

The Mindset of Every-Member Ministry

Part 2

Colossians 4:2-6

Mature Christians don't merely go to church. They live on mission.

LTS: Col. 1:9-12

At Calvary Bible Church we hold to a philosophy that I like to call Every Member Ministry. The last time we met we began studying Paul's final exhortation in his brief letter to the Colossians. In it, I believe Paul assumes that the church has a mindset of Every-member Ministry. That is, he is fleshing out for us what he mentioned to the church in Ephesus (4:11); namely, that God has gifted the church with pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Hence the term, Every-member Ministry.

You see, the pastor/elders of the local church are NOT the only ones who should live "On Mission." Rather, ALL of the members of the church should cultivate a lifestyle of personal ministry. In other words, Calvary Bible Church should be viewed as a community made up of 4 pastors and nearly 300 ministers who are to be constantly on the lookout for opportunities to serve the church and others in meaningful ways.

The logical question, then, is: "What does living "On Mission" involve? What does it look like? How do we do it? Well, of course we do it by taking the initiative to:

- A. be hospitable to one another and to outsiders.
- B. by sacrificing time and treasure for one another
- C. by counseling one another
- D. by encouraging one another
- E. by addressing sin or confessing it
- F. by volunteering to do the dirty jobs
- G. by actively loving our wives and disciplining our children.
- H. by leading a small group or teaching a Sunday School class.

All of these and a thousand others forms of ministry are the normal consequence of a life lived "On Mission" for the glory of God. These are the kinds of things good "Christians" think about when we talk about ministry.

Nevertheless, when Paul thinks about Personal Ministry, the first thing that comes to his mind is Prayer. So, last time we emphasized the fact that the believer's "Mission-Mindset" should be prayerful. That is to say, one of the foundational components of Christ's mission for the church is

Prayer. Paul is simply exhorting us to do what God has ALWAYS called his people to do; namely, to Pray. As he says in v 2...

- A. We are to pray steadfastly (devotedly – NAS)
- B. We are to pray Watchfully (remaining alert/awake)
- C. And we are to pray Thankfully.

So, whether your ministry at any particular moment involves cleaning toilets, singing with the praise team, taking care of babies, preaching a sermon, or talking with your next-door neighbor, it should be done by believers who are devoted to prayer. Our mission-mindset Must be Prayerful.

Second...

II. Our Mission-mindset Must be Plural:

1. This is where we pick up from last week. Look at verse 3-4.

Read v. 3-4

2. Notice the plural pronouns:

- A. “pray for us.”
- B. That God may open a door for us.

Who is the us? I want you to see that Paul is not alone in his ministry-mission. A careful reading of this letter reveals that Paul is accompanied by Timothy, Epaphras, Luke, Aristarchus, John-Mark, Tychicus, Jesus (who is called Justice), and Demas. This is Paul’s prison-ministry team. I say “prison ministry” because Paul mentions (3) that he is in jail. Nevertheless, even while shackled to a Roman soldier, he’s still living “On Mission.” He’s still strategizing for ministry. Beloved, this should be instructive for us.

3. Wherever we are, no matter our circumstances, we can be used of God to minister to others. From jail; from a hospital bed; from your home during Pandemic; At the office; or at the Saturday morning soccer game. Everywhere!

4. But what is Paul’s strategy for advancing his ministry. What does he do? Well, after last week’s message we should not be surprised. He asks the Colossian Christians to pray.

5. You see, Prayer was not a small thing for Paul. He’s not like so many of us who whose first impulse is to call a friend for advice or try to rely on their own wits to make advances and solve the problems. Paul understood that fruitfulness in his mission depends in large measure upon the prayers of his partners in ministry. And I’m convinced that the reason the H.S. had this part of the letter recorded for us was so we would learn to do the same.

