

Dear Friend,

One afternoon about a month after our third child was born, one of the young women who was involved in helping to lead the Campus Crusade for Christ movement of which I was the director came to our house for a visit with Jane, my wife. During the course of their conversation she asked Jane this question, “So how are you dealing with the fact that now that you have three children you cannot be involved in ministry anymore?” What she meant by that statement was that Jane, due to her responsibilities at home was no longer able to go on campus and share the gospel with college students and lead bible studies and so forth. Jane wisely and sadly responded with a question of her own, “Is that what we have taught you?” Jane realized, as I did also when she shared this conversation with me, that this is exactly what we had taught this young woman. We had defined “ministry” in a very narrow and unbiblical way. We had taught her that she was only engaged in “ministry” when she was sharing the gospel with a non-Christian, helping to establish a new Christian in her faith, or leading a bible study to train maturing Christians in how to do the same things she was doing.

This conversation was one of those “light bulb” moments in my life. I came to realize that the biblical view is that all of life is ministry, all the time. As a Christian, every part of my life is service to Christ. Listen to how Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”

Just think about what he is saying! First, everything in my life matters to God. Every action I take, every word I speak is either displaying the glory of God or it is dishonoring him. The way I eat is either showing forth his glory or it is robbing him of his glory. Second, everything I do is either putting obstacles to Christ in other’s way or is influencing them for Christ. All of us are always influencing everyone around us—either drawing them to Jesus or repelling them from Jesus. This includes everyone we relate to every day of our lives; Christians and non-Christians, family members, friends, co-workers, fellow church members, etc. Everyone I am around, every day of my life is being “ministered to” by me in one way or another. You cannot avoid this.

Paul tells us that we are to conduct our lives just as he did. He wants us to imitate him. We are to not seek to please ourselves. We are to not live for our own good. In other words, I am to not act like my life belongs to me, to do with as I please. God is not giving me breath each day so I can maximize my enjoyment of this world’s pleasures. To live to please myself is to not live to the glory of God. To live to please myself, while professing to be a Christian, is to put stumbling blocks between others and Christ. Rather than living to please myself, I am to live to please others. I am to recognize that every relationship I am in, every day is a God appointed relationship in which I am to conduct myself so as to draw the other person to Christ. There are no insignificant moments or relationships in our lives. God is giving me breath today so that those with whom I relate this day may be drawn to trust in Christ in deeper ways. I am to intentionally, thoughtfully, gently, compassionately seek to understand and then to encourage those with whom I relate to trust in Christ more.

What a tragic error to teach or to think that “ministry” is something you volunteer for that is outside of your “normal” life. You are ministering every day in all of your relationships, in all of your life. The only question is what are you “ministering,” stumbling blocks or salvation, glory to God or dishonor to God?

Ministering with you,