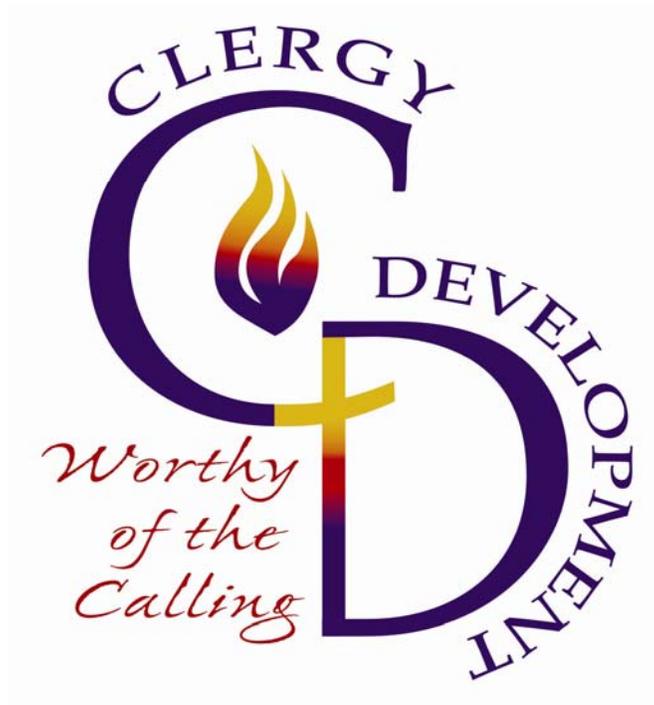

Faculty Guide

Exploring Christian Ministry



Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
Kansas City, Missouri
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2002

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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people: the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, community life, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people, in a form referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe God calls and persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry should continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful

preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1: 7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6: 19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3: 8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1: 5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be, should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6: 11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes “the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; ‘in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left’ (2 Cor 6:6-7)” (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ “must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God’s Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ’s Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation for ministry in Christ’s Church—one’s education in all its dimensions— should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect those standards to be

observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12: 1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules comprising the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

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Introduction

Intended Use of This Faculty Guide

This faculty guide serves as an instructor's guide for teaching principles of *Exploring Christian Ministry* to adult learners who are preparing for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The content is based on intended outcomes defined through the collaborative process conducted at Breckenridge, CO, USA, between 1990 and 1997. The materials prepare the pastor-teacher to present the topic by providing background reading, lesson plans, lectures, instructions to the teacher, and teaching resources for each class session. In most lessons complete lectures, questions for guided discussions, and defined learning activities are provided.

The pastor-teacher who will lead this module should hold a master's degree. Ideally, the pastor-teacher should have participated as a student in a module using this material prior to teaching the material to others. This guide assumes that the pastor-teacher is an experienced minister.

It is further assumed that learners participating in a module using this material will be high school graduates and be adult learners beyond the traditional college age. Learners are assumed to be motivated to learn, and to have adult life-experiences. No prior college classroom experience is assumed on the part of the learners.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to represent accurately the original intent of the principal contributors.

Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Dr. William E. McCumber. Dr. McCumber has been a professor of preaching and pastoral ministry at Eastern Nazarene College, Boston, and Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. Dr. McCumber served as an adjunct professor at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City. His teaching experience encompassed a wide range of ministerial courses including biblical studies, New Testament exegetical courses, Greek, Pauline Theology, Johannine Theology, History of the Christian Church, History of Christian Doctrine, Systematic Theology, Doctrine of Holiness, Wesleyan Theology, Life and Work of Christ, and Philosophy.

Dr. McCumber holds baccalaureate and master's degrees from Pasadena College, the predecessor of Point Loma Nazarene University, and completed three years of graduate studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA.

Dr. McCumber has 27 years of pastoral experience. Additionally, he spent thirteen years as editor of the *Herald of Holiness* and served with the *Showers of Blessing* radio ministry for seven years. He has authored 20 books and hundreds of articles.

Dr. and Mrs. McCumber reside in Gainesville, GA where Dr. McCumber serves as a pastor of First Church of the Nazarene. They have five children, thirteen grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Revision History

First quarter of 2002. In Revision 1,

- the Lesson Overview, Introduction, Body, Close format was established
- the student guide was created

Fourth Quarter 2002. Revision 2,

- copyright was transferred to Clergy Development
 - the Series Foreword was revised
- Fourth Quarter 2003. Revision 3*
- copyright was transferred to Nazarene Publishing House
- First Quarter 2004. Revision 4*
- Module title changed from *Introduction to the Christian Ministry* to *Exploring Christian Ministry*
- Second Quarter 2005. Revision 5, the current version*
- Module reviewed for gender inclusiveness

About This Module

The Modular Course of Study Series Foreword is a rationale for *Introduction to the Christian Ministry*. The module writer intends to view the minister and the ministry from a biblical perspective, to present the ministry as a high calling demanding holy living and hard work, and to encourage a hunger for and commitment to a lifetime of arduous study and patient ministry.

This module is designed for those persons who have received a call from God to full-time Christian ministry and for those who wish to explore the foundation and scope of the Christian ministry. During the module, learners will have the opportunity to examine the scriptures that provide a foundation for Christian ministry and the key components of ministry. The module content can be summarized as answers to three questions: What should the minister *BE?*, What should the minister *KNOW?*, and What should the minister be able to *DO?*

Learning is best accomplished in a collaborative and cooperative environment. A variety of learning activities are incorporated in this module including listening to lectures, completing homework assignments, and participating in discussion groups. Each learner is a valuable teaching-learning resource and will bear responsibility for the quality of the learning environment by preparing homework assignments and participating in class discussions.

This module is an introduction, a survey of the Christian ministry. As such, the module presents a variety of subjects but none comprehensively. Many topics introduced have been expanded into full modules and will be experienced by the learner at a later time. The learner should not expect complete answers to all questions during this module but should become aware of the range of issues and topics that encompass the Christian Ministry.

Module Materials

We have tried to design this module to be flexible and easy to adapt to your situation. For each lesson, there are several support pieces, which we have called simply “resources.” These can be used in many different ways. Resources have been reproduced in the student guide for this module. The instructor will want a copy of the student guide for his or her own use.

1. The instructor may photocopy these to use for his or her own lecture outlines. There is space to add notes from the faculty guide, from the textbook, or from the additional suggested readings. Add in your own illustrations too!
2. The pages may be photocopied onto overhead transparencies for use in class.
3. These pages appear in the Student Guide for the students’ use and participation.

One reason for developing this module is for the benefit of extension education. We understand that teachers all over the world are called upon to teach courses not in their area of specialty, but they teach them because they want to see pastors trained and leaders developed for the church. Extension education is basic to rapid church growth. We want to provide this as a resource for extension educators. If it helps others along the way, that’s fine too.

Another reason for developing this module is to equip indigenous faculty. We believe a class like this is best taught and contextualized by someone from within the culture of the students. Many fine teachers, who are leaders in our churches around the world, do not have higher degrees in theology but have the skills to teach a module like this effectively. We want to set them free to do so, and in so doing, to actually improve the module and make it more dynamic and meaningful for their context than it would have been had we held onto it and insisted on teaching it ourselves.

Notes from the Original Author

As a young minister I took the home course of study. I appreciate all I learned, but a major deficiency left me in the wilderness too long. I was never challenged to learn what preaching is and does, according to Scripture. I was given how-to stuff in quantity, but not the what and why of ministry that is vastly more important. After 25 years of pastoral ministry and seven years of college teaching, I had my first seminar

in the nature, purpose, content, methods, and goals of preaching drawn directly from Scripture with no textbooks involved. I fathered the seminar myself, teaching 24 pastors from the educational zone, most of them graduates of our colleges, who had never been to the Bible to examine these matters. I can honestly say the course saved some good people from quitting the ministry. Naturally, my experience has colored my perceptions and descriptions of ministry appearing in this manuscript.

This manuscript assumes that:

1. An introduction presents a variety of subjects but none comprehensively
2. Those taking the course will be inexperienced ministers taught by experienced ministers
3. The basics of ministry can be taught without specific textbooks since the minister is called to be a servant of the Word of God, not of any "school" of ministry ancient or modern
4. Instructors competent to teach can creatively arrange settings, select and use "props," and introduce and conclude lessons without detailed instructions
5. A course of study leading to ordination will provide additional courses on the minister's work that are more concentrated and detailed—courses in homiletics and pastoral counseling for example.

This manuscript attempts:

1. To view the minister and the ministry from a biblical perspective
2. To present the ministry as a high calling demanding holy living and hard work
3. To encourage a hunger for and commitment to a lifetime of arduous study and patient ministry

I provided questions for discussion followed by some answers. This is not because I wish to stifle discussion. I believe in rather freewheeling discussion, but I believe in guided discussion that moves from Egypt to Canaan without 40 years of wilderness wandering. In my teaching experience there have always been some students who wanted to talk a lot without ever getting near the subject. They were "oral personalities" given to verbal hemorrhages, whose contributions were a waste of the class's time, and the other students resented it if they were allowed to monopolize and control discussion periods. Nevertheless, I don't think an instructor ever has all the answers and I have learned a surprising and valuable lot by listening closely to student discussions. Even when they aren't telling you very much about the subject they are

disclosing a lot about themselves, and that is helpful to the would-be helpers.

Intended Outcomes for the Module

The *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, and the *International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination* define educational preparation for ordination. Additionally, each region of the International Church of the Nazarene has developed educational guidelines to qualify educational programs for ordination offered within their region.

The USA Region *Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* defines outcomes for the overall ministerial development program. The module assists candidates in developing these skills. Other modules in the program may also address the same outcomes. The specific outcomes that relate to this module are:

- CN19 Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, The Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology.
- CN20 Ability to reflect theologically on life and ministry
- CP1 Ability to communicate publicly through oral and written mediums with clarity and creativity for the sake of fostering meaning
- CP4 Ability to write an integrative philosophy of ministry that will answer “why I do what I do when I do it?”
- CP12 Ability to appropriately express pastoral care and concern for individuals and families in crises, passages, and the normal routines of life
- CP13 Ability to offer spiritual counsel and to discern for referral counseling needs beyond the minister’s ability
- CP14 Ability to apply the knowledge of basic helping skills gained from historic Christian and appropriate contemporary models
- CP21 Ability to envision, order and participate in contextualized theologically grounded worship and to develop and lead appropriate services for special occasions (i.e. wedding, funeral, baptism, and Lord’s Supper)

Personal Growth The development of a portfolio for assessing personal growth in character. This portfolio would include periodic self-assessment and assessment by significant others. These assessments would evaluate the minister with

the “BE” categories.

- CH5 Ability to apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity, specifically as they relate to ministers and laity for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness
- CH9 Ability to apply understanding of his or her ongoing developmental needs across the life course of the minister to the pursuit of holy character
- CH10 Ability to demonstrate a realistic self-understanding including personal strengths, gifts, weaknesses, and areas of needed growth
- CH11 Ability to maintain the practice of Sabbath and healthy self-care
- CH12 Ability to practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- CH14 Ability to maintain a healthy balance between family, church, and community commitments
- CX2 Ability to analyze and describe congregations and communities

Course Objectives

To survey in basic and brief discussions

- the meaning and ground of Christian ministry
- the knowledge and skills needed for Christian ministry
- the common settings and functions of Christian ministry
- the character and behavior appropriate to Christian ministry

Suggested Meeting Schedule

The module lessons are designed to last 180 minutes (three hours) each. Each lesson is complete in itself with an opening, a middle, and a closing. They are sequential. Each lesson assumes the learners have mastered material presented in previous lessons. The lessons can be grouped in a variety of ways to accommodate the schedules of your learners.

When lessons are taught in the same meeting or an intensive format, instructors will need to adjust homework assignments because participants will not have time between lessons to prepare homework. It is important for the instructor always to be looking ahead and planning for upcoming lessons.

Here are three suggestions (out of many) for ways the meetings can be organized.

1. Resident campus. The class can meet one day a week for 60 minutes. Present one-third of a lesson per meeting time. Each lesson divides naturally into three parts. Total time: 18 weeks.
2. Extension education. The class can meet one day (or evening) each week for 3 to 3½ hours. Present one lesson per meeting with a break period. Participants will need to travel to a centralized location for meetings, so make it worth their time. Total time: 6 weeks.
3. Intensive course. The class can meet three consecutive days for 7 to 8 hours per day. Present one lesson in the morning with a break period and one lesson in the afternoon with another break period. Participants must complete reading assignments before arriving at the course site, and written assignments can be submitted 30 days following the class meeting. Total meeting time: 3 days. (Elapsed time including reading and written assignments: 1 to 2 months.)

Each lesson constitutes a module unit with three parts. The progression of these units can be seen in the chart below. Space is given for you to fill in the dates when your class sessions will meet.

Date	Title
_____	1. The Ground of Christian Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Incarnate Word • The Written Word • The Preached Word
_____	2. The Persons Involved in Christian Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lord Who Speaks the Word • The Minister Who Has Heard the Word • The Persons Who Hear the Word Through the Minister
_____	3. The Knowledge Required for Christian Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing Your God • Knowing Your Self • Knowing Your People
_____	4. The Communication Skills Needed for Christian Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to Listen • Learning to Speak

Two lessons require special preparations. In lesson 5, you should plan to meet in a church that has a baptistery. Teach the students how to conduct a service of baptism, both of effusion and immersion. Since the students were baptized when they united with the church, this will be a demonstration class. Conduct it with becoming reverence, nevertheless.

An additional lesson may be planned for the Lord's Supper. During the module have the class meet once in a worship service that closes with the Lord's Supper. Have a class member preach a brief message. The instructor may officiate at the sacrament and have class members assist with distribution of the elements. Perhaps spouses, parents, and close friends of the class members could be invited to share the service. Let worship be modeled, but meet as worshipers, not simply as observers of worship.

- Learning to Persuade
 - 5. The Common Venues of Christian Ministry
 - The Minister as Worshiper
 - The Minister as Counselor
 - The Minister as Administrator
 - 6. The Christian Ministry as Servanthood
 - The Servant Life
 - Sustaining the Servant Life
 - Persevering in the Servant Life
- Additional/optional Lesson:
The Lord's Supper

About This Faculty Guide

Note: It is critical to remember that active participation by the learners will enhance their learning. That means you will not be an information giver. This module is not about you. The focus of the module is helping students learn. Your role is to design an environment in which your students will learn. Sometimes you will give lectures. At other times you will guide discussions or assign your students to work in groups. These kinds of activities keep the participants actively involved in the learning process. Learning is a team activity.

The faculty guide has been written to guide an instructor as he or she prepares to teach this module. It contains complete lesson plans and resources to provide a solid educational design for the topic. You will need to prepare for each lesson well in advance of the meeting time. Often there are background reading suggestions for the instructor, or you may know additional reference materials you want to interject into the lesson. Questions intended to be answered or discussed by the students are in italic type.

A two-column format was chosen for the faculty guide. The right-hand column contains the content of lectures, descriptions of activities, and questions to keep students involved. The left-hand column is to give suggested instructions to you, the teacher. It also contains examples you can use to illustrate concepts in the lectures. Whenever possible you should use examples from your own experience and from your students' real-life context.

Large white space has been left in the left column to allow you to write notes and personalize the faculty guide.

The faculty guide has three major components: the Faculty Guide Introduction, the Lesson Plans, and the Teaching Resources. The Introduction and Lesson Plans are in this document and the Resources are contained in the companion student guide. You are reading the Faculty Guide Introduction now. It provides a teaching philosophy for adult learners, background information for organizing the module, and ideas about conducting the lessons.

Each section of the faculty guide is numbered with a two-part page number. Page 5 of Lesson 3 would be numbered "3-5." The first number is the lesson number and the second is the page number within the lesson. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

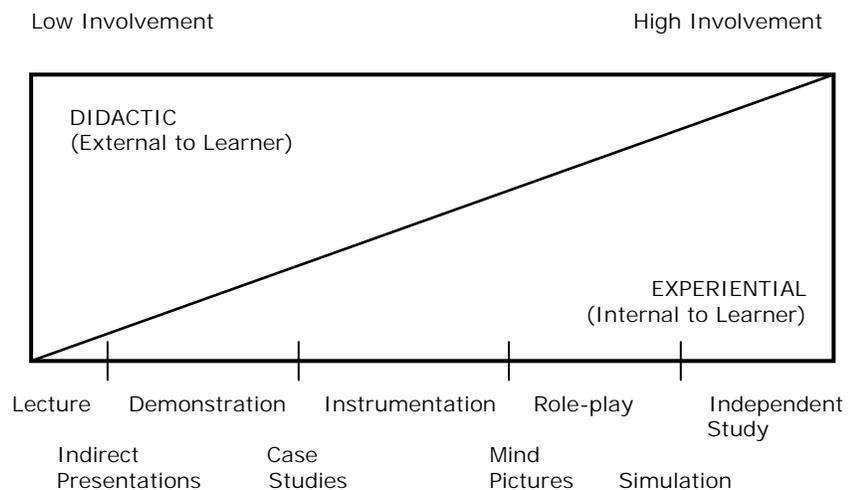
The Lesson Plans are complete in themselves. They contain an Overview, Introduction, Body, and Close. *The Lesson Overview* provides you with a planning tool for preparing and conducting each lesson.

The Lesson Introduction should get participants' attention, orient them to the place this lesson holds in the overall module, define the intended objectives, and prepare them for the learning activities.

The Lesson Body is the core message of the lesson. The key is to keep the learners actively involved. Even in lectures, ask questions that prompt learners to think about the content, not just hear the lecture.

The following chart shows a continuum of learner involvement in different teaching methods. Lecture requires the least learner involvement, and independent study requires the most learner involvement.

METHODS CONTINUUM



A variety of learning activities are used to present information and allow learners to experiment with their new knowledge. Each learner has a set of preferred

methods of learning and has different life experiences that can color or filter what one actually learns. A variety of learning activities help adults adapt to the learning task—by hearing, by doing, by reading, by discussing, or by combinations of these. The learners should have opportunities to test and clarify their new learning by talking with the instructor and other participants, and applying new knowledge in real or contrived situations as soon as possible.

The Lesson Close provides a time for answering questions, reviewing the information, connecting this lesson to future lessons, making assignments, and punctuating the finish. The close does not provide any new information but gives a sense of closure to the lesson.

Homework assignments are important learning activities. They provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize classroom learning. Working on these assignments also extends the learning experience beyond the time constraints of class time.

The student—especially the adult student—needs frequent and timely feedback about his or her learning. While interaction with other students helps the learner refine what he or she is learning, feedback from the instructor is also critical to the quality of learning and ultimately to his or her persistence in the Course of Study.

It is your responsibility as the instructor for this module to provide students with timely responses to homework assignments in order to enhance the learning process. Reviewing and responding to homework will also provide you with critical information about what your students are learning and whether or not the teaching-learning process is succeeding.

Since these modules are preparing the learner for ordination rather than leading to a university degree, a letter grade may not be appropriate. Your response to the learners' assignments should be thoughtful and in most cases it should be written. Its purpose will always be to refine and enhance the learning of the student.

Teaching Resources are reproduced in the student guide. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopier with special transparency material.

The student guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, copies of all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. A copy of the student guide should be made available to each student.

Recommendations for printing You may print this faculty guide if desired. The introduction and lesson plan segments are formatted for printing on both sides of the paper. The resource pages of the student guide should be printed on one side for use as transparency or handout masters.

The student guide should be printed on one side.

A Hidden Agenda

Hidden curriculum issues . . . because the way we teach teaches

In each session, there are certain methodological and environmental things to consider.

First, consider the classroom arrangement. Whenever possible, the room should be arranged to encourage a sense of community. Either the group should sit in a circle or around a table. If the group is very large, chairs can be arranged for easily moving into clusters for discussion.

Second, consider how you present yourself as teacher. Standing behind a lectern with your students facing you in rows says you are above the students and have something to give them (although in a very large group this standing to teach may be unavoidable). Sitting as part of the circle makes the teacher a co-learner at the same level as the students. Speak naturally. Pay close attention to your students, and value the things they share. Learn their names. Encourage participation. Remember that you are modeling for them, and the way you teach will teach them far more than the words you say.

Third, invite the Holy Spirit's presence in the classroom. Do this each time the class meets.

Fourth, the sharing-of-stories activity does more than help the students begin to reflect on their own Christian experiences. It is a way to build community between the students. This is more than an exercise to be checked off. It is vital to set the tone of your intentional community.

When meeting times exceed 90 minutes, consider adding break times. The break between segments is an important time for community building. Remain available to the students during this time. Consider offering coffee or tea during this time as a way to encourage fellowship.

Journaling: The Key to Spiritual Formation

Journaling is a major assignment of each module in the Course of Study. It is the integrating element that helps draw spiritual meaning and ministerial application from the content of each module whether the module concentrates on content, competency, character, or context. It ensures that the “Be” component of “Be, Know, and Do” is present in every module in which one participates. What is journaling and how can it be meaningfully accomplished?

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read books and articles, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head through your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences

The Syllabus contains this explanation of journaling. Journaling provides the spiritual formation component for the module and is an integral part of the learning experience.

Have students read the journaling section during the Syllabus review in Lesson 1 and emphasize that journaling is an assignment for each lesson in the module.

When giving assignments in each lesson, assign journal writing each time the group meets.

and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work faithfully to spend daily time in your journal. Many people confess this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an 'ah-ha' that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, and aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

Bibliography

- Gushee, David P., and Walter C. Jackson, eds.
Preparing for Christian Ministry: An Evangelical Approach. Wheaton, IL: A Bridgepoint Book, 1996.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983.

Lesson 1

The Ground of Christian Ministry

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Incarnate Word	Lecture	Resource 1-1
0:25	The Incarnate Word	Guided Discussion	
1:00	The Written Word	Lecture	Resource 1-2
1:15	The Written Word	Small Groups	Resource 1-3
1:50	Break		
2:00	The Preached Word	Lecture	Resource 1-4
2:15	The Preached Word	Guided Discussion	Taped Sermon
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for the Instructor for this Module

Gushee, David P., and Walter C. Jackson, eds.
Preparing for Christian Ministry: An Evangelical Approach. Wheaton, IL: A Bridgepoint Book, 1996.

Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983.

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- understand the meaning of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God
- explain the role of the Holy Spirit and the Bible in continuing to reveal God to humanity
- accept his or her role as a Christian Minister, grounded in the written Word and exegeting God's relationship with people through the preached word

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

none

Assign for next lesson

Research the two main Greek terms for 'word' (*logos* and *rhema*); write a one-page report giving their definitions and distinctions.

Select one Old Testament prophet and one New Testament preacher and compare/contrast their relationship to the word of God they proclaimed. Write a two-page report.

As the instructor, you may want to choose a sermon(s) for the class to critique.

Read a sermon or listen to a taped sermon by some preacher, past or present, who enjoyed wide acceptance and wielded strong influence. Critique it in light of these criteria: Does it exalt Christ? Does it expound the text?

Write in your journal. Write a brief account of your conversion experience and indicate what you learned about Christ then and what you have since learned about Him.

Send the Nazarene Ministry Strength and Gifts Survey (Resource 1-5) to the person who will be the most objective and honest about *your* strengths and gifts. Choose your spouse, best friend, a trusted colleague, or a parent. Have the person complete the survey as he or she sees *your* strengths and gifts, then return the survey to you prior to the lesson 3 assignment.

Advanced Preparation

Make sure the students receive the Student Guide in advance or have copies available at the beginning of this lesson.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Class Organization

Read through the Series Foreword, the Syllabus, and the section on Journaling. Have the students fill in the schedule of meeting times and places.

For most students this will be the first module they will be taking, so it is important to acquaint them with the Student Guide.

Open your Student Guide and follow along as we look at this module and its requirements.

Orientation

Christian ministry is a theological task—a word about God. “Theology” combines the Greek *theos*—God—and *logos*—word. A preacher is primarily a theologian, not a philosopher, not a sociologist, not a psychologist, but a theologian. He or she speaks the word of God.

Christian ministry does not speak of God apart from human beings, nor does it speak of human beings apart from God. The Christian minister speaks of God and people in vital relationship—of God as their Creator, of people as God’s creatures. Christian ministry speaks of both individuals and groups as persons before God.

This necessarily involves speaking of people as sinners and of God as Savior, for we know people only as “fallen,” as depraved and deprived by reason of sin. Ministry cannot be reduced to a psychological task or to a sociological task. Ministry does have psychological and sociological dimensions, and utilizes psychological and sociological truths. However, the minister’s task is theological, a word about God—and to be authentic, the word about God must be grounded upon the Word of God.

The word of God, in the course of history, has assumed three forms:

- the Incarnate Word,
- the written Word,
- the preached word.

God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in the proclamation of the gospel. What He has said constitutes the foundation of Christian ministry.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- Understand the meaning of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God
- Explain the role of the Holy Spirit and the Bible in continuing to reveal God to humanity
- Accept his or her role as a Christian Minister, grounded in the written Word and exegeting God's relationship with people through the preached word

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Incarnate Word

(15 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 1-1.

The Resources in the Student Guide contain the Bible references are given in the lectures. They do not appear on the Resources in the Faculty Guide.

Of the three forms the word of God has assumed, the first and foremost is the incarnate Word, for it governs and justifies the other two. This incarnate Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. Had God not spoken in Christ, the Church would have nothing to say that other organizations could not say just as well.

The Perfect Revelation

John describes Jesus in the prologue to his Gospel as the Word-made-flesh who “exegetes” the Father.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning . . . The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known (Jn 1:1, 2, 14, 18).

Definition:
Exegesis—explanation, critical analysis, or interpretation of a word or passage, especially of the Bible.

Ex—out, taking out
Isogesis—in, putting in what isn’t there

The phrase “made him known” translates from the Greek word from which our English words “exegete” and “exegesis” are derived. God is explained and interpreted to us as we “fix our eyes on Jesus.”

Jesus understood himself to be the revelation of God.

He knew himself to be the One in whom God is truly and clearly seen. When one of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us,” Jesus replied, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:8, 9). His words and His works were those of the Father. The Father was making himself known through the Son. So completely is this true that Jesus could say, “If you knew me you would know my Father also” (Jn 8:19).

Paul concurred with this understanding of the person of Christ.

To the Corinthian church he wrote:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6).

Christ is the image of God and in His face the glory of God shone forth. God was revealed in the human life of Jesus Christ. As much as we can know of God we learn in fellowship with Jesus Christ who, by what He is and says and does, exegetes God.

The writer of Hebrews had this same understanding of the person and mission of Jesus.

The author opens this inspired letter with these words:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Heb 1:1-3).

Jesus exactly represents God. He reveals Him without distortion or defect. In the being and doing of Jesus we have a perfect transcript of the being and doing of God the Father.

The Imperfect Reception

God cannot reveal himself fully to us, for we cannot fully receive His self-disclosure. We cannot even know ourselves fully, for we are persons-in-progress; we are defining and designing ourselves through years of growing knowledge and experience. God is unchanging, but only God can fully know God. The most that we can know of Him we learn in Christ. His revelation in Christ is perfect, but limited—limited as an accommodation to our imperfect capacity to receive

and to process truth. In other words, the divine transmitter is perfect but the human receivers are flawed. As a consequence, our knowledge of God is a process that requires addition and revision as our receivers, little by little, are improved. We must all say with Paul, "Now I know in part" (1 Cor 13:12).

God's Word in Jesus Christ will be heard without distortion after the Second Coming.

According to John, we shall not fully know God or ourselves until the return of Christ completes His revelation and our redemption.

Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 Jn 3:2-3).

Our present knowledge of Him is true and growing, and it exercises a purifying effect upon our hearts and lives. But that knowledge will only be complete when we behold Jesus at His return, for then our capacity to receive and understand truth will be maximized.

Receiving and proclaiming God's Word in Jesus Christ is essential ministry.

Moses made himself a spokesperson for the human race when he cried out to God, "Show me your glory." The question, "What is God like?" has haunted humanity from the beginning. Jesus, now and always, is God's fullest answer to that human cry.

Jesus is the living Word, the Word that "was with God" and "was God" in the beginning, the Word that "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:1, 14). He is the first form of the word of God that grounds our work of ministry, the first form that makes possible and necessary the other forms of the word of God. Essential ministry, therefore, is making Jesus known to others as we learn of Him. The Word that God speaks in Jesus Christ creates the Christian ministry. To hear that word and to relay that word to others summarizes our total responsibility. The revelation of God in the person and mission of Jesus governs every function of true ministry. In every relationship sustained to the church and community, the minister's one ruling purpose is to bring himself or herself and others into an awareness of the meaning of Jesus Christ for the lives of His people. He or she is, in

the words of Paul, "a servant of Christ Jesus," a servant of the Word that God speaks in and through His "One and Only" Son.

Guided Discussion: The Incarnate Word

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond. For this first time of "Guided Discussion" you may have to really work at getting the students to give responses.

*Possible response:
God is self-revealing and fellowship seeking.*

*Possible response:
Humans have a capacity to think with and talk to God as conversation partners. That is unique among earth's creatures.*

*Possible response:
Life is intended to be lived in company with God but in submission to the words of God. God spoke first. Human speech, indeed all human life, is intended as response to Him.*

*Possible response:
Our ministry is intended to extend His ministry, not to parallel or to succeed it.*

*Possible response:
As ministers we should deliver His same message in His same spirit and with His same creative variety of interaction with and address to people.*

*Possible response:
Words derive force, not simply by being said, but by being lived out.*

*Possible response:
We should learn to use words as appropriately and forcefully as possible, choosing them with care, using them in love.*

Use an overhead or whiteboard to record responses.

God created humanity in His own image. God's first action after creating the human was to talk to him.

What does that imply about the nature of God?

What does that imply about the meaning of "image"?

What does that imply about the purpose of God for human life?

God was revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus was a preacher.

What does this imply about the meaning of Christian ministry?

What does this imply about the matter, methods, and manner of Christian ministry?

How does incarnation relate to the power of words?

How does the incarnation relate to the learning and speaking responsibilities of the ministry?

Think about the attitudes and actions of a person who has influenced you strongly. Give one-word descriptions of the qualities that person exhibits.

Lecture: The Written Word

(15 minutes)

The second form of God's word is the written Word, the Bible.

Jesus, the incarnate Word, is not accessible to us in the same way He was to His first disciples. They could see Him, hear Him, touch Him, eat with Him, walk with Him, and talk with Him as "he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil" (Acts 10:38). They were eyewitnesses to the ministry of this One who came to reveal the Father to us and to reconcile us to the Father. But He who "appeared in a body" has been "taken up in glory," and both His appearance and disappearance constitute "a mystery of godliness" (1 Tim 3:16).

The Spirit-Formed Word

Refer students to Resource 1-2.

Jesus is now present to us in the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

The risen Christ was "exalted to the right hand of God." There He "received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit" and "poured out" the Spirit upon His disciples (Acts 2:33). The Holy Spirit, who is invisible and largely indefinable, was not given to compensate for the absence of Christ, but to assure the presence of Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the truth" (Jn 14:6). The Holy Spirit came as "the Spirit of truth" who makes Jesus known to us. Just prior to His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus said to His followers:

When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. All this I have told you so that you will not go astray" (Jn 15:26-16:1).

The Spirit of truth bears witness to the Christ who is "the truth." The Spirit thus creates a word about the Word. He empowers a testimony to Jesus Christ by which disciples of Christ throughout all time may share in the knowledge of divine glory that was revealed in Christ to His first followers.

The Spirit's testimony to Jesus is recorded in the New Testament.

The Spirit's testimony became the preaching of the apostles and their preaching colleagues. That message, in turn, was written down and preserved in the literature that comprises our New Testament. We can learn of Jesus as we study the Bible. The primary purpose of the Bible is to bear witness to Him. The Bible is not entirely narrative but largely narrative. The Bible is the story of how God has worked in history to reveal himself to us in Christ, and by so revealing himself has redeemed us from sin.

Jesus certainly understood the Scriptures to be a testimony to himself. To those religious leaders who rejected Him, Jesus said:

The Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life (Jn 5:37-40).

"You diligently study the Scriptures" can also be translated as an imperative sentence—"Study diligently the Scriptures." In either case, Jesus plainly asserts that the Old Testament was God's word given as a testimony to himself.

When Jesus arose from the dead, one of His first acts was to form His astounded disciples into a Bible class.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: 'the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'" (Lk 24:44-48).

"The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms" was a common Jewish way of referring to the entire Old Testament. Jesus understood these sacred writings as a testimony to His saving mission among people, and taught His disciples to understand the Scriptures in the same way.

The Old Testament testified to the Christ who would come; the New Testament testifies to the Christ who has come. We cannot know of Jesus Christ apart from the Scriptures.

The Word-Formed Preacher

To be a Christian minister commits a person to a lifelong study of Scripture. By the study of the Bible we gain a growing acquaintance with Christ.

The conversion experience as revelation

When the risen Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, He claimed the persecutor of the Church as a convert and commissioned him as a preacher. "I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you" (Acts 26:16). In that defining moment Saul learned some essential truths about Jesus:

1. He had been crucified but was now alive from the dead;
2. He is the Lord and Savior of Jews and Gentiles;
3. through Him forgiveness and sanctification are received by faith (vv. 17-18).

Bible study as continuing revelation

Beyond what he learned of Christ in the experience of conversion, Saul was promised a continuing disclosure of Christ—"what I will show you." When and how was that additional revelation made? We have no record of any further appearances to Saul. But Saul discloses the answer to our question in Acts 26:22-23: "I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles." That continuing revelation came to Saul as he studied the Scriptures that bore witness to Christ. To put it theologically, revelation (the Scriptures) was processed by illumination (the Spirit's teaching).

What happened in Saul's case will be every Christian minister's experience. Each of us learns basic truths concerning Jesus in the encounter with Him that converts us from rebel to subject, from enemy to friend, from sinner to disciple. As we study the Bible, seeking to know Jesus more fully in order to serve Him more faithfully, our knowledge will increase and our ministries will enlarge.

To make Jesus Christ known to others is the central task of the minister, and in fulfilling that task another form of the word of God comes into being—preaching.

Small Groups: The Written Word

(35 minutes)

For the Small Groups throughout this module you can allow the students to group themselves or assign groups, for the entire module or individual lessons.

Refer students to Resource 1-3.

*Possible response:
Christ is the subject of Scripture, in prophecy and fulfillment, and the teacher of Scripture, through the illuminating ministry of the Spirit.*

*Possible response:
We only possess copies of copies, and no recognized scholar believes the copies to be inerrant. When Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed" he is referring to "the holy Scriptures" that Timothy had known "from infancy"—that is, oral tradition (OT) (2 Tim 3: 15-17). What Paul means by inspiration, therefore, is not inerrancy but the authority and infallibility of Scripture to achieve its purpose—"to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

According to the Nazarene Article of Faith on inerrancy of Scripture, God is able to speak His plan of salvation through Scripture. Scripture is the best tool through which God's grace works in the life of the believer.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 1-3. Select someone to be the recorder/spokesperson. In 20 minutes we will come together and learn from each other.

What is the relation of the incarnate Word to the written Word?

How does the concept of the inerrancy of Scripture relate to the concept of the inspiration of Scripture?

Break

(10 minutes)

Allow the students a chance to stretch and walk around.

Lecture: The Preached Word

(15 minutes)

The third form of God's word is preaching, the message of the Christian ministry. In sum, this is the proclamation of Christ through the exposition of Scripture. The Lord is not simply the subject matter of preaching. He is the subject of preaching. Indeed, only God can speak God's word. That He speaks it through finite and fragile humans, whose gifts are limited and whose knowledge is imperfect, does not make the message any less the word of God.

The Apostolic View of Preaching

Refer students to Resource 1-4.

Paul understood preaching as a form of the word of God.

Writing to the church at Thessalonica he said:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. . . . We preached the gospel of God to you. . . . And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe (1 Thess 1:4, 9, 13).

The gospel message Paul preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel message that changed the lives of his listeners, he calls "the word of God" in contrast to "the word of men." Paul used the Old Testament, which Jews recognized as the Word of God. But his preaching was more than just a string of quotations from the Old Testament. It was a message about Christ, about His atoning death and triumphant resurrection, and about the power of that "Christ-event" to bring forgiveness of sins and newness of life to those who heard and believed. That Paul regarded preaching as the word of God could not be more plainly affirmed.

Peter shared this same understanding of preaching.

He writes of "those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" (1 Pet 1:12), a gospel preaching that transformed their lives:

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. . . . And this is the word that was preached to you (1 Pet 1:22, 23, 25).

Through the preaching of faithful men and women, God had called them “out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). In this section of his letter Peter unites Christ, Scripture, and preaching as the saving word of God. The “Spirit of Christ” in the prophets predicted the “sufferings of Christ” on the Cross (1 Pet 2:11). The written word of the prophets grounded the spoken word of the apostles, who proclaimed the fulfillment of ancient salvation-prophecy in the crucified and risen Christ (v. 12). This preaching was the enduring word of God, the imperishable seed, by which those who heard and believed were born again (vv. 23-25).

Qualifying the Definition of Preaching

To say that preaching is the word of God is not to say that everything that is called “preaching” is the word of God.

Only that preaching which proclaims the incarnate Word through exposition of the written Word is the word of God.

All other preaching, though it comes from church pulpits by ordained clergy, is the word of humans, not the word of God, and such pseudo-preaching lacks power to save people from sin.

Of his preaching, which Paul called “the word of God,” he has this to say:

Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. . . . My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power (1 Cor 1:17-18, 21; 2:4-5).

Preaching that does not proclaim Christ by expounding Scripture is here dismissed as “human wisdom.” Such human wisdom may be attractive and even applauded, but it cannot channel God’s saving power into the lives of perishing men and women.

Preaching as the word of God involves the preacher in a continuing study of Scripture as the Word of God.

When God calls persons to preach and teach His word, they are obligated to bring their best selves and their deepest learning to the task. Their best selves will become better selves as the task is pursued, for the Word of God will take captive their minds and hearts and consciences as they patiently and honestly study. The preacher, like the church, will be “always reformed and always reforming.” As the message changes the messenger, he or she will be increasingly effective in proclaiming the word to others.

In summary: The word of God, in its three forms of Christ, Scriptures, and preaching is the ground, the foundation, of Christian ministry. As ministers we are first and foremost servants of God’s Word.

Guided Discussion: The Preached Word

(35 minutes)

Call on a student to read the passage.

*Possible response:
He was sent by God to preach that gospel, and God would not send messengers with contradictory messages (v. 1). The gospel he preached was truth that saved from sin. God has but one plan of salvation (v. 3). Preaching is bound to the gospel or it is false.*

*Possible response:
Preaching as seed-sowing anticipates new life and growth through the power resident in the seed. We proclaim the word, therefore with confidence and hope.*

*Possible response:
If the word preached is received with faith it produces life, that will grow to completion under the careful labors of faithful pastors.*

Read Galatians 1: 6-9.

Why did Paul believe any preacher who preached any other gospel than the one he proclaimed should be “eternally condemned”?

Peter uses the metaphor of “seed” for the saving word of God. *What is the implication of this for the preacher?*

What is the implication of the metaphor for the listener?

Possible response:

Some commentators refer to the miracles of healing and exorcism that often accompanied apostolic preaching. "Demonstration" translates a Greek term used as court language to indicate proof. Miracles can be counterfeited. Proof of the Spirit's working would lie in the preacher's consciousness of being helped by God, and the listener's consciousness of being changed by God. Compare 1 Thess 1:4-7. The "power" here is broader than miracles; it could include them but they could not exhaust it.

Have the class listen to a taped sermon by some preacher, past or present, who enjoyed wide acceptance and wielded strong influence.

Paul preached "with a demonstration of the Spirit's power." *What is meant by this?*

What is the message of this sermon?

Did it exalt Christ?

Does it expound the text?

What effect did it have on you?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Do you

- understand the meaning of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God
- explain the role of the Holy Spirit and the Bible in continuing to reveal God to humanity
- accept your role as a Christian Minister, grounded in the written Word and exegeting God's relationship with people through the preached word

Look Ahead

During our next lesson we will consider the three persons involved in Christian Ministry.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Research the two main Greek terms for 'word' (*logos* and *rhema*); write a one-page report giving their definitions and distinctions.

Select one Old Testament prophet and one New Testament preacher and compare/contrast their relationship to the word of God they proclaimed. Write a two-page report.

As the instructor, you may want to choose a sermon(s) for the students to critique.

Read a sermon or listen to a taped sermon by some preacher, past or present, who enjoyed wide acceptance and wielded strong influence. Critique it in light of these criteria: Does it exalt Christ? Does it expound the text?

Write in your journal. Write a brief account of your conversion experience and indicate what you learned about Christ then and what you have since learned about Him.

Send the Nazarene Ministry Strength and Gifts Survey (Resource 1-5) to the person who will be the most objective and honest about *your* strengths and gifts. Choose your spouse, best friend, a trusted colleague, or a parent. Have the person complete the survey as he or she sees *your* strengths and gifts, then return the survey to you prior to the lesson 3 assignment.

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Lesson 2

The Persons Involved in Christian Ministry

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Lord who Speaks the Word	Lecture	Resource 2-1
0:25	The Lord who Speaks the Word	Guided Discussion	
1:00	The Minister who has Heard the Word	Lecture	Resource 2-2
1:15	The Minister who has Heard the Word	Small Groups	Resource 2-3
1:50	Break		
2:00	The Persons who Hear the Word Through the Minister	Lecture	Resource 2-4
2:15	The Persons who Hear the Word Through the Minister	Guided Discussion	
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe the roles and relationships of the Holy Spirit, the church, the minister and the congregation in ministry
- recognize a call to ministry from the Holy Spirit, and understand the significance of his or her role as a messenger of the Lord
- accept the servant role of a minister to a people as exemplified by Jesus Christ

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

One-page report on the Greek terms for 'word.'

Two-page comparison/contrast of OT prophet and NT preacher.

Critique of sermon.

Journal reflections and insights

Assign for next lesson

Write a three-page report on the variety and flexibility of preaching situations and methods in the ministry of the apostle Paul, and that of John Wesley, and that of yourself.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Comments on a life-changing situation that resulted from your obedience to the word of God.
- Reflections on the times, places, and circumstances in which you heard and responded in faith to the gospel.

Looking Ahead

As part of Lesson 4 you will need to play, for the class, a recording of one of their discussions. You will need to record a couple of discussion sessions to have a good selection to play.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Homework Sharing

Call on two or three of the students to read one of their reports that are due today. Collect the reports that are due today.

Orientation

We have seen that the ministry is grounded in the word God has spoken, and is speaking

- in Jesus Christ,
- in the Bible that bears witness to Jesus Christ,
- in the preaching that proclaims Christ by expounding the Bible.

The word of God supplies the foundation and rationale for the work of the man or woman who is called to preach.

This suggests at once the persons who are involved in Christian ministry:

- the Lord who spoke the word,
- the minister who has heard the word,
- the persons who hear the word from the preacher.

To a consideration of these persons we now devote attention.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe the roles and relationships of the Holy Spirit, the church, the minister, and the congregation in ministry
- recognize a call to ministry from the Holy Spirit, and understand the significance of his or her role as a messenger of the Lord
- accept the servant role of a minister to a people as exemplified by Jesus Christ

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Lord Who Spoke the Word

(15 minutes)

Obviously, the most significant person involved in Christian ministry is the One who speaks the word that generates the task and qualifies the worker—the Lord.

The Creating Word

Refer students to Resource 2-1

The Lord spoke the word of creation.

All that our eyes behold around us, that environment to which we give the name of “nature,” first existed as thoughts in the mind of God. His thoughts materialized through His words to form the universe. As the Psalmist wrote:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth
Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of
the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to
be; he commanded, and it stood firm (Ps 33: 6, 9).

When we consult the ancient creation narrative in Genesis, over and over we read, “And God said . . . and there was;” “And God said . . . and God saw.” He spoke the universe into existence as a creation that stood apart from its Creator. His words made His thoughts visible, audible, and tangible. The power of the word God speaks is indescribably great!

What language did God speak to create the world? We do not know, but that it was mightily effective we can see. Paul said, “There are all sorts of languages in the world,” and “none of them is without meaning” (1 Cor 14: 10). Most meaningful of all was the language that created the possibility of other languages, the Creator’s language.

