



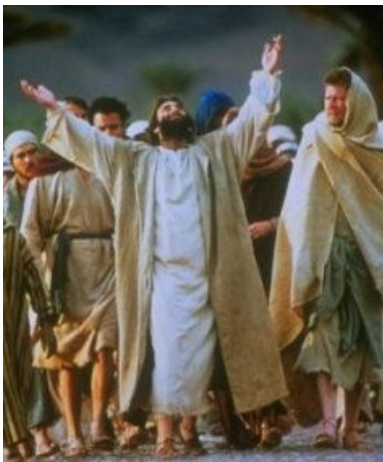
EQUIPPER

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Dear minister of (and with) Jesus:

In GCI, we often speak of “participating in ministry with Jesus,” instead of “doing ministry for Jesus.” In that way we highlight the stunning reality that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is alive and through the Holy Spirit actively ministering in our world. Our calling is not merely to minister *for* Jesus, but to minister *with* him. But what does that look like in practical terms? And how do we figure out what Jesus is doing and then join in?



As we seek to answer these questions, it’s easy to fall into one of two ditches. On the one hand, we can make our answers so complex that they provide little practical guidance. But on the other, our answers can be so simplistic that they strip away the dynamic reality of Jesus’ actual ministry, leaving us with strategies devoid of real life. As pastoral leaders, our challenge is to have a theologically informed, workable understanding of ministry with Jesus that we can practice ourselves and communicate to others.

I find that one of the most helpful ways to achieve this communication is by offering real-life examples of our members ministering actively with Jesus. Though these examples are not perfect, they do point to Jesus’ actual redemptive activity. The more adept we are at seeing that activity, the more able we are to join in. My good friend Ken Williams, who retired a while back from his work as a GCI regional pastor, has seen many such examples, leading to the following list of characteristics found in congregations that are participating actively in ministry with Jesus in their respective locales:

- The community where the church meets is aware that the church is in its midst because the church members are helping community children, the poor, single moms, the elderly, etc.
- Members of the congregation are experiencing new life and joy that clearly comes from a Source other than “cheerleaders” who artificially create “enthusiasm.” They know they are making a difference in the community and take pleasure in doing so, being service-driven, not duty bound.
- People in the community are hearing that they are included and adopted by our loving heavenly Father.
- People other than congregational members are helping and donating to the service rendered by the congregation to the needy in the community.
- The congregation’s members are becoming more Christ-centered, grace-based, Spirit-led and prayerfully-dependent, as evidenced by members reconciling differences, forgiving one another, finding ways to help others, etc.
- New workers and leaders are beginning to show up within the congregation.

When Ken sent this list to me, he mentioned that these indicators are not absolute or fail-safe. However, they are instructive, and thus worth our consideration. On page two, Ted Johnston shares additional material on this topic. Also, I urge you to attend one of our U.S. regional conferences this year, where we are sharing many examples of our ministry with Jesus.

In Christ’s service,
Dan Rogers, CAD director

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Outfitting GCI churches and ministries for a mission-focused journey with Jesus.

A model for ministry with Jesus by Ted Johnston, regional pastor

I'm using here the phrase "model for ministry" rather guardedly, because ministry models are sometimes (often?) used in ways that detract from actual participation in ministry with Jesus. It's important to note that rather than leaving us a ministry *model*, Jesus left *himself*—inviting us to be with him as he continues to minister in our world.

Some proponents of ministry models look back to Jesus' earthly ministry of 2,000 years ago, seeking to mimic today what Jesus did back then. The problem with that approach is that it tends to overlook the reality of the ascended Jesus' continuing ministry on earth through the Spirit. This approach also tends to view the incarnation itself as a temporary ministry strategy that God used to accomplish certain goals. However, that viewpoint overlooks the reality that Jesus continues to be fully God and fully human. Rather than a temporary strategy for accomplishing something else, the incarnation is a permanent reality. Jesus is alive and actively ministering. For more about his continuing ministry and the incarnation, see my *Surprising God* post at <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2014/04/the-relational-pastor-part-9.html>.

Our calling is not to mimic Jesus' ministry strategies of the past (which we tend to idealize and oversimplify), but to enter into Jesus' actual loving and living in our world today—right now, right here—in our contemporary context. Of course, that's easier said than done. How do we identify what Jesus is doing? This is where ministry models and strategies, appropriately used, can be helpful. On GCI's Ministry Development website at <http://mindev.gci.org> the CAD team has outlined a theologically informed ministry model with related strategies and resources. The goal of these tools is not to provide a "one-size-fits-all" way of doing ministry (as though Jesus' continuing ministry could be reduced to "five easy steps"). Instead, these tools help us identify and then participate actively and skilfully in Jesus' present ministry. The model offered does this by addressing three key aspects of our sharing in that ministry:

1. Ministry Foundations

This is the most important aspect of the model in that it speaks to our sharing in Jesus' heart (his character). In this part of the model, we address the foundational theological principles and concepts that establish the basis for Jesus' ongoing ministry and our part in it. The primary emphasis here is on spiritual formation—the means that the Spirit uses to entrain our hearts with the heart of Jesus. To minister is to live out of our personal and corporate encounter with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. Ministry Competency

This part of the model addresses our sharing in Jesus' *head* (his ministry knowledge) and *hands* (his ministry skill). As ministers, we grow in competency as we learn from Jesus in both aspects. Though some of this competency can be "taught," it largely is "caught" through ministry experience. Our model addresses competency in the key areas of ministry with Jesus addressed in the next section.

3. Ministry Strategy

This part of the model addresses our sharing in Jesus' *ministry patterns*—the "rhythms" of Jesus' loving and living in our world. We identify those patterns by looking back at Jesus' discipling ministry during his earthly sojourn, 2,000 years ago. But that doesn't mean that we're suggesting that Jesus is making disciples in exactly the same way now. Instead of trying to mimic specific behaviors and techniques, our goal is to identify the key patterns of his ministry activity then and now. The **Discipling Pathway** (shown at right) summarizes those patterns (see the website for greater detail). Note that the diagram places Jesus and his continuing ministry activity at the very center. To overlook this essential focus would be to risk turning ministry into nothing more than lifeless, rote activity.