6. Once again, we are reminded that we are NOT merely individual Christians before the eyes of God. We are members of Christ’s body and members of one another. We need one another, and if

we are living life God's way, we are dependent upon one another for prayer. Paul's life depended on prayer! His ministry depended on Prayer. And he believed that God answers prayer! In fact, the Bible is full of answered prayer. For example:

- A. Hanna prayed for a son (1 Sam. 1:20) and she was heard and God answered.
- B. Elijah prayed that it would NOT rain for 3 years and six months, and he was heard (1 Kings, 17:1).
- C. God answered the prayers of the Psalmist.
- D. He answered the prayer of Moses
- E. He answers corporate prayers
- F. He answers the prayer of the oppressed
- G. He answers the prayers of the penitent.
- H. He answers prayers for healing
- I. He answers prayers for wisdom
- J. And the author of Hebrews even tells us (5:7) that Jesus, In the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard. Need proof? Open your Bible to any of the four gospels and read about the RESURRECTION! The whole of Scripture testifies that God answers prayer.
- K. And I know some of you have kept written records of the decades of answered prayers for every conceivable need!

7. Consider this: Saul of Tarsus viewed himself as an independent, self-reliant ruler. Paul the apostle, however, viewed himself as an inadequate, dependent child who lived upon Him who is invisible. He lived upon the prayers of God's people. So, he asks them to pray. And there is good biblical precedent for doing so.

- A. In asking others to pray he was like the O.T. prophet, Daniel (Dan. 2:18) who, when all the magicians were about to be slaughtered for their failure to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel stepped in and said, "I can't interpret dreams, but God can! And as he went to seek the Lord about the dream, he sent word to his friends telling them "to seek mercy from the God of heaven" on his behalf.
- B. Again, Paul was like Esther, the queen, who, in the day of distress for her people called them all together to fast and pray. They did! And God heard and saved.
- C. Again, Paul was like the disciples before him (Acts 12), who upon hearing that Peter had been thrown in jail, gathered everyone in the home of Mary (mother of John-Mark) to pray. And an angel came and freed him.
- D. Do you believe that God answers prayer? Then pray! And pray NOT only for your own needs as you minister to others, but also for your partners in ministry who

are, like you, striving to live “On mission” as well.

- E. This is what I mean when I say our mission mind-set should be Plural. It’s good to strategize and plan for how YOU intend to minister in various ways. But the fruit of such ministry is dependent upon a plurality of men and women who pray.

8. There is a part of me that wonders how our church would change if we all got serious about talking to God about our personal needs and ministry ambitions. That would be glorious! But Paul’s not satisfied with that.

9. You see, the Christian life is NOT merely about “me and Jesus.” It’s also about embracing God’s call on our lives to partner with others. It’s something that transcends our own individual faithfulness to Christ. It calls us to assist others who are also striving to live “On Mission”—especially your spiritual leaders; your pastors; your elders.

10. So as Paul was formulating his fallible, dependent plans for more effective ministry, he wrote a letter designed, in part, to solicit help from the letter’s recipients – the members of the church of Colossae.

11. Now, if you were Paul writing to your ministry partners from jail, what would he ask them to pray? Well, I don’t know what you would ask for, but I do know what Paul would ask for, because he tells us.

12. If I were Paul, I might ask them to send a delegation that could put pressure on the local magistrates to release me immediately on the grounds of false arrest! But not Paul. Rather, he asks them to pray. And what does Paul want them to petition God for? Not release. Not for special privileges. Rather, he focuses on two specific requests:

- A. First, that God would give them fresh opportunity to proclaim Christ.
- B. Second, that he might proclaim that message with clarity.

12. In Paul’s own words, “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison.” In other words, pray that God would provide fresh opportunity for evangelism.

13. We know that’s what Paul has in mind because he uses the phrase, “mystery of Christ.” That’s a direct reference to the gospel. Paul is employing apostolic lingo for gospel preaching. The reason he refers to it as “the mystery” is NOT because it’s hard to understand but because it’s NOT of human origin. It wasn’t invented by men. Therefore, it was never known by men until God revealed it.

14. In his letter to the Ephesians he makes it clear that the “Mystery of Christ” (same phrase) was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” That is, it came by divine revelation. In fact, the only other place where we see the formulas “Mystery of Christ” is in Eph. 3, Where Paul explains that it’s a divine message and that it was preached to the Gentiles who are now fellow heirs and members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3: 4-6).