How much time did creation take? The question is irrelevant. Time was created by the word of God that brought the universe into being. The human creature can move from thought to word in nanoseconds. Thought and word in the mind of God originated matter and time with a potential for expansion, differentiation, and continuation that resulted in the universe we now behold, explore, and marvel at.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Rom 11:33-36).

The creating Word is identified in the New Testament as Jesus Christ.

In the august prologue to his Gospel, John wrote:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. . . . He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him (Jn 1:1-2, 10).

The world, blinded by sin, did not recognize, welcome, and accept its Creator. Worse, He was rejected and crucified by those who had the best clues to His identity and purpose in visiting His creation.

The apostle Paul also clearly teaches that Christ was the creator of the world:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:15-17).

By Jesus Christ all things were created and in Jesus Christ all things cohere. He is the creative Word of God, eternal and personal. He is the mediator of creation and He is the mediator of redemption.

The Redeeming Word

Creation, perfectly formed by the speaking God, was tragically deformed by the sinning human. The creature had refused to heed the Creator's word. Only the One who made us could remake us. The Creator must be the Redeemer or redemption was impossible. Into the void of humanity's lost condition the voice that opposes chaos with order sounded again.

The Lord spoke the word of redemption.

When God first beheld His creation, He pronounced it "very good" (Gen 1: 31). What we now behold is a mixture of good and evil, for "sin entered the world," spoiling humankind and their environment. There occurred, early in human history, what has been traditionally and rightly called "the Fall." Humans opposed their will to the will of God in a tragic misuse of the freedom with which the Creator had endowed them. Humans, deprived and depraved by their sin, grieved and angered the Creator. They became an object of divine wrath and were addressed in words of judgment (Gen 6: 5-7).

"God is love," and what He spoke was spoken in love. Not even the sin of fallen humankind can quench the Creator's love. Humanity dug a pit and fell into it. Further exertion only deepened the pit, but could not extricate the sinner. Like miners trapped by a cave-in deep beneath the earth, help from the outside was the only hope. "A second Adam to the fight, and to the rescue came," to borrow a line from an old hymn. The Lord who had spoken to create now spoke to redeem.

The Word of redemption, too, is Jesus Christ.

"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin" (Rom 5: 12), but redemption entered the world and life through Christ.

For centuries the prophets of Israel, whom God called "my servants," spoke of a Savior who was coming. And "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son . . . to redeem" us (Gal 4: 4, 5). The apostles proclaimed the Savior who had come, the One whose death atoned for sin, whose life empowered for holiness, and whose work substantiated their ministry. That apostolic message has been recorded for us. Their witness to the mission and meaning of Jesus is given to us in the words of the New Testament.

God has spoken in Jesus Christ as our Creator and Redeemer. He continues to speak as the Bible is preached and taught, by men and women chosen and called by Him as servants of His Word.

Guided Discussion: The Lord Who Speaks the Word

(35 minutes)

Allow students time to respond.

Possible response:

Nature participates in the consequences of the Fall. See Gen 3: 17-18. Fallen humankind is as out of sync with their environment, as with God and people. However, nature will participate in the "restoration" of all things that God has promised. See Acts 3:21; Rom 8:21-22.

Possible response:

God created humanity in His own image. Ruined by sin, humans create gods in their image. The human mind wrestles with the problem of evil and seeks a solution to sin that exalts the creature rather than honors the Creator. The sin of Adam, grasping for lordship as a rejection of stewardship, is endlessly repeated in every human relationship—to God, to others, and to nature. See Rom 1:18-32. God's command to "Rule over" has become, not a task of obedience, but an obsession with power that seeks to exchange the divine and human roles.

Possible response:

The creative word initiated a process that developed over elapsed time. The same thing is true of the redemptive word. God patiently prepared the world for the coming of Christ "when the time had fully come" and patiently withholds final judgment that sinners might repent and come to Christ. See Gal 4:4-5. 2 Pet 3:8-13. Meanwhile, He exercises sovereignty over nature by employing "natural" events in mercy and in judgment, as He did at the Exodus. God deals with us as thinking, feeling, and willing persons, not as rivers, stones, or trees. His redemptive word invites hearing and acceptance, but does not coerce either. Events and response to them requires the continuum of history.

Since God made all things "very good," why is humanity's natural environment so often hostile towards us?

One God, one world, one Christ—it sounds so simple and logical. Why are there so many religions, each with their gods and redeemers?

If God created all things by speaking them into being, why did He not restore all things by simply speaking them back into right relationships?

What disastrous historical events have resulted from obedience to the words of a wicked human leader?

Would someone like to share a life-changing event in your life that resulted from obedience to the word of God?

The contrast of the last two questions will reinforce the student's awareness of the power of words to destroy or to redeem.

Lecture: The Minister Who has Heard the Word

(15 minutes)

The Lord who spoke the words of creation and redemption gives himself to be spoken of, to be proclaimed, in order to be known and loved and served.

The Speaking Lord Chooses His Messengers

Refer students to Resource 2-2.

An ancient king of Israel during a time of crisis asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" The answer was "Yes" (Jer 37: 17). God has a word to say to every person in every situation. Transmission of His word requires a messenger. "How can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10: 14). Scripture makes it clear that the word of God determines its own messengers.

The prophets' call to preach

What made a man or woman a prophet? What makes a man or woman a preacher? One place the answer is found is in Jeremiah 7: 1-3:

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Stand at the gate of the Lord's house and there proclaim this message: 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says.'"

The one who heard the word said to others, "Hear the word." Jeremiah did not speak for the Lord until the Lord had spoken to him. The coming of the word to Jeremiah as a message to proclaim to others constituted him a prophet.

In a similar passage from the Gospel of Luke we are introduced to the ministry of John the Baptist:

The word of the Lord came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for

the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord'" (Lk 3:2-4).

When the word of the Lord came to him, John became God's spokesperson to others. John did not initiate his own career. It was determined by the call of God.

The apostles' call to preach

Simon Peter, preaching to the household of a Roman army officer, explained the ministry of the apostles in these words:

He [the risen Christ] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:42-43).

The prophets, the apostles, and the preachers who have succeeded them were men and women who heard the word of God and were constrained by His will to declare that word to others. They did not simply choose to preach; they were commanded to preach by the speaking God. Were they the only ones qualified to do so? From a merely human perspective, they did not seem to be the best the Lord could find! Their ministry and their success could only be explained with reference to the wisdom and power of God. The word of God

- created their office,
- supplied their message,
- provided their authority.

The pattern first displayed in them has been duplicated throughout the history of the Church. The Lord summons His preachers, delivers to them His message, and authorizes them to speak in His name.

The Lord Calls, the Church Confirms

The Church does not call a person to preach, nor does it confer the authority to preach. Everything essential about the ministry depends upon the word of the Lord being received and transmitted. The word of the Lord determines its own servants and authorizes their proclamation. However, the Church, as a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led community of believers, will perceive and approve and encourage a person's call to preach. The Church confirms what the Lord initiates.

In the biblical sense, a preacher is one to whom the word of the Lord has come and by whom the word of the Lord is sent to others. The preacher is not validated by a personal career choice, by good grades on an aptitude test, or by the favorable report of a credentials committee. The preacher is a man or woman who can say, as Ezekiel said over and over, "The word of the Lord came to me."

What the preacher receives from the Lord he or she relays to the people, saying, "Hear the word of the Lord." He or she proclaims a given message by the authority of the One who chose and called him or her for that task. Unless the Lord has tapped a person for the work of the ministry, he or she will have no authority. And if those who are called to preach substitute the wisdom of humanity for the word of the Lord, they will only succeed in polluting the air with noise that is powerless to save their hearers from sin.

The Messenger is His/Her Own First Audience

The person who receives the word of God in order to transmit that word to others should apply its message first of all to himself or herself.

The preacher must be a doer before he or she is a speaker.

Those who preach must be willing to say with Paul not only, "Be imitators of God," but also, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (Eph 5:1; 1 Cor 11:1). The one who refuses to hear does not deserve to be heard. Obedience to the word is the first obligation of those who preach the word. We preach with our lives as surely as we preach with our lips.

Jesus warned His disciples that teaching the truth would not excuse us from living the truth.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see" (Mt 23:1-5).

The warning to the disciples was followed by the “woe” directed to these teachers whom Jesus branded as “hypocrites.” The truth they taught was binding upon their hearers, but the lives they lived in contradiction to the truth were condemned. Those who preach and teach the word are first of all responsible to live that word.

The high cost of obedience will not justify disobedience.

To minister the word of the Lord has always been a costly service. In every generation men and women have suffered at the hands of those who reject the gospel. The threat of suffering must not silence the preacher or compromise the message.

When the Jewish high court, offended by the gospel, gave the first apostles “strict orders not to teach” in Jesus’ name, those valiant messengers replied, “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29). Further obedience meant prison and even death for some of them, but silence was not an option. They refused to be intimidated. The ministry of preaching and teaching the word is a task for those who are obedient to the speaking Lord. Disobedience to Him disqualifies them.

Hear and speak. Receive and transmit. That is the simple sequence involved in becoming a preacher. Hearing includes obeying and speaking accepts risk.

Small Groups: The Minister Who has Heard the Word

(35 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 2-3.

Possible response:

The constants include the sovereign action of God and the content of the message one is called to deliver—the word of the Sovereign. The variables include the setting in which the call occurs, the presence or absence of confirming “signs,” and the nature and intensity of the human response to the call—eagerness, reluctance, etc.

Possible response:

To recognize the call. To encourage preparation for ministry. To mentor the called one while he or she

In groups of three discuss the questions found in Resource 2-3. Decide on a recorder/spokesperson to report to the class in 15 minutes.

What are the constants and the variables of a call to preach?

What is the pastor’s role when a member of his or her church is called to preach?

remains in that congregation. To create opportunities for the called one to exercise the gifts and graces God has bestowed upon them. To model the integrity and fidelity of a true minister of the gospel, but to guard against thinking of himself or herself as a pattern to be exactly duplicated.

Possible response:

The Church's recognition of the gifts and graces for ministry safeguards against misfits who are mistaken about their call. A novice who lacks the confidence and respect of his or her own church will be a risk to any other church. The people of God invest heavily in those called to preach; they rightfully expect the investment to be proven wise and safe. The person called to preach will need the strength and comfort that an encouraging community of worshipers can supply.

If one is called by the sovereign act of God, why should any confirmation of the Church be necessary?

Call the class back together after 15 minutes for group reports.

With the remaining time for this section have some in the class share their call to preach and the responses of their pastors and churches to their call.

Break

(10 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to stretch and move around.

Lecture: The Persons Who Hear the Word through the Minister

(15 minutes)

The word of God addresses an individual to create its messenger. The messenger is a way station but not the terminal of God's word.

The Preacher Exists for the People

The word creates a preacher to be employed, not admired. God speaks to claim a people for himself, and to control the lives of those redeemed people. He speaks through individuals whom He personally chooses to convey His word, and they exist and serve for the sake of the people.

Refer students to Resource 2-4.

The example of Moses

The statement that closes the book of Numbers is a lucid example of this truth: "These are the commands and regulations the Lord gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab." At particular times and places God gives to a chosen servant a message for His people. From the Lord through Moses to the Israelites was the route taken by the divine word.

The example of Isaiah

Later in the life of Israel the usual messengers would be prophets, a sometimes strange and always courageous line of preachers who lived and died to achieve the mission given them by the Lord. A splendid example is Isaiah. In a time of crisis in the life of Israel he "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send?'" He responded, "Here am I. Send me!" And the Lord replied, "Go and tell this people" (Isa 6:8-9). The prophet existed for the sake of the people.

The example of Jeremiah

Some were less eager than Isaiah to volunteer as the Lord's messengers. When the Lord said to Jeremiah, "I appointed you as a prophet to the nations," the surprised young man demurred, saying, "Ah, Sovereign Lord . . . I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." Precisely! Because He sovereignly chooses His servants, the Lord replied, "You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you." The call from which Jeremiah shrank was accompanied by the strengthening promise, "I am with you" (Jer 1:4-8). The Lord was with him for the sake of them.

Jesus, the Sent One and the Sending One

The speaking God sends the hearing minister to speak to others. The "man for others" found its supreme example in the Lord Jesus himself.

Jesus was the Sent One.

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, was profoundly conscious of being "the Sent One." In the Gospel of John alone, Jesus speaks more than 40 times of having been sent by the Father into the world. In one such passage we hear Jesus say:

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I

do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him (Jn 8:28-29).

He came to speak the Father's words, and proving loyal to that task He enjoyed the Father's constant presence.

Jesus is the Sending One.

The Sent One became the Sending One. In the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17 we hear Him say of His disciples, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (v. 18). The Father's words, spoken by Jesus and spoken in Jesus, were committed to preaching disciples. The words of God were given to them and accepted by them (v. 8). They were sanctified by the word of truth and sent into the world to proclaim that word (vv. 17-18).

At an assembly of "apostles and elders" Simon Peter took the floor "and addressed them." "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:6-7). God chose the preacher and supplied the message in order to reach other people.

Paul's summons to preach blended with his conversion to Christ. The Lord appeared to him saying, "I am Jesus . . . I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness to what you have seen of me and what I will show you. . . . I am sending you." Paul's response is recorded in these words, "I was not disobedient. . . . I preached that they [Jews and Gentiles] should repent and turn to God." (Acts 26:15-20). God sends the converted that others may become converts.

The Preacher is Sent and Spent for Others

Always the pattern remains—God's word comes to the preacher, and through him or her is channeled to other persons whom God desires to save. At whatever personal cost, the preacher must convey the word received. The preacher is sent and spent for the sake of those who need to hear the word of the Lord.

The word-bearers of God are a light for all nations.

Israel was chosen as “a light to the nations” (Isa 51: 4). Israel came from the loins of Abraham, with whom God made a covenant that terminated upon “all peoples on earth” (Gen 12: 1-3).

Of the Church, as a new Israel, Peter wrote, “You are a chosen people . . . that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). The Church is not self-contained but exists for a purpose, exists as mission. “You are . . . that you may.” Their being was for the sake of their doing, and their doing was declaration.

From within the Church God selects individuals to serve others as preachers of His word. God is always looking and reaching beyond the churches and the preachers to others. Only with a global vision can churches and preachers truly serve the word of God that brought them into being.

The Good Shepherd seeks other sheep through His messengers.

Jesus, the self-named “Good Shepherd,” came to fulfill the ancient word of God, “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them . . . I will rescue them. . . . I will pasture them.” (Ezek 34: 11-13). He looked beyond Israel to the whole world, saying, “I have other sheep . . . I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice” (Jn 10: 16). He was referring to Gentiles, and as a matter of historical record, the Gentiles heard His voice when they heard preachers delivering the gospel message. Of His personal ministry Jesus said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Mt 15: 24). But to His disciples Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations,” and “you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth” (Mt 28: 19; Acts 1: 8).

The preacher is given the word of God in order to bear it to others. He or she does so as the emissary of the Good Shepherd, who said, “I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10: 15). Preachers must be willing to live and die for the people to whom they are sent. Preachers who know their task can say to their listeners, as did the apostle Paul, “I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well” (2 Cor 12: 15).

Preaching Mediates Divine Encounter

Sending His messengers to people who need to hear His word is God's way of creating a saving encounter with those people.

The preaching encounter with others is sometimes initiated by the preacher.

This was the case when a crowd gathered in the streets at Pentecost, attracted by the ecstatic worship of Spirit-filled disciples. Asking one another, "What does this mean?" they were answered by Peter who seemed to feel a sermon coming on whenever he saw a crowd (Acts 2). A similar case occurred when a lame beggar was healed at the gate of the temple. His leaping and rejoicing drew a crowd and Peter seized the moment to preach the gospel to the excited group.

The preaching encounter with others is sometimes initiated by the listeners.

This was the case when Cornelius invited Peter to preach to his household. What preacher would not welcome the words that greeted Peter on that occasion! "I sent for you . . . and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (Acts 10:33).

The preaching encounter with others is sometimes initiated by circumstances.

This was the case when God shook the prison at Philippi with "a violent earthquake." The jailer panicked and started to kill himself, when Paul stopped him with a shout: "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The trembling man fell at the feet of Paul and Silas and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their answer was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." They expounded the answer as they "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house" (Acts 16:25-32).

The preaching encounter with others is sometimes initiated by custom.

This was the case when Paul and his companions "entered the synagogue" at Antioch "on the Sabbath." After scripture was read, the synagogue rulers followed an established custom with the invitation, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak." Paul responded gladly and swiftly,

telling them “the good news” of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ (Acts 13:14-39). This is how most of our preaching opportunities occur. In our churches each Sunday, those who come to worship expect to hear the word of God proclaimed, whether they are eager to receive it or not.

However initiated, the preaching situation fulfills the purpose of God to send His saving word to an ever-enlarging circle of listeners.

Whatever their differences in race, color, culture, economy, and social status, all who hear the word have two things in common—sin and the need to be delivered from sin, that they might live now and forever in fellowship with God. For their sakes the Lord speaks His word through the messengers of His choosing. The preacher’s calling is not a privilege conferred upon a deserving individual; it is a responsibility created that others might become followers of Jesus Christ. Preachers are called and the word is delivered for the same reason that Jesus was given in death at Calvary—because “God so loved the world.”

Guided Discussion: The Persons Who Hear the Word through the Minister

(35 minutes)

Allow time for students to respond.

*Possible response:
Why? Because Scripture so describes the preacher. How? In deep humility and gratitude, with a willingness to serve and to suffer for their sakes. See Eph. 4:11; 3:7-13; 2 Cor 4.*

Why and how should the preacher think of himself or herself as God’s gift to the Church?

*Possible response:
The Church exists as mission. Her mission is an extension of His, not one the Church originates. Ministers are ultimately accountable to Him, and only mediately to church leaders and boards. Those to whom we are sent are worth living and dying for. Heir-ship to God is defined as obedience, not privilege.*

What is the significance for us of Jesus as the Sent One and the Sending One?

*Possible response:
The local church is part of the global mission and contains some of the “other sheep.” One’s personal vision and passion should embrace the far reaches of the*

What does the global dimension of Christ’s vision and mission imply for the minister in a local church?

mission, and one should urge local support for world evangelism. One should keep one's people reminded that the body of Christ is multi-racial, multi-national, multi-cultural, and help them overcome prejudices that are unlike Christ and divisive of the Church.

*Possible response:
The message is a constant. The purpose of preaching is a constant. The methods of presenting the gospel and directing the response to it should be varied to take advantage of the circumstances and setting in which preaching occurs. Gospel work calls for flexibility and resilience.*

What does the variety of preaching encounters suggest concerning the preaching to be done in them?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

- Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you
- describe the roles and relationships of the Holy Spirit, the church, the minister, and the congregation in ministry?
 - recognize a call to ministry from the Holy Spirit, and understand the significance of one's role as a messenger of the Lord?
 - accept the servant role of a minister to a people as exemplified by Jesus Christ?

Look Ahead

During our next lesson we will look at the knowledge required to function effectively as a minister of the word of God.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Write a three-page report on the variety and flexibility of preaching situations and methods in the ministry of the apostle Paul, and that of John Wesley, and that of yourself.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Comments on a life-changing situation that resulted from your obedience to the word of God.
- Reflections on the times, places, and circumstances in which you heard and responded in faith to the gospel.

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Lesson 3

The Knowledge Required for Christian Ministry

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Knowing Your God	Lecture	Resource 3-1
0:25	Knowing Your God	Small Groups	Resource 3-2
1:00	Knowing Your Self	Lecture	Resource 3-3
1:15	Knowing Your Self	Guided Discussion	
1:50	Break		
2:00	Knowing Your People	Lecture	Resource 3-4
2:15	Knowing Your People	Small Groups	Resource 3-5
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- begin identifying his or her identity in relation to God, Ministry, and other people
- objectively assess personal strengths and weaknesses for building and maintaining ministry roles and relationships
- nurture a lifelong desire to know God more intimately

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

Three-page report on Paul and Wesley.

Journal reflections and insights

Assign for next lesson

Identify some of the choicest Christians you have known; list the traits observed in those human lives that convince you of corresponding qualities in God.

Complete Resource 3-6. Obtain from your parents, spouse, or best friend Resource 1-5, their assessment of you. Compare the two for agreement and disagreement, admissions and omissions. Write a two-page report.

Do a comparison of the vocabulary Jesus used in His teaching with that used by the apostle Paul. What do the differences suggest about the communicators, about their audiences, and about the settings in which they address people? Write a three-page report.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Consider some of the famous "portraits" of Jesus from great artists. How have they helped or hindered your understanding of Him?
- How did you feel about the assessment that you did about yourself? How did you feel about your parent's, spouse's, or best friend's assessment?

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Homework Sharing

Return the reports collected from the last lesson. Call on one or two students to read one of their reports due today.

Collect the reports that are due.

Orientation

We have seen that the word of God is the ground of Christian ministry and has three forms:

- the living Word
- the written Word
- the preached word

We have seen that Christian ministry, grounded upon these three forms of the word of God, involves three persons:

- the Lord who speaks the word
- the minister who receives and transmits the word
- the person or group who hears the word from the minister

Our concern, now, is with the knowledge required to function effectively as the minister of the word of God. This knowledge is obviously threefold:

- a knowledge of God
- a knowledge of one's self
- a knowledge of the people to whom one is sent

To these areas of knowledge we will now give our attention.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- begin identifying his or her identity in relation to God, Ministry, and other people
- objectively assess personal strengths and weaknesses for building and maintaining ministry roles and relationships
- nurture a lifelong desire to know God more intimately

Lesson Body

Lecture: Knowing Your God

(15 minutes)

Some knowledge of God is presupposed in a call to preach the word. What has begun must be continued and deepened. Unless a growing knowledge of the word of God leads to a growing knowledge of the God who speaks that word, the minister will shrivel spiritually, and his or her work will become merely professional. The cultivation of one's own friendship with God is the first responsibility of any man or woman who seeks to acquaint others with God through preaching and teaching His word.

Knowledge of God is not a subject-to-object relationship. It is a person-to-Person relationship. Knowledge of is more than knowledge about. God is not an object to be studied but a Person to be intimately loved, trusted, and served.

