

Serving with Balance: the Model of Jesus

Introduction

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (Luke 9:1-6).

Perhaps the most important task that Jesus had when he was here on this earth was to prepare his disciples to implement his teachings and way of life. It was good for Jesus to believe and do things but if these only were done during his lifetime, then his life would have been a failure. Therefore, he had to prepare his followers to carry on his ministry. He spent a lot of time teaching them what they would need to know.

As a good teacher, Jesus knew his students needed more than just information. They needed experience to be prepared for the task they would be responsible to complete. Therefore, Jesus required them to complete a practicum, a semester of student teaching, a field-testing exercise. What were these disciples going to do during this field exercise?

The method of teaching was to have a student attach himself to the master and follow him around until he absorbed his mentor's knowledge and philosophy. Students did this by listening to his speeches, by asking questions, and by observing the way he responded to situations (both positive and negative). However, a person could learn only so much from observation. The student must have practical experience. He must attempt to duplicate what he had heard from the lips and seen demonstrated in the life of his master.

When I had a roofing business, I would have my new workers just watch me a while. Then I would explain; then I would give them a chance; I would then have to correct them but after a time, they could do the work my way.

This is what Jesus was doing. His disciples had been with him for a number of months. They had heard his teachings; they had observed the way he had responded to the situations; they were especially observant of his supernatural ability. Now was the time to determine exactly what kind of students they were. Were they only going to be reporters of what they had seen and heard in the master? Or were they going to be able to do the same things he had done? Were they going to be theologians or practitioners or both?

Jesus' Two Kinds of Ministry

When Jesus gave his disciples their instructions, he told them that their practicum was to be a reflection of what he had been doing. They were to "*preach the good news of the kingdom*" and they were also to "*heal the sick.*" Those two phrases represent the two kinds of ministries Jesus had developed during the few months he had been leading his disciples. I want to explore those a bit more and attempt to demonstrate the balance in Jesus' ministry.

Preaching

The first ministry of Jesus was a ministry of communication that focused to a large extent on Jesus' philosophy or theology. It was primarily teaching and preaching about the kingdom that Jesus came to introduce to the world. It had a heavy concentration on information.

Immediately after the baptism and temptation of Jesus, those events that indicated Jesus was now ready to begin his public ministry, Matthew tells us: "*From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near'*" (4:17). Mark begins his description of Jesus' ministry immediately after the call of his first disciples: "*They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach*" (1:21). Since the disciples did not know this information, Jesus had to spend a lot of time simply transferring the information from himself to them.

Jesus came to introduce a kingdom that was going to be different from what the disciples and the multitudes were expecting. Therefore, he had to spend a lot of time explaining the details of the kingdom. This was done through preaching and teaching. All throughout his ministry, Jesus was teaching about the kingdom. At times, he devoted major blocks of time to teaching about the kingdom or some aspect of the kingdom such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7) and the Upper Room Discourse (John 13 – 17). Jesus was a master communicator and spent a large percentage of his time preaching and teaching about the kingdom.

I should point out although we sometimes make a difference between preaching and teaching, for our purposes here, there is no major difference between the two. They are both oral communication. When Jesus was preaching he was also teaching.

Preaching and teaching the truth is one of the most noble professionals in the world. In fact, most of the major universities of the world started as schools that considered theology to the "queen of sciences." I cannot overstate the importance of preaching in our lives. We as pastors must work very hard to understand the truths that Jesus taught. That is not something that we can do casually. We must devote the whole of our lives to that process.

We must work very hard and preparing our sermons. A lawyer would never go to court unprepared. A legislature would never address the national assembly without being as prepared as he possibly could be. Neither should we mount the pulpit to declare the truths of God's word without being as prepared as we can be. Your method of preparation may be different from mine. However, you should spend the necessary time preparing for whatever sermon you are called upon to present.

I am grateful that Jesus came to this earth preaching the gospel. In so doing, he left a wonderful example for us.

Healing

On the other hand, Jesus was not just an academic. He did not deal only with ideas and information. When Mark describes the first time Jesus taught in the synagogue, he adds that a demon-possessed man began to disturb the congregation. Jesus immediately cast the demon out of the man, much to the amazement of the crowd (Mark 1:25-27). Immediately

after Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue they went to the house of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was sick but Jesus healed her instantly and so completely, she was able to get up and minister to them (1:30-31).

These were only the first of the many practical kinds of ministries in which Jesus was involved. In addition to healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus did many other things:

- He raised the dead (John 11:43-44).
- He helped pay taxes (Matthew 17:27).
- He fed the hungry (Matthew 14:15-21).
- He interacted with children (Matthew 19:13-15).
- He counseled the confused (John 3:1-21; 4:7-30).
- He assisted with income generation (John 21:1-6; 11).
- He assisted the homeless (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20).
- He relieved the embarrassment of the disgraced (John 2:1-10).
- He became friends with the most rejected (Matthew 9:10-13; 11:19).
- He defended the abused (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17).