15. Moreover, when Paul writes to the Gentile believers here in Colossae, he abbreviates this explanation by telling them that the Mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

16. O my friends, do you see why Paul’s ministry required prayer? Evangelism is NOT a human business. Only God can change the heart. Only God can grant saving faith. Only God can cause a hardened sinner to believe.

- A. Witness Acts 16:14. Do you remember the story of how the church in Philippi was planted? Luke tells us that when Paul arrived there, he met a Gentile businesswoman named Lydia – a God-fearing Gentile. Paul spoke to her and the other women gathered by the river that day. He explained the “mystery of Christ” (i.e. gospel). And do you remember what happened?

The text says (Acts 16:14) “And the Lord opened her heart...”

You see, we don’t have to break down the doors of resistance? We just need to ask God to open their hearts.

- B. (Acts 11) We see something similar when the disciples scattered after the stoning of Stephen. Many of them went to Antioch and began preaching the Lord Jesus (the Mystery of Christ) and we read, (Acts 11:21) “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.
- C. You see, successful evangelism is always a work of God. The evangelist is merely the person who delivers the message and calls people to repent and believe.
- D. And we know from his letter to the Philippians that Paul had had a surprisingly fruitful evangelistic ministry to the soldiers who guarded him while under house arrest. At the conclusion of that letter Paul writes, “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.”

17. Paul doesn’t seem particularly anxious to be released, but he longs for more opportunity to share the life-changing “Mystery of Christ” with more people whether bound or free. So from prison he asks the saints to pray. He writes, “...that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ...”

18. You know, as I studied the passage before us this week, I was struck by a Scripture-prompted thought. Perhaps the reason we don't find ourselves with very much gospel opportunity is because we don't pray for it. We don't ask for it. Let's make that a little more personal: Perhaps the reason I don't have more gospel opportunity is because I don't pray for it.

19. Paul apparently believed the words of Jesus who declared, "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find; knock and it shall be opened to you." Paul believed this was a bonified invitation from the living God to come to him with all of our needs. Do you? Do we?

20. So this is what we need to do. Starting today, would you join me and praying for more "open Doors" – More opportunities to share the gospel with the Lost?

21. And while we are at it, can I invite you to join others for prayer on Sunday mornings? All you have to do is come a little earlier on Sunday. There is a small room right down near the entrance to Fellowship Hall that is labeled "Prayer Room." Prayer starts at 8:15. Every Sunday. If the room isn't big enough, we can move to the conference room a couple doors down.

22. What should you pray for? Well, as I said, we should pray for opportunity. Additionally, as Paul the apostle asked prayer for himself and the others on his ministry team, so the elders of Calvary would kindly ask that you pray for us in the same manner.

23. So, Paul's first request is that the saint's in Colossae would pray for an open door to proclaim the Mystery of Christ. (BTW: it needs to be prayer with action, not apart from action)

24. Second, He asked them to pray for clarity as he proclaims the message. Notice verse 4, "That I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak."

25. Anyone can make the gospel confusing. I admit I have made that mistake more times than I care to remember. It's easy to be unclear. But Clarity requires a biblical plan and the power of the Spirit.

26. If someone were to come to you and ask, "What must I do to be saved" what would you tell them? What Scriptures would you use? What questions should you be prepared to answer?

27. The good news for you E4M guys is that we have asked Mike Gendron (who spoke about the Reformation in Sunday School this morning). He's going to join us at 4:00 for specific training in evangelism.

28. And for all of you who are bummed because you also want that training, let me tell you that we are looking for a time for Mike to return and speak to a larger group on the same topic.

29. Until then, I want to encourage you to take the risk with that family member, friend, waitress, or neighbor and ask them about their relationship with the Lord. Help them to see that we are all sinners in the eyes of God who need a savior – that in God’s economy there is a righteousness we desperately need, don’t have, and can’t earn. Tell them that Jesus is God’s solution to that inescapable problem; that by his righteous life and atoning death in our place, sinners are redeemed, rescued from the just and holy wrath of God, completely forgiven, and reconciled to their Creator. Take the risk and speak!