The Place to Begin

Refer students to Resource 3-1.

Personal acquaintance is the best and surest way to know anyone, including God. We are told in Scripture, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isa 55:6). God can be found because He draws near. He comes to us or we could never come to Him.

The place to begin knowing God is His self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

God can only be known as He chooses to make himself known, and He has chosen to make himself known in the person and mission of His one and only Son, the human Jesus Christ. There are other venues of revelation, and therefore other venues of knowledge, but revelation is complete in Christ. As a seminary professor has put it, "Why not begin where the light is brightest?" You cannot know more of God than you learn in Jesus, but you can know less. The high ground is Jesus, and all other landscapes of knowledge are best viewed from the perspective of our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Knowing God means, first of all, knowing Him as a sinner knows the Savior.

“The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 Jn 4: 14). “In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (Jn 1: 4). The life of Jesus is the light in which we come to know God. The knowledge of God is not only from life but also for life. We know in order to live, not simply to acquire knowledge for its own sake. Of his record of Jesus’ miracles, John declared, “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20: 31). The barrier to knowledge of God is sin, and the Savior from sin is Jesus. He is “the light of the world” (Jn 9: 5), and in that light is our life.

The preacher must say, first to self and then to others, “Would you know God? Would you have life? Come to Jesus.” In prayer to the Father, Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17: 3).

To know God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ requires knowing God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture.

Jesus, as a man among men and women, presents himself now in the written Word of God. The days of Jesus’ life on earth, when He could be seen and heard and touched, ended with His ascension into heaven. Our acquaintance with the human life of Jesus as the revelation of God depends now upon the study of the Bible. Listen carefully to the apostle John as he makes this clear:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete (1 Jn 1: 1-4).

We can have the same intimate and joyful fellowship with God in Jesus Christ today that those first disciples of Christ experienced. However, such knowledge of the Word of life is now mediated through a proclamation

that became a written document. If we would know Jesus, we are committed to the patient and continuing study of the Bible, for its primary purpose is to bear witness to Him, and His primary purpose is to reveal God to us in order that we may have life eternal.

This means the preacher is not to reduce the Bible to a "happy hunting ground" for texts and sermons to be preached to others, but to utilize it as the source of his or her personal knowledge of Jesus. To know Him is to find and know God, and we know Him through the Bible. The preacher who comes from Bible study saying first of all, "I have a word to speak to others," is miserably misled. The preacher should be able to close the Book of God saying first of all, "God has spoken to me. I have deepened my acquaintance with Him."

Other Venues of Revelation and Knowledge

God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and through the Scriptures. To a lesser extent, He had disclosed something of himself in other places.

He has revealed himself in our human environment, in what we call "Nature."

Ancient psalmists delighted to see God in the world around them. One of them wrote these exciting words:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world (Ps 19: 1-4).

Nature speaks to us of its Creator. The Creator's signature is upon His creation. As the seraphim exclaimed, "The whole earth is filled with His glory" (Isa 6: 3). The message is universal. Only the blindness that results from sin can keep a person from seeing God in the physical universe.

While revelation does occur in nature, that revelation is limited to what Paul refers to as "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature" (Rom 1: 20). The revelation of God in "the world" is clear enough and adequate enough to make atheism untenable and inexcusable. But the book of nature does not carry the message of redemption. It is in the

gospel, and therefore, in the Bible, that “a righteousness from God is revealed,” a righteousness that makes possible our deliverance from sin, our reconciliation to God. The gospel, and not nature, is “the power of God for the salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16, 17).

The believer views nature through the lens of Scripture.

We may indeed behold God’s wisdom and power in nature, and may justly praise Him for that disclosure. But we see God in nature through the lens of Scripture, which bears the fuller self-disclosure of God. This does not mean every biblical reference to God’s work as Creator is to be viewed and interpreted as a literal scientific truth. We still need Galileo’s caution that the Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go. To discard the lens of Scripture, however, and view humanity’s environment without acknowledging humanity’s Creator leads to self-imposed darkness.

The time constraints of a minister’s calling do not allow him or her to observe “the heavens and the earth” as closely and critically as the scientist views them. The time constraints of the scientist’s work do not permit him or her to penetrate the word of God in Christ and in the Bible as deeply as does the minister. Rightly understood, each is a servant of God with a revelation to explore and share. Both are sinners for whom Christ died and in whom the Holy Spirit desires to live and work. Sin will make them foes. Christ can make them friends and “God’s fellow workers” for humanity’s good.

God is also revealed, in some measure, in human experience.

To that collective experience we give the name of “history.” To say “history is His story” may be too facile, but God has acted within history to give the world a Savior and the Scriptures that bear witness to the Savior. The impact of that “salvation-history” has transformed the lives of millions, relating them in newer and truer ways to God, to one another, to their environment, and to themselves. To see only the hand of God in history is to pile the blame for history’s tragic events and consequences upon the Creator. To see only the hand of humankind in history is to leave humanity depraved and hopeless in a universe saturated with evil and bereft of meaning.

A minister discerns a clear witness to God in his or her own experience, knowing what he or she was before being confronted and changed by Christ, and knowing what he or she has become since beginning to study the Word and finding himself or herself being “transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3: 18). And he or she knows these radical changes were wrought by a Person and power other than himself or herself and greater than human. The minister can say with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15: 10). From this vantage point, he or she can review the past and discern times, places, and events where God was at work, exhibiting His love and wisdom and power to effect those changes. And what the minister views on this small screen of personal experience, he or she sees also in the lives of others. The revelation of God in human experience is “the story within the story” of personal, national, and global events.

God has graciously made himself known, and to know Him is the foremost knowledge requisite for Christian ministry.

Small Groups: Knowing Your God

(35 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 3-2.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 3-2. Select a recorder/spokesperson who will report to the class in 20 minutes.

Call the class back in 20 minutes to share their ideas.

Possible response:

You agree that God is present in His creation. You remind the person that communion without salvation is deceptive to people and dishonoring to God, because they are sinners and He has given Christ as a Savior—which nature cannot tell us. Those who commune with God in nature usually confine God to nature. Consequently, they are communing with an idea of God, not the God who acts within history to reveal himself and to rescue us.

How do you answer the person who says, “I don’t need to go to church. I can commune with God in nature at the lakeside or in the mountains”?

Possible response:

The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ, indwells us and makes Christ real to us as a Person we can know and with whom we can

Granted that God was revealed in Jesus Christ, how can we fellowship with Him when He is a figure in past history but not accessible to our sensory world today?

have fellowship. The Spirit in you means "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:24-29).

Possible response:
 One can know hundreds of facts about the Bible and Bible teachings as the result of a purely intellectual quest. But he or she will miss the whole purpose of the Bible—which is to instrument a personal knowledge of Jesus and direct a personal life of service to Him. The Bible experts who identified the birthplace of Jesus for King Herod never visited and worshipped the Christ as did the Magi. See Mt 2:1-12. The Bible experts who sought eternal life through Bible study never found the source of that life—Jesus. See Jn 5:37-40.

Project upon a screen some of the most breathtaking photos of natural scenes you can find. Or have pictures/photos available for viewing.

Can a person know the Bible without knowing Christ?

View the pictures carefully and then describe what you can know of God from this kind of experience.

Lecture: Knowing Your Self

(15 minutes)

Over the ancient temple of Delphi was inscribed the motto, KNOW THYSELF. Socrates adopted the challenge of that motto as the goal of his personal life and as the focus of his philosophy. While knowing God should be the minister's ultimate goal, knowing oneself is a profoundly significant intermediate goal. Self-knowledge is vital to any person's ministry as a preacher or teacher of the word of God.

Knowing yourself sounds easy but few things, if any, are harder. Knowing yourself demands a ruthless honesty about your motives and actions. It demands a death to all pride and pretense behind which the self cowers to avoid full disclosure. It means more than seeing yourself as others see you. Knowing yourself means seeing yourself as God sees you. A courageous Nathan may confront you to say, "You are the one." But you only become a truer self when you confess, "I am the one"—and allow God to make you an other and better person.

Identify Yourself

Refer students to Resource 3-3.

John the Baptizer attracted huge crowds and preached searching, even searing, messages. A credentials committee from Jerusalem's religious leaders interviewed him, asking, "Who are you?" John

answered both positively and negatively. He knew who he was and therefore he knew who he was not. "I am not the Christ," he "confessed freely." He went on to deny that he was Elijah returned to earth, and to deny that he was "the Prophet" foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18: 15. When the committee, probably growing irritable, demanded a positive answer, John replied, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'" (Mk 1: 3).

John identified himself in relation to the Lord.

He was sent to herald the impending arrival of the Lord. He called upon his listeners to make a road, by repentance and forgiveness, over which the Lord would come to Israel.

John identified himself in relation to the Scriptures.

He found himself and his ministry defined "in the words of Isaiah the prophet." The Bible does not flatter human nature or human behavior. It will tell you honestly and exactly who you are and why you are.

John identified himself in relation to His ministry.

He was sent by God to point out Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1: 19-29). He found the purpose of living in bearing witness to the Savior.

The man or woman called to preach must know himself or herself in these same ways:

- Know yourself as one whom the Lord has forgiven, cleansed, and summoned to the task of preaching.
- Know yourself as one who finds yourself and your ministry defined in the written Word of God.
- Know yourself as one whose mission is beyond yourself, whose mission is to make Jesus known to others by the faithful preaching and teaching of the Bible in its witness to Jesus Christ.

Examine Yourself

Christian ministers need to obey periodically the apostolic injunction, "Examine yourselves . . . test yourselves" (2 Cor 13: 5). The minister needs frequent reality checks.

Make sure that your loyalty to Christ is the supreme loyalty of your life.

Jesus warned His disciples that cherished family members could become their enemies. He added, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:32-39). He questions you as He did Peter: "Do you truly love me more than these?" (Jn 21:15).

Make sure that your loyalty to Scripture is the defining quality of your preaching.

Paul's charge to Timothy is the Lord's charge to all ministers: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Tim 4:2). The word of God is the reason and content of our ministry when we are truly faithful. Any substitute for it is an affront to the people we are sent to serve.

Make sure that your loyalty to the spiritual needs of those who hear you governs your relationships with them and your behavior toward them.

Paul was careful not to place stumbling blocks in anyone's way "so that our ministry will not be discredited" (2 Cor 6:3). We carry the reputation of the entire ministry of the Church in our personal conduct, and we should safeguard it carefully. We exist for the people, not the people for us.

As ministers we need examinations such as these in order to maintain the integrity of our conscience, our conduct, and our calling.

Develop Yourself

Knowing yourself as you are now should lead to improving yourself. Know yourself, but never be content with yourself. Seek earnestly and always to become less of what you are and more of what the Lord would have you be.

Improve yourself through spiritual training.

Involve yourself faithfully in the traditional spiritual disciplines by which a right relationship to God and others is preserved, strengthened, and developed. Chief among these disciplines is daily prayer, daily

reading of Scripture, daily searching of the heart, daily commitment to promptly effect whatever changes God demands of you as you learn more of Him and of yourself. As Paul exhorted Timothy:

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come . . . Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1Tim 4: 7, 8, 16).

The lesser value of physical training is not to be despised, for the life and work of the mind and spirit must be expressed through the body. When a healthy body houses a flabby soul, however, the ministry is disgraced.

Improve yourself through family involvement.

The minister lives and serves in three concentric circles of responsibility and influence—the home, the church, and the community. Some have unwisely sacrificed the home to the church and the community. Knowing yourself means knowing yourself at home, where your “public face” yields to private demands and delights.

- The minister’s home should be a church where he or she unites with the family in simple and honest devotions.
- The minister’s home should be a school where children learn the first and most important lessons for life.
- The minister’s home should be a refuge from the toils and cares of his or her calling—a place where one bears no titles and wears no uniforms.

There you can relax, can just be husband or wife, and daddy or mommy to those who know you best and love you most. A preacher’s true self comes to expression more readily and surely in the home than at the office, on the streets, or in the pulpit. Maintaining a happy and healthy home life is indispensable to spiritual growth and social service.

Improve yourself by recognizing your capabilities and limitations.

To know yourself, you must know your capabilities. You won’t know that you can do more unless you attempt more. That means stretching yourself to your

limits in learning and in speaking, for your task is word-grounded and word-driven. Your career capabilities are vastly more important than your degree of efficiency and success with a fishing rod or a hunting rifle or a golf club. Don't allow avocation to usurp vocation.

To know yourself, you must know your limitations. Given the talents you possess and the time you have available, you must minister as best you can. The Lord and the people deserve no less, and you can do no more. When you have done your best, refuse to be discouraged by what you cannot do. No one can do everything. Everyone can do something. Do what you can and leave the rest to God and others. Don't dishearten yourself because you aren't Superhero or even Supersaint. When the woman who anointed Jesus with "very expensive perfume" was criticized "harshly" for her actions, Jesus said, "Leave her alone. . . . She did what she could" (Mk 14:3-9). He knows when you have done what you could and His commendation is reward enough for your sacrifice and efforts.

Improve yourself by assessing your strengths and weaknesses.

To know and improve yourself you must know your strengths. You must utilize them to the full in service to God and others. And you must guard them as avenues of temptation, for Satan will test you as surely at the point of your strengths as at the point of your weaknesses. Abraham's forte was faith, but twice his faith failed under what he perceived as a threat to his life (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

To know and improve yourself you must know your weaknesses. Knowing them, you must strive to strengthen yourself in those areas, exercising control and discipline. Guard them, too, against temptation. Satan will prey upon them in an effort to destroy the integrity of your life and work as a servant of the word of God and a servant to the lives of people. Weakness is a disqualification only when it could have been eliminated. No one is without weaknesses. Accept your weaknesses with humility and receive the Lord's strength with joy. Listen to a great preacher who learned to "delight" in his weakness:

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in

weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:9-10).

We can all experience this paradox of strength in weakness, but only when we know, accept, and consecrate our weaknesses just as we do our strengths.

The U.S. Army has a familiar advertising slogan: "Be all that you can be." That should be the goal of those who minister God's word. When Jesus first confronted Peter, He said, "You are Simon . . . You will be called Cephas." The gospel record adds a note to the reader, explaining that Cephas, "when translated, is Peter." And Peter, from the Greek *petros*, means rock. "You are . . . You will be." We know Peter's dismal record of weakness, blunder, failure, and sin. But he did become "Rocky Johnson," because he kept himself in the patient, forgiving, shaping hands of Jesus, who takes us as we are and makes us what we can be.

See Jim Stephens, "Rocky Johnson's Story," *Grace Notes* 28, April 2001, www.resourceministries.org.

Guided Discussion: Knowing Your Self

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

Possible response:
We may become more concerned about image than about reality, and more concerned about human opinion than about God's word, and more concerned about pleasing people than about pleasing God. See 1 Sam 15:12-31. We may forget that others are no better judges of us than we are of them. We may forget that their judgment is biased favorably as friends, or unfavorably as enemies.

Possible response:
If we sin our first instinct is to alibi our actions and hide our motives. See Gen 3:8-13. We too easily mask our wrong deeds by right deeds, and too quickly excuse the sins we conceal from others. It takes the word of God to convict us. See 2 Sam 12:1-10. Sometimes we even manage to forget what the word has exposed instead of repenting and finding forgiveness. See Jas 1:22-25.

What are the dangers in striving to see ourselves as others see us?

Why is it difficult to see ourselves as God sees us?

Possible response:

He alone knows the deepest, truest things about us. See Ps 139, Jn 2:24-25. We can deceive and be deceived by others. We can deceive ourselves. Our friends may be too indulgent to speak the whole truth to us. Our families may be too ashamed to tell the whole truth about us. Only the Lord has the perfect knowledge, the perfect wisdom, and the perfect love that qualifies Him to render perfect judgment. See 1 Cor 4:3-5.

Why should judgment, even self-judgment, be left to the Lord?

Lecture: Knowing Your People

(15 minutes)

The effectiveness with which the minister serves the people depends upon a growing knowledge of God and of self, but it also requires a growing knowledge of the people to whom ministry is offered.

Get Acquainted or Be Defeated

Refer students to Resource 3-4.

Unless the minister knows the people to whom he or she preaches, much of the preaching will misfire and much of the labor will be wasted.

To serve people well, we must know them well.

We must know what makes them tick and what makes them stop ticking. We need to know, so far as possible,

- their cultural backgrounds
- their educational levels
- their political opinions
- their family situations
- their economic status
- their spiritual condition

and all other factors that, blended together, shape the thinking, speaking, and acting of the people we serve.

We do not seek this information in order to preach what they want to hear, but in order to find the most effective ways of presenting truth that will change their beliefs and behaviors in order to please God. To put it another way, we do not seek to know them in order to manipulate them, but in order to serve them, in order to reach them with the saving word of God.

The larger the congregation, the more diverse the community, the more difficult it will be to get well acquainted with the people. General characteristics and prevailing attitudes, however, will clue us in where detailed information is not yet accessible. We will not

be shooting in the dark when we preach and witness, but will be on target with the best chance of securing desired responses to God's word.

Ignorance of the target is a waste of arrows.

We are responsible for preaching what people need to hear, not simply what they want to hear. This requires getting to know the people, and getting to know them requires:

- close observation of their lives
- frequent interaction with their lives.

Close observation and frequent interaction do not mean the minister will be a snoop or a nuisance. It does mean he or she will pay attention to what people are doing and saying, to how they are acting, reacting, and interacting with the most "significant others" in their lives. If the preacher is with the people only on Sunday, and observes only their church behavior, knowledge of them will be shallow, distorted, and misleading. We can learn a lot about them in Sunday contexts, but not enough to keep the arrows of ministry hitting the bull's eye. "Sunday best" is applicable both to what people wear to church and to how they behave in church. We need to know them in terms of everyday life.

Getting to know the people will be aided by:

- sharing their meals
- listening to their troubles and joys
- visiting their homes, job sites, sick rooms, and recreational fields.

The total lives of our people is the goal of our quest for knowledge.

Rich dividends require costly investments.

Finding time to acquire this knowledge of the people while also pursuing the knowledge of God and His word will never be easy and will often seem impossible. Effective ministry has always seemed impossible and caring ministers never fully close the gap between what they want to achieve and what they actually get done. Their hearts are always bigger than their schedules, and that frequently proves frustrating, but it should never cause despair. Our dreams should exceed our deeds. We can see more to do than we can get done. That is good, not bad. That keeps us striving in a ministry whose symbol is a cross, not a cushion.

Getting to know the people imposes heavy demands on our time, our energy, our sympathy, and our nerve endings! The challenge is worth the effort, however, for it results in an increasingly effective ministry.

Involvement versus Isolation

At the funeral of Caesar, in Shakespeare's drama, Mark Antony pleads with the crowd, "Lend me your ears." A minister soon discovers that such loans are not readily made. Chances of being heard are proportionate to our knowledge of the people.

Distant preachers speak to deaf audiences.

To win people's ears and hearts a minister must be in close touch with them. Involvement, not isolation, is the key to loving, knowing, serving, and reaching people. If all our weekdays are spent in ivory towers our knuckles will bleed on Sundays from knocking on closed doors. When people know that we care enough to share their lives, to share their grief and their gladness, their hurting and their healing, their temptations and their triumphs, they will respect us enough to listen to us—even when they don't agree with what we are saying.

But if they are convinced that we don't care, that we aren't there for them but for ourselves, they will tune us out and turn us down without giving us a chance to enlist them under the banner of Christ.

Christ shows us how to get acquainted with people.

Jesus Christ is our best exemplar in this, as in all things relating to ministry. Read the Gospels and note carefully the many and varied times, places, and events that show Him in touch with the lives of people to whom He spoke the words of God. Mark tells us that "the common people heard him gladly" (Mk 12: 37, KJV). One reason they heard Him gladly is because He was with them frequently. He saw them because He looked for them. He heard them because He listened to them. He valued them because He loved them. He cared enough for them to get acquainted with their social, political, and spiritual conditions. Like our Lord, we must learn to treasure every human contact as an opportunity for getting to know the people to whom the Lord has sent us as His message bearers.

Getting to know the people doesn't guarantee that our messages will always be accepted, but it does magnify

the possibility of our messages being heard. Sometimes the people flatly rejected the messages of Jesus, even turning violent on occasions. Such responses, however, showed that they heard Him. Worse than being rejected is being ignored, and we will be ignored if people remain strangers to us and we to them. Building bridges is wiser than yelling across chasms.

Small Groups: Knowing Your People

(35 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 3-5.

Possible response:

It creates a greater sympathy, which prompts stronger efforts to reach them. It creates a warmer emotional climate, which makes them more receptive to help. It enables wiser approaches to them and readier responses from them. It conditions the minister's language, which makes him or her more comprehensible.

Possible response:

Neglect of study, which weakens preaching. Neglect of family, which increases emotional stress. Neglect of prayer, which forfeits spiritual power. You can "wear out your welcome."

You may want to assign the Gospels the groups work on so each of the Gospels will be represented.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 3-5. Select a recorder/spokesperson to report to the class in 20 minutes.

How does knowing people better help a minister to communicate the gospel more effectively?

What are some dangers of being with the people too much?

Select a Gospel and report to the class on the variety of people who approached Jesus and the variety of approaches He used to engage them with the truth.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- begin identifying your identity in relation to God, Ministry, and other people?
- objectively assess personal strengths and weaknesses for building and maintaining ministry roles and relationships?
- nurture a lifelong desire to know God more intimately?

Look Ahead

One of the primary responsibilities of those who minister the word of God is to develop communication skills. We will explore that topic next lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Identify some of the choicest Christians you have known; list the traits observed in those human lives that convince you of corresponding qualities in God.

Complete Resource 3-6, Nazarene Ministry Strengths and Gifts Survey. Obtain from your parents, spouse, or best friend Resource 1-5, their assessment of you. Compare the two for agreement and disagreement, admissions and omissions. Write a two-page report.

Do a comparison of the vocabulary Jesus used in His teaching with that used by the apostle Paul. What do the differences suggest about the communicators, about their audiences, and about the settings in which they address people? Write a three-page report.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Consider some of the famous “portraits” of Jesus from great artists. How have they helped or hindered your understanding of Him?
- How did you feel about the assessment that you did about yourself? How did you feel about your parent’s, spouse’s, or best friend’s assessment?

