

Week 19 – Ministry & Ministers

Minister to Society – Our Place in the World

The church of the Lord is the most effective standard and dispenser of truth in any society. As 1 Timothy 3:15 describes it, the church is the “pillar and support of the truth.”

We are God’s means of revealing His truth and compassion to a needy world. Historically, the church of Jesus Christ has founded countless universities, hospitals, orphanages, schools, medical clinics, mercy ministries, soup kitchens, Bible societies, athletic clubs, and other charitable activities. According to Scripture, God’s people should permeate their environment for the kingdom of Christ:

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13-16)

All areas of society need both our loving-care and the shining light of God’s truth. “Working for the Lord” is not just the job of professional ministers. The Bible says that we are to serve the Lord in any job:

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” (Colossians 3:23-24).

We can bring the truth of God, the love of God, and the righteousness of God’s ways into any arena. We need to minister to society in the following areas:

- Business and Commerce
- Media and Broadcasting
- Government, Politics, and Justice
- Education and Community Welfare
- Science and Technology
- Medicine, Caregiving, and Compassion

- Arts, Entertainment and Athletics
- Family and Domestic Support

Some “holiness” sects separate themselves from the world. Jesus tells us, though, that while we are not of the world, we are still in it. In His final hours on earth, Jesus prayed:

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world...As you have sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” (John 17:14-16, 18)

We are called to engage the world, neither dominating it by force nor subjecting ourselves to its whims and standards. As Jesus said, we are “in the world,” but “not of the world.”

A timid believer should recall that Christ is returning to a victorious people engaged in every aspect of life. Unless we bury them, our varied talents further God’s kingdom on earth. God’s strategy is to use His entire family, engaged in all aspects of the world, without compromise, through love and good deeds. We are salt and light, and this world will respond to the truth.

Government of the Church

In encouraging the Corinthians to have orderly worship, Paul wrote: “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33). As with anything God builds, the church is to have order. One way that God provides for that order is through church government.

Christ is Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). He has also appointed people to govern in His house who: “have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction” (1 Thessalonians 5:12). These are not the only leaders in a church. All church members can volunteer and take leadership in a diverse multitude of areas, as their gifts and interests fit into the overall vision of the church. However, God has established specific positions of authority in and over His church in the areas of apostolic leadership, senior ministers and elders, and deacons. (1 Corinthians 12:28, Acts 14:23, Philippians 1:1)

God’s appointed leaders are not to “lord it over” their fellow Christians (Matthew 20:25); however, neither are they to twitch like puppets if members pull their strings. The Bible commands church members:

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

Senior Ministers and Elders

The elders of a church are called, anointed and appointed to provide direction, government, teaching and pastoral care for a local church. Another word for elder is a bishop. Sometimes people use the word “pastor,” even though this word has a broader meaning.

One of the elders also serves as the senior pastor and primary leader of the local church (Acts 15:13; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12). Many scholars agree that the “angel (means messenger) of the church” in the book of Revelation refers to the senior pastor (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14).and destroy” (John 10:10).

Review

1. How should we as Christians impact our culture? Name an area in our community where we can bring the truth of God.
2. Has God established specific leaders over the Church? What are their positions, and what is their function?