30. That being said, in addition to having a clear strategy for sharing the gospel, we must also PRAY.

- Pray that the Spirit will quicken their minds and hearts, causing a desire to believe and obey.
- For as Paul taught the 1 Corinthians,

“No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor.12:3).

31. Your gospel ministry must be strategic, but even more importantly, it must be dependent. That is, dependent upon the Spirit of God who alone can save. So we have learned that our Mission-mindset must be Prayerful, it must be Plural, and finally.

III. Our Mission Mindset must be Personal

Read v. 5-6

1. Just in case any of us may have lingering thoughts that ministry – especially gospel ministry – is something reserved for people like apostles and pastors, Paul speaks directly to the congregation.

2. The message of this text begins with talking to God about lost people. Here we are talking to people people about God. And this exhortation is for ALL of us!

3. We know Paul is speaking about ministry to the lost because he calls them “outsiders.” That is, they are outside the family of God. In mark 4, Jesus makes a distinction between his disciples and those who are “outside” (Mk. 4:11). We are Christ’s beloved, his chosen, his children. We should relish the privileges we have in Christ and delight in all that God has given to us as His his unique people. Nevertheless, we need to be careful not to project a kind of “sanctified superiority”¹ as we speak.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 147.

4. It's so easy to rest in the reality of our own salvation forgetting that fact that everywhere we go we meet people who know nothing of the danger they are in or of God's gift of salvation.

5. What is our responsibility toward "outsiders?" Paul says, we are to "walk wisely among them. In Paul's day the Jews especially held Christians in derision. But Christians were to labor NOT to defend themselves, but to win over those who had a negative view of Christ. To "walk wisely," then, means to live before unbelievers with an irreproachable life. There should be nothing in our lives that would jeopardize our testimony.

6. Love your neighbors. Serve them. Bless them. "Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Live in such a way that will make it easy for them to hear and believe the gospel.

7. Then, when God answers our prayers for gospel opportunity, "Seize the moment!" "Redeem the time." Take a deep breath and Step through the open door and speak forth the Mystery of Christ!"

8. The phrase here, "Make the best use of the time," mean to "Redeeming the time." it's a commercial term and pictures the Christian as a faithful steward who knows an opportunity when he sees one.² "Don't miss the opportunity!" Paul seems to say. Pray for opportunities to speak and seize the moment for the glory of God.

10. Its not enough simply to walk wisely and kindly before the unbelievers we encounter. We must also speak. We must tell the "Mystery of Christ." And when we do, we must speak in a winsome manner.

11. Notice (v.6) Paul commands, "Let your speech ALWAYS be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person."

12. In Luke 4 we read about Jesus (22) that "all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth." That's the model we are to follow. Don't be argumentative. Don't be a spiritual bully. Be winsome. Be gracious. Be kind in your speech.

13. To borrow a term from Ephesians, we must "Speak the truth in love."

14. I think Warren Weiersbe get's the balance right when he writes, "The Christian's walk and talk must be in harmony with each other. Nothing will silence the lips like a careless life. [However],

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 148.

when character, conduct, and conversation are all working together, it makes for a powerful witness.³

15. As I said in the beginning, I think the point of this passage is to encourage us that God has called the members of His body to live “On Mission.” We believe in Every-Member-Ministry.” That is, Calvary Bible Church has 4 pastors and nearly 300 ministers. That’s what a healthy church – a biblical church should be like.

16. Are you one of the ministers of Calvary Bible Church? Have you learned the priority of prayer?

- A. Do you pray Steadfastly, Watchfully, with thanksgiving?
- B. Do you pray for opportunity to declare the “Mystery of Christ?” to an unbeliever within your circle of influence?
- C. Do you pray for the elders of our church that we would be faithful with the gospel?
- D. Do you pray that we would preach, teach and counsel with clarity?
- E. And when you minister to outsiders, is your speech winsome, full of the flavor of grace? That’s how Christians are supposed to live in this world, because, you see,

Mature Christians don't merely go to church. They live on mission.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 148.