

Ministry- Doing Life Connected

Ministry is from the Greek word *diakoneo*, meaning "to serve" or *douleuo*, meaning "to serve as a slave." Webster defines ministry as "the work or vocation of a minister of religion," but everything we do is ministry related because we are all ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, each of us should be involved in some aspect of ministry that takes place in, among, and through our body of believers. Our best, and only, model for ministry should be found in the person of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, and John 13 we see examples of Jesus coming not "to be served" but "to serve." As Christ followers and ministers of the gospel, we are to intentionally seek out opportunities to serve. Most of the ministry we see taking place in scripture, happens in areas that we would least expect it. In John 2, we see ministry taking place at a wedding. In John 4, Jesus speaks to a woman who by definition, then and now, was unreachable, and He did so in a place most Jews of His day would never have gone. In this encounter, we do not see Jesus preparing a three-point sermon, waiting for the choir to finish their worship set, or wait for the last five minutes of the service to offer an invitation to the woman. We see Jesus sitting by a well ministering to the woman that was in front of Him. These are both valuable lessons to show us that ministry, if we allow it, can and will happen all around us. For this to happen we must be ready for a couple of things to change in our life. We have to quit looking at our relationship with Christ as twice a week on Sundays and Wednesdays. It must be a healthy, daily, consistent relationship. We must be equipped properly to do ministry when the opportunities arise. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter reminds us that we are to always be ready to give an answer and a defense for the hope that is found in us. This does not merely happen by pure accident. It will take intentional time and study. It will take a considerable amount of prayer time and fellowship with other believers.

This approach to ministry is different from that of the modern church movement. Many churches today create ministries as a means of programming, but it is our desire that ministries in and through Immanuel Baptist Church will do three things. They will share Christ with a lost and dying world, make better disciples of those who have committed their life to Christ, and ultimately serve the kingdom.

Our goal is to have at least eighty-five percent of IBC's active membership involved in one to three different ministry areas within the framework of the local church by the end of 2020. We want to provide ministry opportunities for all age groups represented. However, this does not mean that we want students to do ministry over here, adults here, and children over there. There is a time and a place for age-specific ministry to take place, but we also want to encourage collaborative ministry plans across the board. With the amount of talent God has blessed this church with, our music ministry should be overflowing with people willing to use their talents for the Lord. Psalms 100 reminds us that we can all make a joyful noise, and in verse 2 it challenges us to use that noise in service to the kingdom. We need more men doing ministry and fellowship together and ladies like so. In 1 Thess. 5:11, Paul reminds us that we are to build one another up. How can we do this if we do not schedule time to be together and do life together? We need more students leading and spending intentional time in the Word of God. We need men leading boys and ladies leading girls and those students need to work alongside our adults, because God has gifted them with some unique gifts and talents that they can bring to the table. We need more children and preschool involvement. Awana, Kids Praise, and Sunday morning Bible study are all a great start, but we need more opportunities to equip and encourage our children and preschoolers to be grounded in their faith. Statistics tell us that fifty percent of those who commit their life to Christ do so before their twelfth birthday. We want this age group, as we do all age groups, to know what they believe, why they believe it, and how to defend it. On top of this, there is no reason that says children cannot do ministry alongside adults. In John 6, a young boy gave his lunch to Christ and 5000 plus people were fed. We must allow those who are willing and able to serve the opportunities to do so.

Missions is another great ministry opportunity we have to share Christ and serve the kingdom. We often view missions as sending someone to a Third World country to share the gospel with a group of people who have never heard the name "Jesus," but missions start right here in our little Jerusalem town of Nashville. We are all on mission and have all been given the charge in Matthew 28 of carrying out the Great Commission. This will begin first by being poured into consistently and intentionally, then it will be done by allowing Christ to minister through us in our neighborhood, on our job, at our school, the grocery store we shop at, and wherever else we are. Can you imagine what could happen in Nashville, Arkansas, if we prayerfully and earnestly sought after the Lord and allowed Him to minister through us? Luke reminds us in Acts 17:6 that a small group of individuals who were committed to Christ turned the world upside down. What could He do with us?

In Christ Alone,

Paul