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Lesson 4

The Communication Skills Needed for Christian Ministry

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Learning to Listen	Lecture	Resource 4-1
0:25	Learning to Listen	Small Groups	Resource 4-2
1:10	Learning to Speak	Lecture	Resource 4-3
1:25	Learning to Speak	Small Groups	Resource 4-4
1:50	Break		
2:00	Learning to Persuade	Lecture	Resource 4-5
2:15	Learning to Persuade	Guided Discussion	
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- practice the discipline of listening, the first step in communication, in private study, corporate worship, prayer, and conversation with people
- articulate and initiate a personal plan for developing effective speaking skills
- understand the use of persuasion in delivering God's message to the people

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

List of traits of select Christians.

Two-page report on character/behavior assessment.

Three-page report on Jesus/Paul comparison.

Journal reflections and insights

Assign for next lesson

Research Acts and the Pauline Epistles for times when the Lord spoke to Paul directly, not through the Scriptures. Discuss the settings, the messages, the effects, and their meanings in a three-page report.

Examine the messages of the apostles (Acts 2: 14-41; 13: 13-48; 17: 22-34). Identify the elements of persuasion in them. Also, identify the recorded responses to the messages and the reaction of the speakers to those responses. Write a three-page report.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections and insights from this lesson and from your reading and study. Begin with the sentence, "I remember how I felt when I was coerced into doing . . ."

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Homework Sharing

Return the reports collected from last lesson. Call on one or two students to read one of their reports that are due today.

Collect the reports due today.

Orientation

Few things, if any, are more difficult than effective communication. To speak clearly and to listen closely, so that what is transmitted squares with what is received, is the most challenging task that has confronted the human race since languages were confused at Babel. More often than any minister would care to admit, preaching, witnessing, and counseling are Babel revisited. One of the primary responsibilities of those who minister the word of God is to develop communication skills.

To develop communication skills the minister must

- learn to listen
- learn to speak
- learn to persuade.

In today's rapid-paced living, none of these learning areas is easily explored. To achieve the ability to think, speak, and convince in order to forge a connection between God's word and people's needs is a goal worthy of our strongest, enduring efforts. The minister seeks, as did Paul, to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (1 Cor 10:5), a victory that makes the hardest struggle worthwhile.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- practice the discipline of listening, the first step in communication, in private study, corporate worship, prayer, and conversation with people
- articulate and initiate a personal plan for developing effective speaking skills
- understand the use of persuasion in delivering God's message to the people

Lesson Body

Lecture: Learning to Listen

(15 minutes)

We must learn to listen before we speak. The word of God for human life must be understood and applied to our lives before we attempt to convey that word to others. We ministers serve as spokespersons for the speaking God. We are captive to a word-based and word-driven career. We live in danger of talking too much and saying too little. High on the list of imperative education for ministry is learning to listen.

Listening as a Learned Art

Refer students to Resource 4-1.

We must learn to listen because listeners are made and not born. Listening is not a native capacity but a learned art. Most of us are more prone to speak than to listen. We find it too easy to use our mouths before we have used our brains. James had good reason to write these words:

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (Jas 1:19-21).

James knows listening is not enough. Action must be taken. The word received must become the word practiced. But listening is vital, for a person's first instinct is to react without thinking. Listening enables us to purify our inner lives, from which our speaking and acting emerges. Listening enables us to know what to say and how to say it in order to make people's lives better and not worse.

Listening to God has Priority

We must first of all listen to God. We are servants of His word, responsible for injecting His word into the differing life situations we confront. This brings us back to the three forms of God's word—Christ, the Bible, and preaching.

God speaks in Christ.

Christ is the Word incarnate and when He visited our world, He brought the words of the Father for the children. Describing the call and commissioning of “the Twelve,” Mark writes:

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons (Mk 3: 13).

Mountains, in both Testaments, are pre-eminently places of revelation. To the place of revelation Jesus summons those who will speak for Him. Before they speak for Him they must be with Him—with Him as disciples, with Him as apprentices, with Him as on-the-job trainees. While with Him, they are receiving from Him the words that will furnish substance to their lives and content to their messages. They are to be listeners before they become speakers.

Rushing to speak before we have listened will leave us poorly qualified and frequently defeated. If we follow Simon Peter, the impulsive disciple with “the foot-shaped mouth,” through the Gospels, we can see how much goes wrong when someone is swift to speak but slow to listen.

Jesus placed tremendous emphasis on action. Take for example His matchless parable of the Good Samaritan. It was sparked by the question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer was given in the two greatest commandments, “Love the Lord,” and “Love your neighbor.” Jesus said, “Do this and you will live.” That prompted another question, “Who is my neighbor?” The answer to that question was given in the story of the Good Samaritan, who did something for a stricken man while others merely passed him by. And Jesus closed the dialogue with the challenge, “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10: 25-37). Observe the accent on action: “What must I do?” “Do this and you will live.” “Go and do likewise.” Obviously, the life of love is one of intense and significant activity.

But that passage in Luke’s Gospel is followed immediately by the story of Jesus’ visit to the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany. There Mary sits quietly at the Lord’s feet, “listening to what he said.” Meanwhile Martha is busy doing—banging pots and pans in the kitchen as she prepares an elaborate meal for her

beloved guest. Doing, doing, doing while her sister just sits and listens. Frustrated, she bursts into the room where Jesus is teaching and Mary is learning. Pointing to Mary and talking to Jesus, Martha demands, "Tell her to help me!" Poor Martha, she tries to tell the Lord what to tell Mary! She tries to usurp lordship in the situation. And Jesus replies, "You are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:38-42). Jesus is saying, in effect, listening should precede doing. A simple, one-dish meal would have sufficed, and all present would have had time to be with Jesus, to learn how to live and speak for Him by listening to Him.

We must company with Jesus and listen to what God is saying to us in Him.

God speaks in the Scriptures.

We come to Jesus by coming to the Bible. There He calls us to the mountain. There He speaks His word to us in order to shape us as servants of that word. From there He sends us out to speak to others. We have, as ministers, a Moses-like responsibility. We read in Exodus 19:

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel . . . These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak (vv. 3, 6, 7).

We hear from God and then speak to the people. His written Word is the source of our message to them.

Effective communication skills, in our task, require giving large chunks of time to the study of the Bible. No other literature provides wiser or better training for ministry. The Bible is replete with wisdom for the whole gamut of relationships (person-to-God, person-to-persons, and person-to-things) that make up the stuff of daily human life. Listening to God as He speaks through the Bible is indispensable for equipping us to speak to others.

As we noted in an earlier lesson, the risen Christ, before His ascension, formed His disciples into a Bible class:

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (Lk 24: 44-48).

Before He can send us out He must call us in, call us in to hear and understand the biblical witness to Him as Lord and Savior of the world. From Bible study He sends us to "speak in the daylight" what He has disclosed to us "in the dark," and to "proclaim from the roofs" what He has "whispered" in our ears (Mt 10: 27). Private learning is to become public discourse. The flat rooftops of houses in ancient Palestine were convenient places for heralds to proclaim their messages. First, though, the Lord must speak the message to His heralds, and then it can be fully and boldly announced to the world.

God speaks through preaching.

Those who would do preaching should listen to preaching. They must train themselves as listeners if they hope to speak so that others will listen to them. Unfortunately, preachers are often poor listeners to preaching. They are prone to miss the message as the Lord's personal address. They too easily assume a posture of overhearing the word preached as a message to others, instead of hearing it as a message to themselves.

When part of a congregation, we ministers should listen just as others do, to hear what the Lord is saying to us. We should take from the service of worship some wisdom for our personal journeys, and not simply a few tips on how to do our work—or how not to do it. We must listen, not to critique another's sermon, but to catch the voice of God to our needy hearts.

We must listen to the messages of ancient prophets and apostles, messages recorded in Scripture. But God has living voices crying in the present wilderness, and to them also we need to give attention. This is not a matter of "professional courtesy" but of spiritual enrichment, indeed of spiritual survival.

Our listening to God will occur in private study.

Reading is our opportunity to listen to gifted persons whose writings explain

- the teachings of Scripture
- the behavior of people
- the events of history
- the methods of communication

and all other areas of learning that will benefit our pursuit of effective ministry. Rightly done, study is a way of listening to exegetes, theologians, psychologists, historians, and communicators. This listening helps develop our own communication skills.

Our listening to God will occur in corporate worship.

We listen and learn “together with all the saints” in order to grasp the limitless love of Christ that “surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:17-19). We listen with all the saints because it takes the enriching contribution all God’s people can give from their listening and learning to enable us to learn to listen and to listen to learn.

Our listening to God will occur in prayer.

We too readily think of prayer as talking to God. Prayer is better understood as conversation with God, and that involves listening as well as talking. Jesus did teach, “When you pray, say . . .” (Lk 11:2). Prayer is talking to God. But we also learn from Paul that prayer is hearing from God. Speaking of his struggle with a thorn in his flesh, Paul wrote: “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you’” (2 Cor 12:8, 9). Paul both talked to the Lord and heard from the Lord while praying.

Listening to People is Important

We must learn to listen to people as well as to God.

Communication is not a one-way street. We must listen to those to whom we will speak. We must listen to

- the questions they ask
- the suggestions they make
- the complaints they lodge
- the testimonies they give

and to all other forms of implementing knowledge and communicating truth they have developed.

We listen to people for what it tells us about them, and for what it tells us about ourselves. The minister is self-destructive who thinks he or she has everything to teach and nothing to learn from his or her people. We can learn something of value from every person God brings into our lives. Let's not be too bigheaded or pigheaded to do it.

Learn to listen! Listen to God. Listen to people. Only those who become good listeners will become good communicators.

Small Groups: Learning to Listen

(45 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 4-2.

Get into groups of three to discuss the questions on Resource 4-2. Select a recorder/spokesperson who will report to the class in 20 minutes.

*Possible response:
Speaking gets more attention than listening. Speaking creates a barrier to listening. Speaking is easier than listening, calling for less discipline, less concentration.*

Why are most of us much readier to speak than to listen?

*Possible response:
They are pursuing a career that habituates them to speaking. They do so much public speaking that it accustoms them to uninterrupted speaking.*

Why are many preachers such poor listeners?

*Possible response:
They develop the habit of searching the Scriptures for sermon texts, instead of listening to the Scriptures for personal counsel.*

Why do preachers often fail to hear God speaking to them in Scripture?

*Possible response:
They may be mentally ill. They make think such claims make a stronger case for gaining approval for their conduct. They may think such claims secure a reputation for being deeply spiritual. In short, they are deceived or they are deceivers.*

Why do some people claim to hear God telling them to do things that don't square with Scripture?

After the group reports, play the recorded class discussion from a previous lesson. You need to select a section of the recording and not play the whole discussion.

Listen to the class discussion from a previous lesson. Note how often and why a person is interrupted.

Lecture: Learning to Speak

(15 minutes)

Speaking for God is the minister's primary task. This is too important to leave to chance or to the "inspiration of the moment." One called to preach should work hard to become an effective speaker. The Master deserves the effort. The message deserves the effort. The people to whom the message is delivered deserve the effort. Paul scorned all claims to superior wisdom and all attempts at artificial eloquence (1 Cor 2: 1-5), but he also "argued persuasively about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19: 8). He wanted to do his best for the Lord who sent him to speak and for the people who needed to hear his message.

Unique Message, Common Techniques

Refer students to Resource 4-3.

The minister has a special message but it requires no special techniques of delivery. There is no "sacred rhetoric;" there is just common rhetoric in the service of sacred truth. There are no special rules for public speaking that give extra punch and power to a preacher's message. The same rules of effective speaking that govern a speech on building a sailboat govern a speech on building a relationship with God.

The rules for effective public speaking reduce to three basic constituents:

- have something worthwhile to say
- say it in plain and persuasive language
- stop when you have said it.

Following those simple guidelines will shape anyone into an effective speaker.

The Greatest of All Subjects

We who preach have the most significant and urgent message of all, for we can say with Paul, "We preach Christ." That a speaker's subject should be relevant to the listeners and to the occasion is axiomatic. You would not face a crowd of contractors whose whole lives will be spent in the tropics, and lecture them on how to build igloos. Jesus Christ cannot be irrelevant, for He is the Creator and Redeemer of humankind. He may not be wanted by all but He is needed by all. He died for all, He lives for all, He has power to save all, and He is coming to judge all. No subject that ever engaged the minds or tongues of people is of greater importance than that which constitutes the burden of our preaching.

Since our subject is the meaning of Christ for human life, it is inexhaustible, and only small portions of it can be delivered at any one time. A lifetime of faithful preaching will leave much still unsaid. Having to divide the subject into particular and manageable messages creates the necessity for keeping each message suitable to the persons, the settings, and the times involved. Students at a Christian college still chuckle over the exuberant pulpit-pounder who thundered against the wearing of skimpy attire while a fierce blizzard was blowing outside the chapel windows as he bellowed.

The Clearest of All Language

The grandeur of our message should not be sacrificed to fuzzy thought or drab language. Our ideas should be compelling. Our language should be clear and colorful.

Preach in the language of the people, not of the study.

Every career field develops its own technical vocabulary. That is just as true of theology as it is of biology, astronomy, engineering, or any other science. Paul has some invaluable advice for us here:

Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me . . . I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Cor 14:10-11, 18-19).

Think of it! A word our listeners can understand is 2,000 times better than a word they can't understand! Those of us who preach speak in "unknown tongues" oftener than we realize. We should heed the advice of a Scotsman who warned preachers that shooting over people's heads doesn't prove you have superior ammunition—it just means you can't shoot. Gospel truth is not simplistic but it can be simply stated. We should aim at being understood, not admired.

Colorful language does not mean artificial eloquence.

The stretching of truth, so dear to would-be spellbinders, does not serve preaching well. Colorful language means vivid and vigorous language, the

language that employs simile, metaphor, symbol, and narrative. Sermons do not have to be dry, drab, and dull. Truth doesn't have to be clothed in gray to be understood; it can wear bright and arresting colors. Too much color, of course, can detract from substance and focus on style. People should not go away so impressed with how something was said that they cannot remember what was said. We steer a right course when we keep in mind that words should be employed to serve thoughts, not to be served by them.

The urgency of our message forbids frivolous preaching.

Our task is not to entertain but to inform, not to tickle but to spur. In choosing and using language, neither trivialize the significant nor solemnize the insignificant. There is a terrible urgency in the Christian message, so gravity should be the rule and not the exception in our language. We are well advised to use humor and satire sparingly. Unless we are gifted for wielding these tools we should not even pick them up. We need not make a mask of solemnity, but humor too quickly degenerates to titillation, and satire too easily descends to scorn. Like rattlesnakes, humor and satire can be more harmful than helpful when mishandled.

Measure Length by Common Sense, Not by Clocks

The importance of our subject does not justify longwinded sermons. In preaching, length and strength are not synonyms. The strength of preaching is not its length but its clarity and sincerity. The substance of the message and the integrity of the messenger give force to a sermon that clocks cannot measure. We should not be prisoners of the clock, but we should be aware of the limited attention spans of those to whom we preach. Watch the faces of the people, not the face of the clock. If they have quit listening you may as well quit speaking. If you are talking to yourself, go home. Trade the pulpit for your easy chair, and listen in comfort. If we don't know when to quit perhaps we should not start.

A preacher once apologized for the brevity of his sermon, explaining that his dog had chewed up several pages of the manuscript. Enough of it survived however for the congregation to silently cheer the dog. At the close of the service a visitor asked if the dog had pups—he wanted one for his pastor back home!

Confucius has been credited, rightly or wrongly, with saying, "You don't have to be a carpenter to know how to put a seat in a chair." Leave something to be said on other occasions. Exhaust your subject and you will also exhaust your audience. Crowd whatever time you have with your best thought and speech. God and the people will bless you. God gave an angel "the eternal gospel" to proclaim (Rev 14:6); He didn't risk it with a human.

One Size Fits All

What has been said about public speaking applies also to private conversation. Some of the best preaching is done with audiences of one. Think of what truths emerged, and what sermons have been drawn, from the conversations of Jesus with Nicodemus (John 3), with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4), and with Simon Peter at a lakeside breakfast (John 21). Our occasions differ but not our message or purpose. Rules for effective speaking do not vary with the number of persons addressed. Indeed, effective public speaking may be justly described as conversational in style—simple, friendly, and animated.

Whom the Lord Calls He Qualifies

Polls have shown that public speaking is a major fear with most people. Some never overcome that phobia. If God has called you to minister His word you must overcome it. If you are not a ready speaker you can become one by diligent application. Study speaking. Study grammar. Study psychology. Write your messages and read them aloud. Listen carefully to capable speakers. Appropriate their strengths without imitating their quirks. Be yourself, but strive constantly to better yourself.

You are going to speak to a person, to a family, to a group about Jesus Christ. Of course you are nervous. You should be. Character, behavior, and destiny ride upon the occasion. But go with confidence, remembering Who is sending you and going with you. Entreat His help. Expect His help. Enjoy His help.

- Be well prepared
- Be self-effacing
- Be audience-oriented
- Be divinely anointed

This last item is vital! While preaching certainly employs the common rules of public speaking, preaching is not simply public speaking. Preaching is communication of the word of God and His anointing is indispensable to our success. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts of sin and attracts to Christ. Unless He fills and uses us we will fail, whatever our natural or acquired abilities. Our messages should be offered as sacrifices of praise and thanks to God, and we should pray earnestly for His fire to fall upon those sacrifices.

The Lord says to you, as He did to Jeremiah, “I formed you . . . I set you apart . . . I appointed you . . . I send you . . . I am with you” (Jer 1:4-8). When you hear those words in your heart, you can face a people and a situation with full expectation of communicating effectively.

Rejection and Failure are not Synonyms

Do not judge your ability or your value, either solely or mainly, by listener response. Sometimes a well-prepared messenger with a well-delivered message will be rejected. Jesus was rejected at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30). Paul was rejected in Jerusalem (Acts 21:39-22:22). John Wesley was rejected in many places throughout England. Why should we be different? Those we do reach are worth whatever opposition and suffering we experience as we fulfill our calling.

In a context of anticipated hatred, rejection, and persecution, Jesus promised, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mt 24:13). If we can say of our preaching what Paul said of his—“I was not disobedient”—we will also be able to say with him, “I have had God’s help to this very day” (Acts 26:19, 22). To those who “go” at His command Jesus says, “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20). The promise sustains throughout the perils.

Small Groups: Learning to Speak

(25 minutes)

There is a full module on Oral and Written Communication and one on Preaching. It is not necessary to explore the topic fully at this time.

Refer students to Resource 4-4.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 4-4. Select a recorder/spokesperson who will report to the class in 15 minutes.

Possible response:

They are timid by nature, and attention flusters them. They are prisoners to memories of unpleasant experiences when they attempted public speaking. Low self-esteem convinces them that no one wants to listen to them. They are not enthused by what they are asked to talk about. They have heard too many poor speakers.

Why are so many people afraid to speak in public?

Possible response:

Record and listen to yourself, then correct faults and strengthen weaknesses you detect. Listen to good speakers and note what you find helpful in their speaking. Have a trusted friend or friends critique your speaking and share the assessments with you. Treat every blunder as a challenge to improvement, not an excuse to quit. Pray for help and expect the Lord to grant it, even by surprising means.

How can you develop a pleasing and persuasive speaking style?

Possible response:

In the Lord's work, by faithfulness—to your abilities, to your opportunities, to your subject, to your audience, to your purpose.

How do you measure success as a public speaker?

Break

(10 minutes)

Allow the students time to stretch and walk around.

Lecture: Learning to Persuade

(15 minutes)

The minister learns to speak in order to convince, to persuade listeners to adopt a certain course of belief and behavior. In a truly Christian situation, the desired response expresses the will of the Lord who summons the speaker and supplies the message. The goal of speaking is not to gain applause for the speaker but to gain allegiance to the Lord.

There is a case on record where the speaker's message moved a city to repentance, saving that city from destruction, and yet this result greatly displeased the preacher. The city was ancient Nineveh and the

preacher was the prophet Jonah. His grumpy reaction to the success of his message is recorded in Jonah 3-4. A misguided patriotism prompted Jonah to resent God's sparing of the city. He regarded Nineveh's continued existence as a threat to the security of his own nation. Ideally, of course, the desires of the Lord and of the preacher will be congruent.

Christ Commands but Doesn't Coerce

Persuasion is the opposite of coercion.

Refer students to Resource 4-5.

James Stewart said, "Christ doesn't court men, He commands them." This is true. In His parable of the great banquet, Jesus has a master tell his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them [who live there] come in" (Lk 14:23). There have been sad times when church leaders, in the name of Christ, used this passage to justify forced conversions. Surely Jesus meant "make them" by persuading them, not by twisting their arms and force-marching them to the banquet against their wills.

Persuasion is Joshua pleading with Israel, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh 24:15). Coercion is an Inquisitor with drawn sword saying, "Convert to Christianity, or die."

Persuasion is the opposite, too, of manipulation.

Manipulation is a subtle form of coercion, a species of psychological coercion, differing from brute force only because it inflicts mental pain rather than physical pain to achieve its objective. Brainwashing is not persuasion; it is coercion through manipulation. Sometimes coercion and manipulation are united to exert pressure and secure goals.

Persuasion is Christian. Coercion and manipulation are anti-Christian. Christ was speaking to the Church throughout all centuries when He ordered Peter, "Put your sword away!" (Jn 18:11). The only weapon He allows the ministry is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).

Persuasion respects both God and people.

Persuasion respects God, for He conferred freedom on His human creatures. God seeks from us, not the obedience of slaves who are driven to their labors by force, but the obedience of children who are motivated by love. God does not force us to be good or force us to be saved when we have done wrong. Indeed, as someone has observed, hell is the respect God

eternally pays to the freedom He has given humankind.

By the same token, persuasion respects people as beings who possess and exercise freedom. It recognizes one of the deepest meanings of humanity. Persuasion treats people as persons. Coercion and manipulation treat them as objects. People cannot be hijacked into the kingdom of God. They enter by invitation, an invitation extended through the preaching of the gospel. They enter by exercising a freedom that not even their sin has completely destroyed. Christ stands at the door and knocks (Rev 3:20); He doesn't kick down the door and stomp into the house like a big bully.

