

CHAPTER 12: JESUS-CENTERED MINISTRY

SUMMARY

In Matthew 28, Jesus says to go and make disciples. Before He gives this call, the text says that He has been given all authority. So, Christ is not calling His people into something that He has not already been given the authority to do. This reality is comforting for ministers of the gospel because it means the work of ministry comes behind the authority that Christ has been given. As agents of grace, we have the opportunity to do God's ministry behind and through the power of Christ.

AUDIT

1. **Who is the greatest influence among those you lead? Is it a pastor, leader or Christ?**
2. **Is your church defined by prayer? What does this reveal about your personal prayer life?**
3. **How are you cultivating prayer in your church? Do your people see it as a formality or as a gift?**
4. **How would the average member in your congregation or ministry view suffering in light of Scripture? Does your church know God intends to bring great transformation to our lives in and through suffering?**
5. **When God's faithfulness in and through an individual's suffering is made evident in your church, are those testimonies put before the church and ministry for corporate edification and worship?**

6. Do you, as a church, have a proper understanding of suffering that leads you to proclaim the purpose and opportunity afforded amid suffering for the sake of the gospel?

7. Do you actively put stories and evidences of grace before your people for celebration? Why or why not?

8. Do you have difficulty embracing the inefficiency of ministry? Do those in your church know that implicit in sanctification is the fact that God knows we haven't fully arrived?

9. Do you walk in the freedom of knowing that Christ's atoning work has freed you up to minister to people?

RENEWAL

1. As a leader in the church, it is never too late to set a tone of prayerfulness for the body. Create a rhythm of prayer in your individual life that displays your weaknesses and deep need for God.

2. As a church, dedicate nights of the week and periods of the calendar year for focused corporate prayer.

3. Evaluate your church's understanding of suffering in light of Scripture. What teaching do you need to put in place to help your people develop a deeper theology of suffering? What stories do you need to share that testify to God's goodness and purposes amid suffering?

4. Jonathan Edwards called affections the “inclinations of the soul.” He also was particular to differentiate affections from emotions. The gospel says our permanent joy is not predicated on emotion but the objective reality that the deepest longings of our heart have been fulfilled with our union with Christ. Ask for the deep things of God to permeate the depths of your soul. Ask Him for a profound measure of His presence.

5. Listen to Tim Keller’s *Preaching to the Heart* series. Celebrate the reality that, in Christ, God is tangibly changing your motivation to love Him more. Spend time asking the Lord to continue to align your heart with His.

6. Celebrate the Lord’s initiating love for you. Read Exodus 14 and see God’s salvation of His children pictured as they crossed from death to life. Focus on verse 14. What does God mean that we must be silent?

7. Read Paul’s confession of sin in Romans 7:7-25 and agree with him that there are things in your life that need to die, areas where you long to flourish and haven’t yet arrived. Ask Him to get you there. Follow Paul’s lead in 24-25. Thank the Lord for delivering you from your sin and transforming you into something altogether different.

PRAYER

Father, help us to see that ministry doesn’t take place because of our own plans and efforts, but only in and through the power of Jesus Christ. Let that truth comfort us. Create in us a posture of prayer, a sober and humble understanding and confession that we desperately need You. In our pain and suffering, may we pursue You and rest in knowing that You are good and faithful and that, as a loving Father, You desire our good and our joy. Thank you for Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, amen.