

Summary:

All ministry flows out of a life of intimacy with Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit. If we do not learn the practice of drawing close to our Savior in order to learn, love, and be refreshed, we often go into our ministry prepared for burn-out instead of fruitfulness, struggling to hear the voice of the Spirit. Additionally, every moment spent at his feet reminds us of the supremacy of his love, stokes excitement, and nourishes a desire to see all the world reconciled to him. In short, if we do not live out our identity as his children through a continual relationship, we will struggle to represent Christ to the children to whom we minister. This workshop will look at the importance of ministering out of our identity as children of God, with a focus on the goal of the worship gathering, accomplishing that goal, song selection, flow of a worship set, and ministering from a place of genuineness.

Jeremiah 20:9 - "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

This section of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7-18) is a lament. It occurs after he is beaten for his proclamation. This makes his inability to stay silent all the more significant. What would compel him to continue his declaration? In the midst of all the trials, he is persistent in proclaiming the word of the Lord to the people. It is more than persistence, as he cannot but do it!

Throughout the book, like in the other prophets, we see phrases like, "this is what the LORD says," (Jeremiah 19:1), "the LORD said to me," (Jeremiah 15:1), and "the word of the LORD came to me," (Jeremiah 16:1). Whatever else we may say about Jeremiah (especially as a prophet in the Old Testament tradition where vision were at times thrust upon the individual - or so it seems) he was clearly in a position where he could listen to God. The disclosures of God's heart were given in a place of intimate relationship. The same is true of the imperative nature of these disclosures.

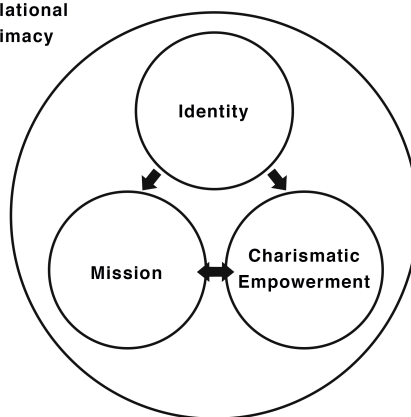
All ministry flows out of intimacy with Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit. It is the necessary starting point for our lives as disciples. It appears that out of an intimate relationship with the triune God three spheres of Christian life emerge: identity, mission, and empowerment.

Identity: Mark 1:9-11; 1:12-13 (and parallels)

Mission: Mark 1:35-39; 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1; Matthew 28:17-20 (all reveal universal mission); Ephesians 2:10 (and context); Acts 13:1-3; Ephesians 4 (all reveal a specific, individual calling/mission)

Empowerment: John 15:1-17; Acts 2:1-21

Spheres of Relational Intimacy



These three spheres emerge as we draw near to be with and learn from Jesus.

Note: participation in these spheres is also drawing near to Jesus. He is present in both our active and passive rhythms of discipleship. So, we can expect to grow deeper in each of these things as we live them. It is only out of relationship with God that these things will emerge and solidify. So, for our effectiveness in ministry and the health of our souls, drawing near in relational intimacy is absolutely necessary. As we draw near to Jesus, we gain his perspective on the world – primarily his love for it. It is this love compelled Paul, with sentiment that echoes Jeremiah, to proclaim Christ (the Word of God).

1) Note the mission that emerges in light of Matthew 28:17-20 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21: the reconciliation of creation to God and making disciples of humanity. All ministry must have this end as its goal. 2) Worship = discipleship (Romans 12:1-2). Worship is holistic, and includes all of who we are: body, spirit, emotions, intellect, and social relations. Paul mentions both the body and the mind - the whole person. 3) Thus, the goal of our work (like all ministry) is to shepherd kids into greater and greater intimacy with Jesus; deeper and deeper relationship; truer and truer discipleship; caring for them so that they develop a deep love and relationship with the source of the fire/the fire itself that exists in all circles of life.

So, how do these emerging spheres of intimacy, and the mission, influence the practice of leading worship for kids?

1) We share the fire. We lead them to someone. Namely, Jesus, and the Father and Spirit. Everything we do must display an accurate depiction of the LORD, for it is from him that our life (and new life) emerges.

- Our song selection should be rigorously scriptural and Christo-centric.

2) We give them tools for experience and responding to life with Jesus. Music is both a tool for expression and a vehicle for truth. Primarily, worship through music facilitates a ministry of the Word, and provides an environment for responding to the Word. It is one of the many avenues through which Christ is presented, and, as discussed, exposure to Christ in relational intimacy is the starting point for discipleship. Worship through music is particularly adept at this because it addresses the emotions, imagination, and intellect - it ambushes us with the truth and, as C.S. Lewis may say, it "baptizes our minds" in preparation for the truth. These internal realities are part of the body and mind that Paul mentions in Romans 12:1-2

3) Practical implications:

- Be genuine. Relational intimacy that reinforces our identity gives us the means by which we can be ourselves, knowing our limits, gifts, and calling. Surprisingly, this gives us greater effectiveness and flexibility. We cannot risk being ingenuine - being safe in the abundant love of God is our strength.
 - The ministry cannot be done well outside of relationship with the kids and their families. We must get to know those to whom we minister.
- The goal of discipleship is Christlikeness; we desire the kids to be whole (true peace, or shalom) as they find their identity in Jesus. This means that we cannot put unrealistic expectations on those to whom we minister. While children can have a genuine response to God through praise, it may look different than it will with adults. Children have developing emotional and intellectual capacities, so their response will look different. The important thing is that they learn to live all of life with Jesus.
 - We should endeavor, therefore, to provide a musical means by which they can live out all of their experiences. This means both an accurate representation of Jesus, but also songs with a wide emotional range. See the intent behind Jesus Wept.
 - We also need, then, displays of humor, joy, etc.

4) Finally, it all goes back to drawing near to Jesus in relational intimacy, the security of our identity, and the discovery of both mission and empowerment.