When children were brought to Jesus for blessing He took them into His arms (Mk 10:13-16); He never seized them from the arms of their parents and forced a blessing upon them. A punished child may sit down when commanded to do so because it fears worse punishment, but that child is still "standing up on the inside." A person may submit to baptism, unite with the Church, and become a Christian "officially" while remaining a lover of sin and hater of God in heart. Genuine Christianity simply cannot result from coercion or manipulation; only from persuasion. Since the Great Commission summons us to "make disciples of all nations," we need to learn how to speak persuasively when we speak for Christ.

To Persuade, Preaching Appeals

Persuasion argues, but coercion silences. Persuasion calls for choice, but coercion resorts to force. Persuasion appeals.

God appeals through the preacher.

A great passage in Paul's correspondence to the Corinthians describes it well:

Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. . . . God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. . . . As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my

favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 5: 19-6: 2).

God acted in Christ to save the world. God speaks through preachers to implore men and women to receive grace and be saved. The opportunity for salvation is "now." With great urgency, therefore, the appeal for decision is made. To sense that urgency, to extend that ministry, to repeat that appeal is the task of every true minister.

Appeals rejected must be repeated. We have no other plan.

We cannot coerce. We dare not manipulate. We must persuade, and so we appeal. To bring about the response of obedience and faith we appeal to the whole person.

- We appeal to Scripture, a rational appeal.
- We appeal to a sense of obligation, an emotional appeal.
- We appeal to enlightened self-interest, a volitional appeal.

When our appeals are rejected, we can only stop, wait, hope, pray, and then appeal once more. Gaining response through persuasion can be much slower and much harder than using force, but only the response gained through persuasion unites a person with God in a saving embrace.

Paul "entered the synagogue" at Ephesus "and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God." Some of his listeners proved "obstinate," and "refused to believe." Indeed, they "publicly maligned the Way." Paul did the only thing he could in the circumstances—he left the synagogue, taking with him those who had believed, and continued to preach and teach "the word of the Lord" in a "lecture hall" (Acts 19:8-10). We continue to appeal, we are never free to coerce.

Paul, as a prisoner, spoke freely to King Agrippa about Christ and repentance and salvation. The king responded, perhaps with a sneer, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" And the intrepid apostle answered, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains" (Acts 26:28-29). That is the challenge confronting every Christian minister when he

or she preaches— prayerfully to persuade others to become Christians.

Learning to persuade is vital, for the Christian minister speaks in order to make a difference in people's lives for this world and the next. Therefore, we must be willing to make and keep making our appeal, even at the cost of "chains."

Guided Discussion: Learning to Persuade

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

*Possible response:
Sound learning and logic. Personal experience and testimony. Enthusiasm about subject and in presentation of subject. Reputation for integrity. Appeal to deep needs. Appeal to deep emotions. Appeal to enlightened self-interest.*

*Possible response:
Fear of failure to persuade. Lack of moral integrity. Inability to compete in the "marketplace of ideas." Mental illness.*

*Possible response:
By honest examination of the motives behind our appeals. By refusing to measure success by numbers. By keeping the Golden Rule when we preach and appeal. By handling rejection without rancor or retaliation.*

What are some of the elements of persuasive speaking?

Why do some leaders resort to coercion instead of persuasion?

How can we keep from crossing the line between coercion/manipulation and persuasion?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- practice the discipline of listening, the first step in communication, in private study, corporate worship, prayer, and conversation with people?
- articulate and initiate a personal plan for developing effective speaking skills?
- understand the use of persuasion in delivering God's message to the people?

Look Ahead

We are now ready to consider the places and situations in which the servant of the Lord applies the word. We will take this up next lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Research Acts and the Pauline Epistles for times when the Lord spoke to Paul directly, not through the Scriptures. Discuss the settings, the messages, the effects, and their meanings in a three-page report.

Examine the messages of the apostles (Acts 2:14-41; 13:13-48; 17:22-34). Identify the elements of persuasion in them. Also, identify the recorded responses to the messages, and the reaction of the speakers to those responses. Write a three-page report.

Write in your journal. Include your reflections and insights from this lesson and from your reading and study. Begin with the sentence, "I remember how I felt when I was coerced into doing. . ."

Location Change for the Next Lesson

You will need to make advance arrangements for a place to meet.

Next lesson will take place at _____ so that we can look more closely at baptism.

Lesson 5

The Common Venues of Christian Ministry

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Minister as Worshiper	Lecture	Resource 5-1
0:25	The Minister as Worshiper	Guided Discussion	
1:00	The Minister as Counselor	Lecture	Resource 5-2
1:15	The Minister as Counselor	Guided Discussion	
1:50	Break		
2:00	The Minister as Administrator	Lecture	Resource 5-3
2:15	The Minister as Administrator	Group Discussion	Resource 5-4 Handouts
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Instructor Preparation

As part of the Small Group activity for “The Minister as Administrator,” you will need to secure two handouts for the groups:

1. The monthly treasurer’s report from a well-managed church, which gives permission to duplicate the report for discussion purposes.
2. A selection of advertisements for various church activities ranging from excellent to “ugh!”

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe the significance of the minister being a model worshiper
- identify elements of worship and understand the importance to corporate worship of preaching, administering sacraments, and establishing an attractive setting
- understand the proper role and potential pitfalls for the minister and professional counselor in counseling situations
- articulate administrative responsibilities of the Christian minister
- plan and conduct effective, empowering board and staff meetings

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

Report on the Lord speaking directly to Paul.

Report on the three messages of the apostles.

Journal reflections and insights

Assign for next lesson

Write out an order of service for a Communion Service. Include the songs to be used. Indicate the scriptures to be used—the order and context. Also, indicate how the elements are to be served and who is to help with the distribution.

Interview a senior pastor from a medium to large church concerning their counseling practices. Ask questions about:

You may want to prepare a list of pastors the students can contact for this interview.

- Kinds of demands the congregation presents (spiritual, family, addictions, financial, etc.)
- What situations he/she refers to professional counselors
- How one-on-one situations of male/female counseling are handled

Write a two-page report.

Prepare an outline for a board structure—number of persons and committees needed. Prepare a sample agenda for a board meeting.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Reflections from your baptism.
- Feelings (fears) about working with a church board.
- Evaluation of your financial status.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Homework Sharing

Return the reports collected from the last lesson. Call on one or two students to read their reports to the class from the last lesson's assignments.

Collect the reports due today.

Orientation

We have discussed the word of the Lord and those who speak it. We have looked at the knowledge required for this ministry and the communication skills necessary for success in this ministry.

We are ready now to consider the common venues of Christian ministry—the places and situations in which the servant of the Lord applies the word of the Lord in order to nourish and guide the people of the Lord.

The minister is responsible for giving leadership and guidance in the worship services of the church, in counseling sessions with troubled persons, and in business affairs relating to the mission of the church in the world. In all these roles and functions and ministries, he or she remains essentially the servant of the word of God.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe the significance of the minister being a model worshiper
- identify elements of worship and understand the importance to corporate worship of preaching, administering sacraments and establishing an attractive setting
- understand the proper role and potential pitfalls for the minister and professional counselor in counseling situations
- articulate administrative responsibilities of the Christian minister
- plan and conduct effective, empowering board and staff meetings

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Minister as Worshiper

(15 minutes)

Since Christian ministry has the proclamation of God's word as its primary task, the worship services of the church afford the most common venue of that ministry.

Preaching the Word

Refer students to Resource 5-1.

The worship services of evangelical, Protestant churches have traditionally been centered in preaching.

Preaching is bound to Scripture.

A pulpit-centered ministry disappoints the people and distorts its purpose unless the preacher faithfully and forcefully expounds the Scriptures. The preacher's personal opinions, however well informed and however well delivered, have no greater validity than the opinions of the congregation, and have no greater claim upon its faith and practice. The preacher is the servant of the Word of God, not a peddler of the words of humanity, and one forgets that to one's own peril and at the cost of failure.

Biblical preaching requires diligent study.

The pastor must make time for study, for the preparation and delivery of messages that matter, messages that can stake a legitimate claim to the attention of the people because they explain and apply the word of God. Preaching techniques are as varied as preachers' personalities, and none of them can claim authority and legitimacy to the exclusion of others. The manner of preaching is important, but the matter of preaching is much more important. Saying something poorly is better than saying nothing eloquently, if that something is gospel truth. However, gospel truth will not be poorly spoken if a preacher is willing to invest the time and energy required for adequate preparation of sermons. The blunt fact is that more preachers fail for want of effort than for want of ability. If a preacher is unwilling to labor in their study, he or she should be willing to vacate the pulpit.

Biblical preaching channels divine power.

A sermon well prepared and earnestly delivered channels the life-changing power of God. To be the

bearer of such messages is a high calling indeed, deserving the best a person can do, a best that is constantly getting better.

“God was pleased,” wrote the apostle Paul, “through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1: 21). He did not mean the “message of the cross” is foolishness, only that some perishing sinners haughtily regard it as foolish. In truth, it is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” What Paul never says is that foolish preaching is God’s vehicle for saving lost people from the eternal consequences of sin.

Preaching has a purpose too serious and a history too glorious for anyone to dismiss it with scorn or to attempt it with apathy. Only that man or woman deserves a pulpit who esteems preaching as immense privilege, that man or woman who can say with Paul,

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things (Eph 3: 7-9).

The given grace of preaching Christ is calculated both to humble and to ennoble the person on whom that grace is bestowed. No human life could be better spent than in the service of “this gospel” of the “unsearchable riches” of Christ’s love and power to save. A KEEP OUT sign should be posted on every pulpit against any person who lightly values the privilege and responsibility of preaching Christ.

Point out to the students that Resources 5-5, 5-6, and 5-7 are in their Student Guides as information to be added to their files/library that may be helpful as they prepare to preach.

Every part of a worship service is important.

Just because preaching is central, however, the preacher should never think of any part of the worship service as insignificant. We must not dismiss the songs and prayers and offerings of God’s people, and certainly not the sacraments, as “preliminaries.” They form the context of the sermon, and properly planned and executed, they lend additional beauty and force to the preached word of God. No part of a worship service should be carelessly planned and sloppily performed. This is not a plea for religious formality, icily and stiffly expressed, but for orderly worship that can be enthusiastically sincere without being haphazardly routine.

Administering the Sacraments

A vital part of corporate worship is the Lord's Supper.

The Lord is the host and not the guest at this crammed-with-meaning ritual. Paul addresses the Church today, as he did yesterday, in these exciting words:

I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor 11:23-26).

Essentially, the sacrament is not the action of people but of the Lord. He offers to us the bread and wine that symbolize His body broken and His blood shed for our redemption. These "elements" are not empty signs. They are symbols through which reality is conveyed. The Lord who offered himself for us at Calvary offers himself to us in the Supper, and when the sacrament is received with perceptive faith, He bestows thereby His forgiveness, cleansing, and peace. What the sacrament is and does can be summarized in these brief statements:

- The Lord's Supper is recollection.
- The Lord's Supper is anticipation.
- The Lord's Supper is proclamation.

The Lord's Supper is recollection, something done "in remembrance" of Him.

In the biblical sense "remembrance" brings a past event into the present. This does not mean Jesus dies again, but the saving effect of His once-for-all sacrifice is presently operative—because He is present. He is present in the Spirit, not in the elements of the Supper. The ritual does not change the symbols into reality, but it changes the partakers as symbolized reality translates into experienced reality.

The Lord's Supper is anticipation, fueling anew our hope "until he comes" and our salvation is consummated.

The Supper looks backward to the Cross and forward to the Coming. Our participation in the Supper is an actual foretaste of the joy and peace of eternal fellowship with Christ and His people. This being true, the ritual may be serious but it should not be funereal. The mood should be uplifting and joyful.

The Lord's Supper is proclamation; by it we "proclaim the Lord's death."

"Proclaim" translates a common term for preaching. As the sermon is the audible word of the gospel, the Supper is the visible word of the gospel. When people hear the sermon in faith, Christ encounters them as the One who forgives and sanctifies and upholds them. The same word is proclaimed in the sermon and in the Supper, with the same results when the sacrament is received in true faith. Christ acts upon our hearts and lives. Rightly understood, grace is proffered and received.

The Lord's Supper is meant to be an evangelical experience! Let us plan it carefully and share it happily!

Less frequently, but regularly, the minister will be involved in the sacrament of baptism.

To Christianity's shame and sorrow, no other component of corporate worship has been the occasion of more division and strife than baptism. This is not the place to rehearse the history of this conflict or to launch a fresh battle. Suffice to say that we must not allow the ancient quarrels to justify a present neglect of this important sacrament. Water baptism is:

- the saving action of God,
- the public confession of faith in Christ,
- the "doorway to the church"—an initiatory rite.

Taking our clue from New Testament practices, baptism should be administered as soon after conversion and counseling as possible.

Complications may arise in the administration of baptism.

One source of complication is the minister's conscience. Our church allows baptism by immersion or by effusion, as the candidate chooses. If a pastor's

conscience forbids the chosen mode, some peaceable arrangement should be made for another minister to officiate.

Another complication may arise regarding an appropriate setting. Not all sanctuaries are equipped with baptisteries, and some preachers and people prefer, even insist upon, natural streams of water. This calls for patient selection of borrowed or “makeshift” facilities.

Other complications may arise from unforeseen difficulties. Even the disparity of size between the officiant and the candidate for baptism can create problems. A preacher who is five-feet-four-inches tall, weighing 120 pounds, cannot easily immerse a candidate who is six-feet-eight-inches tall, weighing 315 pounds. A candidate's fear of water may also occasion a sudden “hitch” in the ritual.

Any situation that arises, however, can be overcome, and the significance of the sacrament preserved, if the minister is both faithful and flexible. Baptism should be one of the most memorable events in a person's life. We who minister should do everything possible to make it so.

Attractive Settings and Blessed Results

Worship should occur in the most pleasant and attractive settings possible.

The place of worship may not be ornate and expensively furnished, but it should be neat, clean, and bright. However, limited resources and unimposing ambiance cannot defeat worship when ministers and congregations are utterly sincere, and when the power of God is present to save, heal, bless, and encourage. Some simple rules will insure gracious and glorious worship experiences:

- Come to the place of worship prayerfully.
- Prepare the elements of worship carefully.
- Participate in the rituals of worship joyfully.

Every part of a worship service should be an expression of what is taught in the word of God for the lives of His people.

The minister inescapably worships as a role model for worshipers.

To lead people in worship, to train people in worship, and to join with people in worship are responsibilities of the minister. His or her example should discourage people from being spectators and not participants in worship services. His or her tutelage and supervision should inform and inspire all who take part in worship services to “do their thing” humbly, happily, and heartily. The minister’s worship should convey the message that true worship is joyfully reverent and reverently joyful. Ministers should not seek “efficiency” by meeting with committees during the singing or by engaging someone in whispered conversation during the praying. He or she should worship with the people throughout the entire service!

Indispensable to worship is the presence and power of God.

The divine presence and power cannot be manipulated or controlled by worshipers. God does not surrender His sovereignty to rituals, to formulas, or to incantations. However, when our worship is genuine our God will delight to receive us and bless us. We will go from the places and times of worship other and better persons than when we came to them. Here is a biblical recipe for services of worship that inspire and transform:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col 3: 15-18).

When worship is God-centered and not human-centered, God-exalting and not human-exalting, God-pleasing and not human-pleasing, the worship experience will forge stronger links between God and His people and supply greater power to the Church for ministry and mission.

Guided Discussion: The Minister as Worshiper

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

Possible response:

True freedom always operates within boundaries. Tracks free a train to run; without them it would bury its wheels in sand or mud. Freedom lies in structured power; not unstructured action. Freedom is not worship divested of form, but form invested with meaning and power.

How can worship be free without being spontaneous?

Possible response:

He is compelled to preach because he is the servant of the Lord who commanded him to preach. He is compelled to preach the gospel because it is the word of the Lord who summoned him to preach. Both the act of preaching and the content of the message proclaimed are matters of obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Judgment would befall him if he failed to preach or changed the message.

What does Paul mean when he exclaims, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel?"

Possible response:

Scripture does not specify, and Church tradition has ranged from every Sunday to quarterly. The minister should be guided by the tradition of his or her church, by the needs of the people, by common sense, and by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. How the sacrament is observed is more important than how often it is observed. Done too infrequently, it may lose significance for the congregation. Done too frequently, it may become a mechanical gesture. Neither should be true, however often the sacrament is observed. Where triviality or boredom exist, they are in the minds of worshipers, not inherent in the nature of the sacrament.

How often should the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be observed?

Secure the use of a baptistery and teach the class members how to conduct a service of baptism, both of effusion and immersion. Since the students were baptized when they united with the church, this will be a demonstration class. Conduct it with becoming reverence, nevertheless.

Lecture: The Minister as Counselor

(15 minutes)

Counseling has always been a big part of a minister's work, and never more so than today. Increasing numbers of ministers are engaged in this practice full-time. Most ministers do it as one of many pastoral duties.

Counseling from Scripture

Refer students to Resource 5-2.

Whether counseling is done part-time or full-time, the Christian minister's responsibility is to apply the Word of God to the lives of individuals or groups. Whatever general knowledge of psychology the minister has and uses, he or she never escapes the role of servant of the Word. Secular counselors provide theories and maxims from a variety of sources in their counseling, but the Christian minister should not give any advice in any situation that violates the clear teaching of Scripture.

This stricture neither disqualifies nor limits the Christian counselor's service. The Word of God, in Christ and in Scripture, speaks to every condition of the heart and to every relationship in life. God's people are covenant-bound to obey His Word, and the Christian minister is covenant-bound to teach that Word in its application to the totality of human lives. By the Word of God we are saved, by the Word of God we live, and by the Word of God we will be judged. The Bible is filled with common-sense psychology, and the minister who knows the Bible is well equipped for helpful counseling.

There will be some persons, however, who are mentally ill, with problems too profound for the average pastor to handle. These persons need to be referred to professional psychologists and psychiatrists with specialized training in working with such patients. And where these professionals are Christians, they will seek to restore the patients to a level of mental and emotional health that permits them to resume their lives according to the teachings of Scripture.

Staying in Control

People who seek counseling need help from someone who can advise without commanding, who can guide without dominating; someone in control but not obsessed.

A wise pastor will control the counseling schedule.

He or she will not feel obligated to counsel at times, in places, or on occasions chosen by the counselees. Neither will they allow counselees to determine the length of counseling sessions. Unless care is taken to control this ministry, the persons seeking counsel will develop a manipulative dependency that threatens to enslave the counselor who tries to help them. They are already out of control in the situation that brings them for counseling. Permitting them to dictate the counseling situation will serve only to complicate the lives of both parties.

A wise minister will also control the emotional climate.

Troubled and hurting people, starved for affection, sometimes idealize their caring ministers. They see in them the virtues and traits they desired in their spouses, and this tempts them to want and even to seek a distorted relationship to their counselors. The Christian minister, while caring deeply and wanting urgently to help, must always respond in ways that maintain the integrity of the pastoral relationship.

The church suffers terribly when a counselor becomes romantically or sexually involved with a parishioner. The privacy and intimacy of counseling sessions lend force to that temptation, and the ruined lives of too many pastors attest to the force such temptation develops. What began as a slight breeze may become a killer hurricane. One-on-one counseling with members of the opposite sex should be avoided. Have a trusted third party (another counselor or your spouse) involved in the counseling sessions.

The counselor must also control his or her tongue.

Never gossip with or about those who seek counsel. Never betray their confidences. Keep faith with those who bare their pained and ruined souls to you. Hundreds of secrets should be buried in the graves of all dead pastors. A sure way to discourage people from seeking your help is to allow them and the problems they discuss to show up as illustrations in your sermons. James wrote, "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire. . . . It corrupts the whole person, set the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell" (Jas 3:5-6). From this vivid description of the tongue's

potential for disaster, James did not exempt the preacher's tongue. The same apostle spoke of "wisdom that comes from heaven" and is "pure," "peace loving," "impartial and sincere" (3:17). You cannot dispense heavenly wisdom with a hell-fire tongue.

Refusing to Judge

Rarely, if ever, take sides in a conflict situation.

The minister's challenge is to serve compassionately and effectively all the parties in a conflict. Some counselees will come to you wishing or even demanding that you become a judge ruling in their favor. They must be informed, kindly but firmly, that your help is available to those with whom they are in conflict as surely as to them. Life is not a game and choosing sides does not heal relationships. The minister ought to function as a friend to all, a judge for none. Jesus refused to arbitrate a dispute between brothers over property. Instead, He warned both against greed and reminded them that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk 12:13-15). A Jesus-like counselor is the best of the breed.

Rarely, if ever, give direct advice.

For one thing, you may be wrong. You aren't God and wisdom will not be buried in your casket. You can be held liable for damaging consequences that emerge from actions you specify. Enable those you counsel with to discover from God's Word the attitudes and actions that should characterize them and urge them to be obedient to the Scriptures. Pointing solutions out is one thing, prescribing them quite another.

There are exceptions to the rule. For example, when spouses are being victimized in situations of physical abuse, you may need to take direct action to shelter them from harm or death. The same thing would be true in cases where children are being abused and neither parent intervenes to rescue those children. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Prov 31:8-9). But bear in mind that even this proverb was designed for a ruler, not a minister!

Respecting Your Limitations

Recognize the limits of your competence and do not allow counselees to become the victims of any unwise attempts on your part to transgress those limits. Accept the fact—which is evident to others and should not be hidden to you—that you don't have all the answers and you can't provide all the remedies. Another counselor can help some of the people who seek your help far better and much quicker than you can.

You are not a failure because you cannot bring about healing for all who need it. You will be a failure if their condition worsens because pride or stupidity prevented you from referring them to a more competent counselor. Learn all you can about pastoral counseling and use all you know to help those who are hurting. But when you reach the outer edge of what you know and what you can do, don't tumble into the abyss, dragging with you someone who was desperately clinging to you for help.

Being Yourself

Wear your own hat.

When you do counseling, do it as the servant of the word of God, not of secular theories and worldly maxims. You are called to make disciples of Jesus, not of Freud or of any other psychologist or school of psychology.

