individuals multiply so groups can multiply so the church someday can multiply by planting another church.
- † That’s the big picture, but you might not think it sounds fun and exciting yet, just challenging and stretching.
- Let’s talk about fun. The groups will use a 3+1 format. That means once every month, the group will not meet for Bible study and whatever else, instead they will do something fun together. They might have a pot luck supper or a progressive dinner, they might go skiing or biking or hiking, they might have a game night or a movie night, whatever they want! But fun and friendship is built in: every month, something fun together.
  - Here’s where some of the excitement comes in. When you are having a blast together, that’s the perfect opportunity to invite a few unchurched friends to join you. This is an easy invite, right? You’re not inviting them to church or to a small group or to Bible study, you’re inviting them to play cards or have a picnic or go horseback riding. Then in a no pressure situation, they get to meet more Christians, they get to sense your love for each other, and maybe they develop a desire to know more, especially if your group is praying for them every week.
  - Wait, did I just say “your love for each other”? Yes! I am not promising that Wade or Carol will want to hug you – some groups are huggy and others are not – but small groups give you a great opportunity to develop strong friendships with people who share your values and faith. In the 3 & the 1 weeks, you will be having fun together and learning to do life together. You will get to

know each other and you will grow together. You will find people who will encourage you, affirm you, accept you how you are yet help you grow better; people who will care for you and be kind to you, who will pray for you and serve you in the group.

- With all of that, plus sharing food together, talking about life, laughing or crying, as the need might be, you might understand why we don't call this a "Bible study," and you might wonder if you ever get to do any Bible study. Yes, but you will not be studying the end times prophecies of Ezekiel or the priestly laws in Leviticus; instead, you will be talking through passages that are obviously applicable to life, so that you can learn how to walk with God and be empowered by him for life, together.

† That's the little picture to go with the big picture. Now, I expect some resistance to this paradigm change; there always is resistance to change, even when it is biblically mandated. Maybe you are asking, "Is it worth it?" "Can this work?"

- We saw earlier that Jesus mentored the twelve apostles, and gave extra attention to Peter, James, and John. James was destined for an early death, in Acts 12 he was executed by King Herod. Peter and John went on to lead the new church.
- Let's talk about John. Jesus mentored the apostle John, who wrote five books of the New Testament, helped lead the early church as it exploded throughout the Roman empire, and finished his life mentoring and coaching pastors all over western Turkey. John mentored Polycarp, who became the pastor of Smyrna, just north of Ephesus. Polycarp mentored Irenaeus, who became the pastor of Lyons, in what is now France. Polycarp and Irenaeus were very influential throughout the church during the second century, and they mentored others.
- Another example. It is not clear who mentored Barnabas. He first appears as a faithful believer in Acts 4. He was not one of the twelve apostles, but perhaps one of the twelve mentored him. What is clear is that Barnabas and Peter ministered to Paul. Paul mentored Titus, who then mentored men to become pastor-elders all over Crete. Paul mentored Timothy, who worked in missions and mentored people in Ephesus. Paul mentored Clement, who became the pastor over all of Rome. Paul mentored Silas and Luke and many others, who mentored others.

† Ok, I know, you might be thinking, "This is all well and good for Bible-times, but what about today?"

- There was a man named Jay, who mentored a fellow student at Auburn University, named Bob. Jay and Bob each mentored several other people. I never met Jay, but I am familiar with Bob, so I can tell you that Jay is a spiritual ancestor to hundreds of people now. He has made an eternal difference by raising up multiplying disciples who raise up more multiplying disciples.
- And it gets even better. Jay ministered on a college campus. Bob also ministered there, but then he went to Thailand, where he planted two churches and grew them – in a Buddhist country – each to over a hundred people by the multiplication ministry of personal evangelism and mentoring. Like Jesus, Bob did not rely on fancy programs or nice buildings, just relational ministry. Bob left Thailand about fifteen years ago, but those churches continue to thrive as Bob's disciples make disciples who make disciples, and the process continues.
- In fact, this Thailand chain of Bob's spiritual descendants extends many generations, and there is another chain extending from his wife Susan's work in Thailand which is just as impressive. Bob now heads the missions agency Launch Global, where he continues to multiply into people like you and me, who use small groups to reach international students around the US and then to go out all over the world. So Jay's impact and Bob's impact are not only eternal, but also global.