Take your own medicine.

Keep your own mind and heart and conscience healthy by living daily as a practitioner of the word of the Lord. A preacher will find that an amazing number of personal problems are resolved by the resolute application of our Lord's "Golden Rule": "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 7: 12). What sums up the Law and the Prophets should govern our relationships to in-laws, outlaws, false prophets, and non-prophets. To measure others by a rule we are unwilling to apply to our own lives is hypocrisy.

D. L. Moody's slogan puts it well: "My human best filled with the Holy Spirit."

Guided Discussion: The Minister as Counselor

(35 minutes)

You may want to invite another pastor who has had great success in pastoral counseling to join you for this discussion.

Allow student interaction.

*Possible response:
It seeks to restore life to normalcy, but interprets normalcy as life lived in the will of God and by the word of God. It uses theories and methods employed by secular psychologists but only by taking them captive to Christ. It recognizes that a person cannot be rightly related to people and things unless and until the person is rightly related to God. It attempts more, but pays much less!*

How does pastoral psychology differ from other kinds of psychology?

*Possible response:
They fail to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly (Col 3: 16). They fail to let the peace of God keep sentry duty at their hearts and minds (Phil 4: 7). They fail to view their counselees as persons to be helped, and treat them instead as objects to be exploited. They fail to recognize their own weaknesses and fail to secure the resources of spiritual power available in the Word and Spirit.*

Why do ministers too often get wrongly involved with counselees?

*Possible response:
This must be determined by such variables as the time needed for other ministries, the number of persons who need counseling, and the extent of his or her training and ability to function as a counselor. A steady program of biblical preaching will take care of many needs that otherwise would demand counseling sessions.*

How much time should a pastor devote to his or her counseling ministry?

Break

(10 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to stretch and walk around.

Lecture: The Minister as Administrator

(15 minutes)

Whether they find the business affairs of the church deplorable or welcome, ministers cannot escape them. The church is an organization and the ministry does involve administration.

Conducting Board Meetings

A minister's work as an administrator is regularly needed and tested by conducting board meetings. The work of the church needs to be properly organized and adequately financed. Such matters are the responsibility of the church board, which the pastor serves as *ex officio* chairperson. A pastor who finds great delight in the preaching and counseling ministries may regard the business affairs of the church an onerous duty. What must be done, however, we should seek to do wisely and well.

Handle boards with loving care.

Persons elected to church boards are men and women who have the confidence and respect of the congregation. They are usually strong and intelligent persons with a record of proven ability in their career fields. When such persons meet together some conflict is inevitable. Indeed, it should be welcomed. To keep the conflict of ideas from becoming a battle of personalities and a struggle for power is a challenging task for the spiritual leader of the congregation. Makers of aspirin surely view board meetings as a boon to their business.

A wise pastor thinks of board members as friends and fellow-workers, not as "the enemy." A wise pastor does not view the rejection of his or her ideas as rejection of himself or herself as a person. A wise pastor learns to defuse tense situations, sometimes with a bit of self-deprecating humor, sometimes with a quiet appeal to relevant scriptures, sometimes with injected comments of appreciation, and sometimes with the healing expedient of prayer. Think of board meetings as planning sessions, not as battlegrounds. Remember that most laypersons are as eager for the success of the church's mission as are pastors. They will appreciate and respect sound leadership, but not leadership that is all sound. Walk your talk.

Conduct board meetings efficiently.

Begin and close them on time.

Work from an agenda. Prepare it in time for prior thinking and discussion about issues that must be faced. Adhere to it faithfully.

Study parliamentary procedure. Study the church manual. Know the limits of your authority, and utilize that authority fully but gently.

Save time by having copies of minutes and reports of committees printed and ready for distribution.

Study your board members.

Every board includes a power structure comprised of those persons who are thinkers, decision-makers, and exercisers-of-influence, in contrast to others who just go along. Learn to identify and utilize this power structure. Value these strong laypersons for the assets they possess, for the wisdom they exercise, and for the dedication and cooperation they demonstrate.

Use these particular board members to test your ideas. Persuade these particular board members to adopt your ideas. Trust these particular board members to implement your ideas. Don't assume that the frogs that croak loudest rule the pond. A lot of quiet, thoughtful, and prayerful church members exercise tremendous influence, sometimes almost unselfconsciously.

Learn to influence and motivate people, not by manipulating or exploiting them, but by recognizing, appreciating, and utilizing their special strengths and proven worth.

If you ever have to lock horns with one of the "movers and shakers" be sure that you are on biblical ground, not on an ego trip. Maintain your poise when you are challenged, even on those rare occasions when you are attacked. Refuse to be petty, selfish, or vengeful. Acting and reacting in love will enhance your influence, but "getting even" can only reduce the respect and confidence people have in you as a leader of the church. Relieve tension and strain in meetings without creating guilt, without belittling persons, and without damaging your own conscience and influence. The Lord can make a preacher too big to act small.

Make the spiritual growth of the church board a special project.

They are key members, and as they go, so will the church go. Those who carry the heaviest burdens deserve the greatest support. Spiritual renewal that begins in the pastor's heart and then spreads to the church board will be the longest-lasting and farthest-reaching revivals in the local church's history. Rooting the board members in the Word of God will go a long way toward the creation of a Bible-believing and Bible-practicing church. A wise pastor will concentrate some time and effort and prayer upon this vital inner circle of the church's life.

Conducting Staff Meetings

Staff meetings are similar opportunities for and challenges to effective ministerial leadership. Staff persons need to be affirmed and not belittled. They often possess areas of skill a senior pastor lacks, and therefore exercise areas of influence that equal or exceed those of the senior pastor. This is to be expected where staff persons are gifted workers and not dull flatterers.

Delegate authority when work is delegated.

Staff persons need freedom to express their ideas and to pursue their tasks. Where this freedom creates a potential for conflict and a temptation to jealousy, the senior pastor and the staff person alike tread dangerous ground. Each must be resolutely dedicated to the highest good of the church, not to the protection of their egos. Each needs to respect the others' gifts and encourage the use of those gifts. Each needs to know the word of God in relation to their fields of service and to model the character and behavior that each expects of the other.

Healthy staff relationships require well-defined job descriptions, large doses of encouragement and appreciation, loyal support of all persons involved and all responsibilities assigned, and mutual submission to the lordship of Christ for the welfare of the church.

Conduct regular staff meetings in a genial atmosphere.

Those who work together must meet together for mutual encouragement and achievement. Adding meetings to already crowded schedules may produce groans, but staff meetings are necessary goods at

best, necessary evils at worst. Staff meetings are times to:

- establish goals
- decide on strategies for reaching those goals
- distribute fairly the workload required to implement those methods
- check on progress being made and hindrances being encountered
- revitalize any flagging efforts and jaded spirits that threaten success
- pray for divine anointing and blessing upon the work and the workers

Make necessary staff changes graciously.

When senior pastors and staff persons decide they cannot continue to work together, for whatever reasons, resignations should be tendered and received without acrimony. When workers part company, each person should resume labors for the kingdom with the continuing love and respect and appreciation of the others. Such good men and proven leaders as Paul and Barnabas reached a point where they could no longer work as a team. They parted in love, formed other teams, and continued to serve Christ and the Church without despising or defaming their former yokefellows (Acts 15:36-40).

Training Church Leaders

Training church leaders is another venue of ministry that demands special attention, special skills, and tons of patient love.

Increasing the doers gets more done.

Sometimes doing all the work seems easier than training others to share the load. Short-term labor may defeat long-term benefits, however. "Many hands make light work" is not a scripture, but the adage has proven true in various fields of human endeavor, including the ministry of the Church.

Viewing the harvest, Jesus told His disciples to pray for additional laborers (Lk 10:2). When Jethro found Moses trying to settle all the disputes between the Israelites without help, he said, "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone." He advised him to recruit "capable men" and thus lighten his load (Ex 18:13-26). Moses wisely adopted Jethro's advice and lived longer and served better for doing so. When we cannot subtract from the work we must add to the work force.

A busy pastor cannot suspend enough of his or her own labors to train personally all the needed laborers. However, the pastor should give supervision where he or she cannot give “hands-on” training.

Leadership training benefits everyone involved.

There are teachers, witnesses, counselors, ushers—among other workers—who need to be trained by strengthening their beliefs, by recognizing and developing their gifts, and by defining and encouraging their attitudes toward the demanding tasks to be achieved. Unless this training is provided their personal growth will be stunted, the ministry of the church will be truncated, and the pastor’s own workload will be enlarged and complicated. The full potential of the church for its mission can only be reached through “the supply of the Spirit” and the tapping of all available human resources.

Training leaders assures mission success.

Training church leaders will enable us to reach a maximum number of people for Christ. Jesus called twelve disciples to be with Him and then be sent out by Him (Mk 3: 13-14). Later He recruited 72 disciples and sent them “two by two” into a “plentiful” harvest field (Lk 10: 1-3). At Pentecost 120 disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak” to multitudes concerning “the wonders of God” wrought in Jesus Christ (Acts 2: 4-11). Soon there were thousands of members added to the Church.

This pattern of increasing the number of workers in order to increase the measure of harvest continues throughout the New Testament. Paul recruited and trained Timothy. In correspondence with Timothy, the apostle names the various leaders and functions needed in the life and work of the Church and urges Timothy to teach them. Timothy is not only to instruct; he is to model. To the injunction, “Command and teach these things,” Paul adds, “set an example for the believers” (1 Tim 4: 11-12). Paul envisions a lengthening chain of training, saying to Timothy, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2: 2). The Church, as a result, will be strong enough numerically and spiritually to survive and thrive even through “terrible times in the last days” (2 Tim 3: 1).

Financing the Church's Mission

The financing of the church's mission involves the minister in special and serious responsibilities. The mission of the church should guide and determine its actions, not special giving.

Ministerial leadership is vital for securing adequate finances.

The pastor should encourage the people to give systematically, proportionately, and generously—a scriptural pattern found in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. In the matter of giving the pastor should set an example by personal generosity and sacrifice.

When raising money the minister should preach and exhort without apology or embarrassment. Jesus is our best role model in this matter. He had more to say about the right attitude toward, and the proper use of, material possessions than any other subject. Jesus knew one's relationship to money is an acid test of loyalty to God. People will serve God or Mammon; they cannot serve both (Mt 6:24). A faithful pastor must do whatever is possible to discourage idolatry and to cement the people's loyalty to God.

The minister is responsible for encouraging the church board to adopt wise spending policies. Hoarding or wasting the Lord's money is just as wrong as hoarding or wasting one's own money.

Competent treasurers are needed to handle finances.

A wise pastor will secure the election of an honest and competent church treasurer, not one who thinks that accounting skills give him or her ownership over the spending policies of the church. The treasurer is to disburse funds according to the decision of the church board, not at whim or dictation.

Bonding and auditing the treasurer is not an insult to his or her integrity. Rather, it safeguards against suspicion, distrust, and false accusation. The pastor and board should insist on regular, detailed, and accurate financial reports, and make them available to all the membership. People are less reluctant to give when they know how the money is being spent.

Ministers should advise money handlers, not be money handlers.

A pastor would do well to print this on his or her mind in bold, capital letters: **HAVE AS LITTLE TO DO WITH THE ACTUAL HANDLING OF THE CHURCH'S MONEY AS POSSIBLE.** Restraint and delegation here will spare the pastor a lot of grief.

Publicizing the Church

The Church and its ministers are engaged in the most important business in the world. To publicize that business is not only smart, it is right. Like all things done by the church, advertising should never trespass against the teachings of the Word of God.

Use every legitimate means of publicity available.

The various means of publicizing our work are limited by the funds available and the personnel required, so choices must be made and wisdom is needed. Some publicity can be generated "in house" with minimal staff and cost. This would include weekly newsletters, Sunday bulletins, and posters displayed in strategic locations. An attractive sign and outdoor bulletin board are valuable assets too. As finances permit, the use of public media, especially television and newspapers, can be effective. The pastor should be alert to any free space available and the kinds of news items and activity reports acceptable to the local media.

All publicity projects should be handsomely done.

Advertising poorly done is worse than none, for it sends a wrong message. Publicity items should be in good taste, both in content and format. Proofread everything. Spelling and grammar errors do not help the image of the church. Efforts to be contemporary and clever must not betray the excellence of the One we serve.

Our buildings and grounds are themselves components of advertisement and publicity. If they are neat and clean and well kept, however modest they may be, they constitute a constant and silent reminder that our Lord is worthy of our best. Holiness befits the house of the Lord (Ps 93:5), whether we think of His dwelling place in human lives or His meeting place with His worshipping people.

Carefully choose advertising and advertisers.

The minister has neither time nor skill to be personally responsible for executing all the publicity projects of the church, but must be willing to influence and to guide the kind and the quality of them all.

A demon-possessed fortuneteller followed Paul and Silas at Philippi, shouting aloud, "These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved." When she persisted in this "for many days" Paul publicly commanded the evil spirit to vacate its hapless victim (Acts 16: 16-18). What she shouted was true, but Paul knew that if the devil advertises the Lord's work, that work becomes associated in the public mind with the advertiser. The incident cautions us to exercise care in choosing our advertising and advertisers.

The widespread dissemination of the gospel is the mission of the church. The widespread advertising of that mission is sound strategy. Publicity should not be self-promoting and boastful, but we must not hesitate to billboard the saving love and power of Jesus Christ in every way consistent with His Spirit and aims.

Small Groups: The Minister as Administrator

(35 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 5-4.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 5-4. Select a recorder/spokesperson to report to the class in 20 minutes.

*Possible response:
Loyalty, integrity, flexibility, maturity, and humility. The staff person must guard against becoming the cause or occasion of divisions within the church. Cooperation is essential to progress. Jealousy is fatal to progress. Only those who can follow deserve to lead.*

What are the personal qualifications, as distinguished from ministry skills, needed by staff persons in a local church?

*Possible response:
Staff persons may be unable to work effectively and harmoniously with the next senior pastor. Personalities differ too greatly for a pastor to work with just any staff or a staff with just any pastor. We are not interchangeable parts of machinery.*

Why should staff persons resign when the senior pastor resigns?

Possible response:

Many are not adequately skilled or trained for such work. None have ample time to do such work without neglecting or omitting other ministries. Spending policies always create some measure of dissonance and conflict, and the pastor has enough problems to handle without adding unnecessary ones.

Why shouldn't pastors serve also as treasurers of the church?

Obtain a copy of the monthly treasurer's report from a well-managed church, which has given permission to duplicate it. Hand a copy to each group at the beginning of the Small Group time.

Evaluate the monthly treasurer's report. *What do you see as strengths or weaknesses?*

Obtain a selection of various advertisements for church activities that range from excellent to "ugh!"

Examine and evaluate the selection of advertisements for various church activities. *Which would be models to imitate or avoid?*

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- describe the significance of the minister being a model worshiper?
- identify elements of worship and understand the importance to corporate worship of preaching, administering sacraments, and establishing an attractive setting?
- understand the proper role and potential pitfalls for the minister and professional counselor in counseling situations?
- articulate administrative responsibilities of the Christian minister?
- plan and conduct effective, empowering board and staff meetings?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Write out an order of service for a Communion Service. Include the songs to be used. Indicate the scriptures to be used—the order and context. Also, indicate how the elements are to be served and who is to help with the distribution.

You may want to prepare a list of pastors whom the students can contact for this interview.

Interview a senior pastor from a medium to large church concerning their counseling practices. Ask questions about:

- Kinds of demands the congregation presents (spiritual, family, addictions, financial, etc.)
- What situations he/she refers to professional counselors
- How one-on-one situations of male/female counseling are handled

Write a two-page report.

Prepare an outline for a board structure—number of persons and committees needed. Prepare a sample agenda for a board meeting.

Write in your journal. Include:

- Reflections from your baptism.
- Feelings (fears) about working with a church board.
- Evaluation of your financial status.

Lesson 6

The Christian Ministry as Servanthood

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Servant Life	Lecture	Resource 6-1
0:25	The Servant Life	Guided Discussion	
1:00	Sustaining the Servant Life	Lecture	Resource 6-2
1:15	Sustaining the Servant Life	Small Groups	Resource 6-3
1:50	Break		
2:00	Persevering in the Servant Life	Lecture	Resource 6-4
2:15	Persevering in the Servant Life	Guided Discussion	
2:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe elements of the “servant life” based on the examples of Jesus and the Apostle Paul
- practice the disciplines for sustaining a servant lifestyle
- list reasons why some ministers give up the ministry, and ways to persist in ministry
- accept the servant role of a minister as exemplified by Jesus Christ

Homework Assignments

Due this lesson

Order of service for a Communion Service.

Two-page report from interview.

Outline of Church Board structure.

Journal reflections and insights.

Assign for continued study

Engage in a special season of prayer, asking God for a spirit of humility and for the power to serve.

You may want to do this as an in-class activity.

Place yourself in Gideon’s shoes when his army was reduced to 300. Compose an imaginary letter of resignation to God. Go through the letter item by item and supply scriptural reasons for refusing to mail it.

Write in your journal. Include

- Your journey with Christ during this Module
- Your dreams and vision for your ministry
- The struggles you feel in preparing for ministry

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Sharing Homework

Return the reports collected from the last lesson. Call on one or two students to read one of their reports that are due today.

Collect the reports that are due.

Orientation

The minister is called to practice what he or she preaches. He or she assumes a modest role with eternal consequences. The work of ministry is important, therefore, though the office of ministry is not highly regarded. The humility of the Son of God was evidenced when He became a human, and even more so when, as a human, He became a preacher! In doing so He invested the ministry with a glory the world cannot recognize, and that the Church often does not recognize. How many Christian parents want their sons or daughters to become ministers?

A servant's life is not only humble but hard, and few are the servants who do not wish to be masters instead. The temptation to resign is frequent and fierce. A preacher's heart is often the scene of raging battles unknown to the church he or she serves. The most eloquent speeches a preacher composes are never spoken aloud—speeches of protest and resignation when the heart is angry, anxious, or anguished.

Jeremiah grew so desperately weary of the ill treatment he received from those to whom he preached, that he wailed in agony, "Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!" When the words of the Lord came to him he "ate them" and they were his "heart's delight." But when he proclaimed them to Israel, the people refused them and imposed terrible suffering upon him. When he complained to the Lord, the Lord promised, "I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you" (Jer 16:10, 16, 20). The good news is this: the minister is a wall that cannot be

broken down. The bad news is this: people keep painting targets on that wall and firing away at it. The ministry is not for bullies and braggarts, but neither is it for cowards and quitters.

Our final lesson will concentrate upon the worker more than upon the work.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- describe elements of the “servant life” based on the examples of Jesus and the Apostle Paul
- practice the disciplines for sustaining a servant lifestyle
- list reasons why some ministers give up the ministry, and ways to persist in ministry
- accept the servant role of a minister as exemplified by Jesus Christ

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Servant Life

(15 minutes)

The minister is a servant, not a master. He or she lives to serve, not to be served. He or she does not stand at the center of life, reaching out with greedy hands, chanting "mine, mine, mine." He or she lives for others or denies the Lord, denies the calling, denies the message, and denies the people.

The Apostolic Ministry

Refer students to Resource 6-1.

True "apostolic succession" is not a matter of being able to trace your ordination back to the apostles. It lies in proclaiming the apostolic message in the apostolic spirit. If we explore the minister's life through the example of Paul we can isolate three areas of servanthood.

Paul designated himself a servant of Christ.

He opens his letter to the Romans with the words, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus" (Rom 1:1). His colleagues in ministry were "fellow-servants." He speaks of himself also as "an apostle of Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:1) and "a prisoner of Christ Jesus" (Philem 1). But he was essentially a servant of Christ, and only functionally an apostle, and only circumstantially a prisoner. Preaching was a form his servanthood took, and prison was a cost his servanthood exacted. They resulted from his being a servant; they did not make him a servant.

The word Paul uses in Greek is *doulos*, a slave. He chooses the strongest possible word to designate his relationship to Jesus Christ. Christ possesses him totally, so that he can say, "To live is Christ" (Phil 1:21). Whether he is preaching or making tents, whether he is in prison or on the road, he is always and everywhere the servant of Jesus Christ.

As Christ's servant who preached, Paul exercised leadership and authority. However, he wanted the churches over which he exercised that authority to regard him as a servant, not as a master. To the Corinthians, who were fussing about which preacher they followed, whether him or Apollos, he wrote,

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. . . . So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ (1 Cor 3:5; 4:1).

And that is precisely how the Christian minister should live and think and desire the church to think.

Paul designated himself a servant of the gospel.

To the Colossians he wrote, “This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant” (Col 1:23). Paul didn’t master the word of God; he was mastered by it. To him the proclamation of the message was more important than the circumstances of the messenger. Was he imprisoned? Was he “in chains for Christ”? He wasn’t depressed for it “served to advance the gospel.” He was put there “for the defense of the gospel.” Therefore, he would rejoice because “Christ was preached” (Phil 1:12-18).

As the servant of the gospel he was willing to be “a slave to everyone.” Listen to this tremendous testimony:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor 9:19-23).

For the gospel’s sake he would endure hunger, thirst, shipwreck, beatings, imprisonment, and even death without a whimper of self-pity. The Christian minister who is that devoted to the gospel cannot fail to preach it with power and blessing.

Paul designated himself a minister of the Church.

He wrote, “I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the

commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in all its fullness" (Col 1: 24-25).

In calling himself the servant of the Church, Paul did not mean the Church could dictate his ministry and message. He was the servant of the Church as the servant of Jesus Christ and as the servant of the gospel. But while the Church could not command his highest loyalty, he would serve it as a people who deserved his best efforts—a people worth living and dying for.

It was Paul who wrote that "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy" (Eph 5: 25, 26). Christ loved and sacrificed himself for a people who were not holy but needed to be made holy. And Paul felt this people was worthy of his life and death also, for all their flaws and failures.

The minister is a shepherd and his or her church is a flock. But the metaphor breaks down at this point: the shepherd is also one of the sheep, no other and no better than the rest of the flock. He or she serves the Church, as did the Good Shepherd, by laying down his or her life for it.

This, then, is a minister in apostolic succession—one who is a servant of Christ, of the gospel, and of the Church.

The Servant of All

The servant-supreme is Jesus Christ our Lord. His example and teachings are the criteria by which our servanthood must be judged as true or false.

The foot-washing Servant.

When His disciples wanted thrones and wrangled among themselves as to which of them should occupy those thrones, Jesus shamed their carnal ambitions by comparing them to "Gentiles," hard stuff for Jews to swallow.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 42-45).

He knew himself to be their Lord and Teacher, yet He assumed the place of a common household slave and washed their dirty feet. Then He assured them that such behavior on their part was the condition of His blessing upon their lives (Jn 13: 12-17).

On another occasion when they “argued about who was the greatest,” Jesus told them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mk 12: 33-35). He responded to the same quarrel by saying, “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22: 27). He conferred upon them a kingdom, but it was a strange kingdom where rulers serve and servants rule, a kingdom “not of this world” but operating in this world wherever the Church’s ministers catch the spirit of their Master.

Do you wish to reign with Christ? Your throne is a cross, your crown is a circlet of thorns, and your scepter is a shepherd’s staff. If the Church will turn its leadership conferences into servanthood conferences, she will be on the road to revival.

The meal-cooking Servant.

The risen Christ plied the soul of Peter with the question, “Do you truly love me?” Consider well the setting of that question. Seven of the disciples had fished all night and caught nothing. Someone standing on the lakeshore called to them, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” They did, and netted 153 “large fish.” It was the Lord! They hurried to shore, and what a sight greeted them: Jesus had made a fire and was cooking bread and fish. He invited, “Come and have breakfast.” And He “took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish” (Jn 21: 1-14). Think of it! The risen Lord, conqueror of death and possessing all authority in heaven and on earth, cooked and served breakfast to tired, hungry, almost-defeated fishermen!

This One, this One who died for them as the supreme expression of His service to them, three times pressed the question upon Peter. Do you love me? And each time Peter responded, “I love you,” Jesus gave him a service assignment: “Feed my lambs.” “Take care of my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.” And then Jesus told him that in old age he would glorify God, not by occupying a throne, but by dying as a martyr. Love creates servants, men and women willing to serve, to suffer, and to submit even unto death.

Peter caught on. The Church tagged him "Pope," but all he calls himself is "a fellow elder" and "a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 5:1; 2 Pet 1:1). The only robe he recommends is "humility toward one another" (1 Pet 5:5). And he called upon his fellow believers to "rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet 4:13). Once he aspired to be "first of all." Through Christ he became content to be a "servant to all."

When we equate ministry with service and not with privilege, we are looking at it through the eyes of Christ and the apostles. How in the world did the ministry of the Church come to the place where they were distinguished by gorgeous robes, impressive titles, and special chairs? When we think we are too important for common forms of service, we need to go to the lakeside and watch and listen to the Servant of all, as He cooks and serves the food.

Guided Discussion: The Servant Life

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

Possible response:

To the extent that the world is in the Church and the Church is of the world, we adopt the definitions and concepts of the prevailing culture. In century 21 as in century 1 the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. Only when ministers are crucified to the world and the world to them will they joyfully adopt the servant life as a controlling paradigm of ministry.

Possible response:

The rapid increase of disciples (v. 1) supplies the probable answer. There was as urgent a need for the instruction in "the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42) as there was for addressing the complaint of Grecian Jews that their widows were being neglected. The apostles did not regard any task as beneath their dignity. They simply had an even more urgent ministry—"prayer and the ministry of the word"—which the other disciples could not address. The arrangement worked, as 6:7 indicates clearly.

Why is the servant concept of ministry less conspicuous in the Church than in the New Testament?

Since Jesus washed feet and cooked meals, why did "the Twelve" refuse to handle the problem of distributing food to widows, turning it over to a committee of seven instead, as we read in Acts 6:1-6?

Possible response:

The sacraments are grounded in what Christ did to save us, in His atoning death. The footwashing has been understood as a command to serve human needs humbly, and in cultures where people do not walk dusty roads in bare feet that particular need does not arise. Other needs require the same humility and love and the Church must address them, doing so as service to people in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. There is a danger that doing today as ritual, what was done back then as a common service, may be regarded as a proof that we are humble and spiritual—which would have precisely the opposite effect. At the same time we should not impose a negative judgment on churches where footwashing is practiced and is found to be a significant ritual.

In view of John 13:14, why is footwashing not a sacrament in our church?

How did the work of Mother Teresa fulfill the call of God to servanthood?

Think of the most Christlike person you know. What are the traits in that person which fulfill the call of God to servanthood?

Lecture: Sustaining the Servant Life

(15 minutes)

Christian life is not automatically sustained. Spiritual life must be nourished as surely as physical life. The spiritual health and growth of the minister calls for decisive action. We are commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). Maturity is essential to maximum effectiveness in the service we render to the Lord and to His people. This requires daily appropriation of the means of grace and daily attention to the guidance of the Spirit. We do not need to become spiritual hypochondriacs, living with a finger on our pulse and a thermometer in our mouth. But we do need spiritual nourishment and exercise that strengthens us against temptation and fits us for ministry.

Life Sustained by Prayer

Refer students to Resource 6-2.

A minister must pray or die. Every argument against the necessity or value of prayer breaks upon the anvil of this simple fact—Jesus prayed and taught His disciples to pray. If He needed to pray in order to sustain His spiritual energies, how much more do we?

The prayer life of Jesus

A study of His prayer life will provide the choicest model for our own. He prayed before making major decisions. He prayed before enlisting His apostles. He prayed before going to the Cross and He prayed while hanging on the Cross. He prayed to give thanks. He prayed to petition help. He prayed before preaching His messages and before working His miracles. He could touch people with power because He touched God in prayer. He prayed for himself and for others. He was preeminently a person of prayer. Indeed, He was in the act of praying when His disciples approached Him to be taught to pray.

When we search the Gospels to research His prayer life we discover that, so far as the record shows, He had no set time for prayer, no set place for prayer, and no set formula for prayer. He did supply His disciples with a prayer, the one we call the Lord's prayer, but He did not intend that it should be always their prayer or only their prayer. A glance at the record of their prayers in the book of Acts will show this to be true.

The prayer taught by Jesus

While the Lord's Prayer was not intended as a prayer for all occasions, it is a prayer that supplies a pattern for our praying. There is not a petition we can think or ask that does not fit within the framework of this intensive, extensive, comprehensive prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Mt 6:9-13).

To this we add the line that is relegated to a footnote in the NIV, but treasured by a centuries-old tradition of Christian prayer, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

What a prayer! It reaches from earth to heaven, and stretches from past to future. It unites the asking people to the hearing and answering God. It petitions the hallowing of God's name through the doing of God's will. It petitions the provisions needed for physical and spiritual life and recognizes those provisions as the gifts of the Father's love. It petitions protection against our greatest enemy through the guidance of our greatest Friend. It recognizes divine

sovereignty and human dependence, divine power and human weakness, divine glory and human poverty. Throughout, it is both personal and social. It invites contemplation of God, conversation with God, and consecration to God. There is nothing we can ask that does not fit within these deep and wide and long projections of God's limitless grace for our continuing needs.

To live as a person who prays within the boundaries and provisions of the Lord's Prayer is to insure our sustenance physically, mentally, and spiritually. Such praying, sincerely done, makes possible the kind of human existence God intended when He created humanity in His own image.

Life Governed and Guided by Scripture

Like every other Christian, the minister is a pilgrim in this world, on a journey home to God. A persistent biblical metaphor for the Christian life is a road.

The Road and the Light

The road leads through dark places and rough stretches. Missteps can plunge us into quicksand. We can't see very far ahead, and we leave the road at the risk of injury and death. We need light, we need guidance, and we need direction. These we have in the Scriptures. The minister's life, as a servant of the word of the Lord, is to be governed and guided by that word.

Jesus said, "I am the way"—literally translated, "the road." He also said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. . . . I know where I come from and I know where I am going" (Jn 8:12, 14).

He is the road and the light by which we keep to the road. His governance and guidance are indispensable to our lives. To those whose lives were spent in a context of hardship and suffering, Peter wrote, "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21).

To follow in Christ's steps we must read the Scriptures. They testify of Him. They spell out His example in a wealth of detail. They contain His footprints. They are given that we might know how to live so as to please God. The psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path," and he prayed, "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me" (Ps 119: 105, 133). A writer of ancient

proverbs admonishes: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths" (Prov 3:5-6). To be strong and safe, to be wise and useful as ministers, we must find and follow Christ in the written Word of God. Our understanding is not a sufficient guide. Our conscience is not a sufficient guide. Only Christ can lead us in the paths of righteousness and guide us through the minefields of the enemy.

Scripture: Means to an End

People may search the Scriptures without finding guidance for their lives, because they do not read the Word in order to be led by Christ. Scripture is not a collection of texts for Sunday use. Courses in "The Bible as Literature" will not light our journey to heaven. The Bible is not an end in itself. It is a revelation of God intended to rescue us from sin and direct us to "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). The Bible was written to instrument life and to instruct living (Jn 20:31).

Here is how one devout and earnest preacher expressed this truth:

I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen, I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing: the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book] (John Wesley).

Wesley studied many books, but he knew that just one book could direct his steps to God and salvation and heaven: the Bible.

A preacher can go to hell with the Bible in hand, but will not miss heaven with the Bible in his or her heart. A minister's spiritual health and growth depends upon reading the Word of God with full intention to believe and practice what it teaches. If he or she neglects the Word of God, studied for that purpose, the result will be a tragic loss of spiritual power and blessing and usefulness.

Life Spent and Offered for Others

The minister must follow the Incarnate Word by the devotional use of the written Word, but cannot improve his or her soul while neglecting the souls of others. Indeed, the steps of Christ always lead us to those around us who need His word of life.

Following “the man for others”

Jesus was “the man for others,” to quote a modern theologian. Spiritual life can be pursued in a self-centered way that is certain to destroy it rather than develop it. We need our “quiet times” but we cannot forsake the noisy crowds for lengthy intervals. The study is a place to sharpen tools, not to avoid work. The prayer closet is a retreat in order to advance, not in order to escape. Prayer and Scripture build muscle. Service exercises that muscle and keeps it from being atrophied.

In a statement so simple that we easily miss its depths, we read of Jesus, “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth” (Jn 9: 1). He would! Jesus looked for those whom the world overlooked, whom the world shunted aside, whom the world closed out. Even to the disciples the blind man was just a problem to be explained, but to Jesus he was an occasion for service, and Jesus restored his sight.

On another occasion another blind man, hearing that Jesus was “passing by” and “leaving the city,” cried aloud for mercy. The crowd tried to hush him. A blind beggar was just an annoying distraction to them. But Jesus stopped, called the blind man to himself, and bestowed on him the priceless gift of sight. Having healed him, Jesus said, “Go,” but we read that he “followed Jesus along the road” (Mk. 10: 46-52; Lk 18: 35-43). The minister who is not following Jesus along the road to Calvary is still groping through life with blinded eyes. Those who really see follow Jesus, and He walks the service road.

Spending yourself rich

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well” (2 Cor 12: 15). These words were addressed to some Christians who had proven ungrateful for the sacrifices he had made in order to minister to them! No matter how people responded to him, Paul was willing to pour out his life for them. He was following in the steps of Jesus, and that is the only genuine Christian

spirituality. God calls His people "a peculiar treasure." They learn by following Jesus that God doesn't hoard His treasure; He spends it.

Jesus once crossed Lake Galilee to escape the pressure of the unscheduled crowds and crowded schedules. He and His disciples had been so busily engaged with the people that they "did not even have a chance to eat." But when they reached "a solitary place" the crowd had rushed to meet them there. Instead of rebuking them or ducking them, Jesus "had compassion on them." Despite His own weariness, He taught them and then fed them and then prayed for them (Mk 6:30-46). Jesus put the interests and needs of others ahead of His own. His own name did not top His priority list. So devoted to others was Jesus that Matthew's Gospel attributes but one emotion to Him: compassion. He suffered with others, ministered to others, drained himself for others. If we would be spiritually mature we must walk in His sandals.

Even in "the vicinity of Tyre," a pagan area, Jesus "could not keep his presence a secret" (Mk 7:24). Hurting people sought Him out wherever He went, for He had a well-earned reputation for both love and power. There is a certain rhythm of engagement and withdrawal in His ministry, but the rhythm was often interrupted. Though the jarring notes cost Him heavily, Jesus never spared himself by ignoring others. He gave himself to them in a costly expenditure of His sacred energies.

The difference between shepherd and hireling is never more apparent than when weariness and frustration create the climate in which one ministers. The disciples had a quick and easy solution for the pressing crowds: "Send them away!" Jesus had a better answer: "Feed them." Like those first disciples, if we keep walking in Christ's steps we will learn to give ourselves away without reservation or regret. By giving ourselves away we enrich ourselves. By withholding ourselves we impoverish ourselves.

The venues of prayer, Bible study, and compassionate service combine in the making of a minister. They are the primary spiritual disciplines. Others can be added to the list, but these can never be subtracted from it. They are not incidental; they are essential.

Small Groups: Sustaining the Servant Life

(35 minutes)

Refer students to Resource 6-3.

Possible response:

Prayer makes heavy demands upon physical and emotional energy. When consciousness of God is weak, prayer seems useless. When consciousness of God is strong, prayer demands utter honesty. We are kept from sin by prayer or kept from prayer by sin. "Unanswered" prayer discourages further praying.

Possible response:

Scripture requires close attention and many are careless readers. Scripture punctures ego and we are quick to defend ego. We are not serious enough about divine guidance. Duties or pleasures beckon and too easily distract us. We lack historical imagination that projects us into the cultural milieu of Scripture, and it remains a strange book.

Possible response:

We have learned to think of devotions as paths to God and service as paths to people. We regard devotions as "filling the tank," and service as "burning the gas." We are taught to believe that solitude and silence are indispensable to devotions, and these are precluded from service. We do not reflect adequately upon how the service we render to people brings us closer to God.

Assign each of the groups one of the Gospels.

In groups of three discuss the questions on Resource 6-3. Select a recorder/spokesperson to report to the class in 20 minutes.

A number of polls disclose a poverty of prayer among Christians, including ministers. *Why do we find it so difficult to pray?*

Why is devotional reading of Scripture so frequently neglected?

Why does service as a devotional exercise seem strange to us?

Chart the prayer life of Jesus through one of the Gospels.

Find the prayers of the apostles mentioned in Acts. *Which prayer has the biggest impact on you personally?*

Break

(10 minutes)

Allow students time to stretch and walk around.

Lecture: Persevering in the Servant Life

(15 minutes)

Servant life is never easy. Servants, by nature, are givers and not receivers. They are typically overworked and underpaid. Their status is humble and their rewards are minimal. Even when they are appreciated they are not envied. Few engaged in other callings would care to trade places with them.

Scripture refers to the preaching servants of God as shepherds. The authors of Scripture certainly knew that shepherds formed an underclass, often a poor, despised, and unprotected class of persons. True, some who were shepherds became famous and admired, like David for example. But think about it: David was admired as a king, and some aspired to his throne. There is no record of anyone admiring him while he was a shepherd or desiring to take his place as a shepherd.

Precisely because the minister's work is difficult and less glamorous and rewarding than other professions, many give up and drop out.

An Exhortation to Persistence

Refer students to Resource 6-4.

Let's look at a passage of Scripture, not addressed exclusively to ministers, but powerfully relevant to them. The passage is from the busy and burdened pen of Paul.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ . . . Each one should carry his own load. . . . Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Gal 6:2, 5, 9-10).

Some ministers give up because opposition is unrelenting.

Paul wrote this very letter in a desperate attempt to counteract the influence of some enemies of the Cross, who were out of line with the gospel and seeking to alienate the affections of his converts. They dogged the apostle everywhere he preached.

Peter warns the Church's shepherds, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for

someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). That lion never quits roaring and always has blood on his teeth!

Paul writes in the closing words of this epistle, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." These were the scars received from persecution for Christ's sake. He was like a slave branded to identify his owner. Those scars were mute witnesses to the fact that opposition to the gospel and its messengers was relentless. Nevertheless, he refused to quit the ministry.

Some ministers give up because their strength is depleted.

They are too worn out to care and bear any longer. In cases of incurable illness this is understandable and permissible. However relentless the opposition and heavy the burdens, however, we need not break down spiritually. As our previous lesson emphasized, persistent devotional lives will renew our flagging strength that we may renew our zealous service. Isaiah's promise is our refuge in this case:

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isa 40:28-31).

Those who wait upon the Lord when their strength is small will find that strength being renewed. They will be able to say with Paul,

the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen (2 Tim 4:17-18).

Some ministers give up because people are ungrateful.

Sometimes you work hard from motives of pure love and the people who benefit from your service seem ungrateful and unappreciative. That was Paul's

experience with some of these Galatians. He had labored faithfully and sacrificially for them, and now they were being alienated from him (4: 17), and worse than that, alienated from Christ (5: 4). A greater one than Paul experienced ingratitude. Jesus healed ten lepers from their death-in-life disease, and only one of them returned to give thanks (Lk 17: 11-19). The Lord's pathos-laden question has been framed on the lips of many a minister: "Where are the other nine?"

An old story is told of a fox that freed a trapped wolf, only to have the wolf seize and devour him. The moral to the story: ingratitude is the world's pay. Sometimes people in the church respond to a minister's service with the world's pay.

Some ministers give up because results are meager.

You can often work prodigiously and have such scant return for your labor that you are tempted to drop out of ministry. When Isaiah saw the Lord exalted in holiness and heard Him call for message-bearers, he eagerly volunteered: "Here am I. Send me." The Lord, who is always straight with His servants, told him to "Go and tell" but let him know that his message would be rejected. Only a tenth of the people would be spared the impending judgment. Even that pitiful remnant would be a charred stump, not a standing tree. Understandably, Isaiah cried out, "For how long, O Lord?" And the answer was, "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitants, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken" (Isaiah 6). In other words, as long as there were people to preach to, he was to bear the word of the Lord to them. He was to go and tell, not because the message would be welcomed and he would be rewarded, but because the Lord commanded him to go. The bottom line is this: ministry is a matter of obedience to God and is not allowed to depend upon grateful reception and large harvests.

Of course, the ultimate harvest will be great, and the ultimate reward will be magnificent. "At the proper time," and only God knows when that will be, "we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Study Paul's conclusion: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." This tells us two important things:

1. We are to serve "all people," not just the appreciative and thankful ones.

2. Responsibility is measured by the minister's opportunities, not by the people's response.

An Example of Persistence

Paul was hard to discourage, impossible to defeat. In an autobiographical passage in Philippians he wrote:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you (Phil. 3:12-17).

This is the resolution of a man who was in prison even as he wrote. He confesses that dying would be "better by far" than living under the pressure and persecution he was receiving. But he is needed by the Church, and is therefore convinced that both his service and his "struggle" will continue (1:20-30). He will "press on toward the goal."

This attitude he regards as mature, and this persistence he commends as a pattern.

The minister's goal lies beyond the service he or she renders.

Paul's goal is two-fold: (1) completion in Christ and (2) residence in heaven. Of the first he writes,

Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. . . . I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:7-8, 10-11).

To be fully conformed to Christ is the goal for which he has taken hold of Christ and Christ has taken hold of him. Nothing of which he boasted and in which he

glorified before meeting Christ now matters. He counts it all rubbish, to be tossed aside without regret for the sake of "becoming like him."

Of the second goal he writes,

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Phil 3:20-21).

He is not only a servant; he is a pilgrim, moving through a hostile world en route to a better and happier world. He is enrolled as a citizen of heaven and every day of ministry brings him nearer home. Christ is in control of both the route and the goal.

What was true of Paul, and true for Paul, is true for every person who serves as a minister of the word of the Lord today. The goal toward which we are moving makes whatever hardship and ingratitude we encounter a small matter. Service is not just something to occupy our time until we get home. Service is the path to that goal. Service is not just something in which we persist; it is the very process of persistence. When the goal is reached, we shall look upon all that tempted us to give up and to drop out, and we will marvel that we allowed those things to loom so large and to pose so great a threat.

Paul lived what he preached. He endured what he could not enjoy. He remained at the task through thick and thin. The only way the Lord could get him to quit working was to take him to heaven! Before his exit, which was itself an expression of the opposition he encountered and the ingratitude he experienced, he wrote this final testimony:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Tim 4:6-8).

Notice that these last lines were penned just after exhorting Timothy, his younger colleague in ministry, to "endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." If we accept

the charge given to Timothy, we will share the reward given to Paul. Today the Cross, tomorrow the crown. Press on!

Guided Discussion: Persevering in the Servant Life

(35 minutes)

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

Be very sensitive to the response to this group of questions. They call for compassionate, non-judgmental, and unselfish concern on the part of the instructor and classmates.

Possible response:

By the King's fellowship. See 2 Tim 4: 16-18. On the basis of fidelity to opportunity. See Mt 20: 1-16. All out of proportion to merit. See Lk 17: 7-10.

Possible response:

By prayer. By standing by and spending time. By words of appreciation. By acts of kindness. By tributes to the tempted one's good influence on our lives. By reminders of God's faithfulness.

Give careful guidance to this time of prayer with the class.

Have you been seriously tempted to quit the ministry? Why? How did you handle it? Have you settled the issue? Can we help you now?

How is kingdom service rewarded?

How can we support one another when the going is rough?

This is a time for us as a group to intercede in prayer for each other. You will need the support of your colleagues throughout your ministry. Let us begin now.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- describe elements of the “servant life” based on the examples of Jesus and the Apostle Paul?
- practice the disciplines for sustaining a servant lifestyle?
- list reasons why some ministers give up the ministry, and ways to persist in ministry?
- accept the servant role of a minister as exemplified by Jesus Christ?

Assign for Continued Study

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Engage in a special season of prayer, asking God for a spirit of humility and for the power to serve.

You may want to do this as an in-class activity.

Place yourself in Gideon’s shoes when his army was reduced to 300. Compose an imaginary letter of resignation to God. Go through the letter item by item and supply scriptural reasons for refusing to mail it.

Write in your journal. Include

- Your journey with Christ during this module
- Your dreams and vision for your ministry
- The struggles you feel in preparing for ministry

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