- And there is more. Bob mentored me, then I mentored high school students. Bob is not wired for high school ministry, but through me, he had an impact on those students. One of those students became a pastor and now heads up a non-profit, another is in seminary, another became an evangelist while in college, another worked with youth and then led the young adult ministry in his church.
  - I went on to become a trainer and coach of small group leaders. Many of those people are also multiplying shepherds in their churches. I mentored a man named Keith, who worked with the homeless, especially homeless addicts. While I have preached to the homeless and taught recovering addicts at the Salvation Army, Keith's ministry was at a whole other level, because he was effective in helping people get clean, get off the street, find work and a church, and rebuild their lives; last I heard he was trying to set up something similar in the Philippines.
  - Keith mentored Jason, who was an addict. Jason mentored other addicts and specialized in mentoring at risk youth. He now is a seminary trained pastor. One of the men Jason mentored was Jamie, who continued the work of helping recovering addicts and mentors young couples in his church. Thus Jay's mentoring chain has had an impact that is not only eternal, not only global, but expanding in reach since each new disciple reached others who would not have been reached by his mentor.
- † The training I got from Bob was as valuable as anything I learned in seminary. Bob taught me skills and encouraged me to actually do ministry to get experience. Those experiences include mentoring teenagers and adults, leading small groups ranging from high school freshmen to seminary students and their wives, and several kinds of groups and people in between. Because of my success with multiplication ministry, I was asked to train and coach small group leaders in two churches with dozens of groups. Now I am here, as your pastor.
- I want to teach you the fundamental beliefs of our faith, and show you how you can do likewise for someone else. I want to train you in evangelism, mentoring, leadership, and teaching, and show you how you can do likewise for someone else. I want to help you in your relationship with God and your relationships with each other, and show you how you can do likewise for someone else.
  - In some of these areas, you might know more than I do: that's ok, then you can teach the rest of us, but the point is that we will be going through this together, which will build our sense of unity and teamwork as well as our individual empowerment. And at the least, you will learn the mentoring techniques that Bob and I developed, which have proven effective.
  - Right now Mark and LeeAnn are leading small groups. Let's suppose three more of you were interested in an intensive training program. Then two years from now, there would be six of us doing multiplication ministry in this church. If each of us multiplied just once then in another couple of years, there would be twelve leaders in this church, in total unity on beliefs, total unity on goals, total unity on methods likely to succeed, fully equipped to help others and to multiply for Christ, and actually doing the work of helping others grow. Six years from now, if we all multiplied again, we could have over twenty shepherds in this church, who are healthy, growing, and active in ministry.
- † That is sustainable growth for the church. If we had twenty leaders doing this ministry, instead of three, imagine how many more people we would be reaching and helping.

- This is the only sustainable growth model for the church. There is no way one pastor can be fully, relationally, effective at ministering to forty adults and their children, especially if he has to do most of the administrative work too. But if we work together to begin this mentoring process, then even when we grow to 100 adults or 150 adults, we will have sufficient infrastructure of shepherd-leaders to carry out the ministry at a fully relational level.
  - And as we develop people in this relational mentoring context, we will see evangelism increase, spiritual growth accelerate, giving increase, serving increase, and the glory given to God increase. And we will be sending out more missionaries and church planters.
  - In the past two years, almost all who have experienced amazing blessings of spiritual growth, who have moved outside their comfort zone to expand their ministry, had benefitted from being in small groups.
- † Look around the room. What in this room is eternal? The people; only the people. So what is the one way you can really make an eternal difference? By investing in people.
- **Mark 8.34 NET: Then Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”**
  - It is time to give up our comfort zones, our non-biblical traditions, our preferences, and follow Jesus into the work of multiplying discipleship.
  - If you are not yet a believer in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the only savior, it’s great that you are here today; I hope you will come back; but I also encourage you to find a mentor in this church who will show you what the Bible says, so you can make an informed decision.
  - Those of you who have accepted Christ need to join the church, you need to commit to being in unity with us. This does not mean you can never leave; you can leave whenever you want, but it means you commit to unity in belief and practice while you are here.
  - Those of you who are members, I encourage you to invest in friendships through a small group. Again this requires a commitment: you need to make the group, these people a priority in your life; you need to commit to building relationships with each other and seeking to grow spiritually together. Hopefully as you progress in faith and relationship, you will grow to be ready for more intensive mentoring by your small group shepherd leader or an elder.
  - I hope there are a few people here today who already really want to live out the dream, who want to follow Jesus into multiplication ministry badly enough that they are willing to invest in weekly deep discussions, willing to do some devotional homework, and willing to try new ministry experiences outside their comfort zone. If that is you, let me know.
  - I want to give you a few moments for prayer right now. If you feel this calling, then I want you to fill out the card I am distributing; then come up front and sign the pledge to become a multiplying disciple of Christ and drop the card into the bucket.