I believe all of these activities are summarized by the phrase "*heal the sick.*" The word "heal" is the Greek word *therapeuo*. It is a summary of all that Jesus was doing. When he was casting out comforting the grieving, he was healing. When he was feeding the hungry, he was healing in one sense of the word. Even when Jesus was addressing injustices in society, such as the time he dealt with the unscrupulous businessmen in the Temple, he was healing the society.

Thus, when Jesus sent out his disciples with the instructions to "*heal the sick,*" that was a summary phrase indicated the disciples were to be involved in the whole range of compassionate and constructive ministries they had witnessed in their master.

These two kinds of ministry—speaking and doing, the theoretical and practical, were part of Jesus' ministry from the beginning and made up the two arms of his ministry. Therefore, in this presentation, I will use "*preaching the good news of the kingdom*" as a summary phrase of Jesus teaching ministry and "*healing the sick*" as a representative phrase of the other practical ministries in which Jesus was engaged.

The Balance of Jesus' Ministry

When people have multiple responsibilities, it is hard to keep them in balance. We tend to focus too much attention on one aspect of our ministries or, we get diverted from one of the ministries we should be doing. For example, I am a husband, a father, a son, a brother, a preacher, a university lecturer, a missions director, a consultant, a writer and a few other things. It is hard to keep all of those responsibilities in balance. However, Jesus managed to maintain this delicate balance between preaching and healing—between communication and practical ministry.

We learn about balance in Nigeria. You go to the market and see the girls put things on their head pan. They get the balanced just right. They then wrap up their little clothe and put in on their head and then ask you to help them lift that load up on their head. They will adjust it a couple of times to get it balanced. And when it is balanced, they can do practically

anything. They can walk; they can run; they can stoop down and pick up things. They can act almost like the things in not up on top of their heads. The key is getting the thing balanced.

We want to focus a bit on getting our ministries balanced.

The Balance Between the Words for Teaching and Healing

According to my calculations, the word “teach” is associated with Jesus 62 times, not counting the 45 verses where Jesus was addressed as “Rabbi” or “Teacher.” The word “preach” is associated with Jesus another 14 times. Adding these together, we see the gospel writers using “communication language” of Jesus 76 times. The word “heal” is associated with Jesus 58 times. Also Jesus is described as “touching” people” or people touching him for healing 29 times (including the touch of the coffin that raised a young man to life, Luke 7:14). By adding all of these together we see the gospel writers using “healing language” of Jesus 87 times. Although this is not an exhaustive list of synonyms for either communication or healing, nor is this a highly sophisticated way of evaluating the balance that Jesus had in his life, this does demonstrate to us that Jesus spent about an equal amount of time communicating the gospel and addressing the physical needs of people.

The Balance Between the “Red” and “Black Verses” in the Gospels

Another way of looking at this is to evaluate the amount of the gospels content devoted to Jesus’ communication and the amount devoted to describing his activities. A simple way of doing this is to count the number of verses where Jesus is speaking, as demonstrated in the red letter versions of the Bible compared to the times when the Biblical characters are not speaking as reflected in the black letters in the red letter editions of the Bible.¹ The following chart gives us this information in a visual form.

Book	Total Verses	Red Verses	Percentages
Matthew	1067	643	60.2%
Mark	678	302	44.5%
Luke	1151	594	51.6%
John	879	422	48.2%
Totals	3775	1961	51.9%

This analysis demonstrates that Matthew focuses more on Jesus speaking than any other book with 60.2 percent of his material being devoted to Jesus’ specific communications. Mark, on the other hand, focuses more on the actions of Jesus with only 44.5 percent of his gospel devoted to things Jesus said. When all verses in all four gospels are taken together, it is discovered that 51.9 percent of the verses refer to Jesus speaking while 48.1% refer to the deeds of Jesus.

Whether this was deliberate or unconscious on the part of the gospel writers, this suggests to me that the gospels portray almost an equal balance between “*preaching the good news of the kingdom*” and “*healing the sick.*” In other words, the writers did not just focus on the teachings of Jesus or the activities of Jesus. They gave about the same emphasis to both

¹ In this analysis, I used the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation (second edition)*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 2004) for the red and black verses. Any verse that had any part where Jesus was speaking was considered a communication verse.

types of ministry. And, since we as Bible-believing Christians accept the scriptures as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit, we accept this ratio as being the balance desired by God. Jesus sent out his disciples to essentially replicate his ministry, as illustrated by the statement that they were to go and “*preach the good news of the kingdom*” and also “*heal the sick.*” These two statements, then, become something of a formula for the way the followers of Jesus should be investing their time.

Two Kinds of Christianity

Right-Handed Christianity

Throughout church history, there has been tension between these two aspects of Jesus’ ministry. Some have focused on the “message” side, particularly the good news that repentance will lead to eternal life and that learning and following the teachings of Jesus will produce holiness, meaningfulness, and fulfillment in one’s life. This might be called the “spiritual” part of the gospel message.

This was the emphasis of the particular branch of Christianity in which I was reared. My people tended to separate the world into two classes of people. There were the believers and unbelievers.

- Among the believers, there were the regular people and the full-time Christian workers.
- Among the full-time Christian workers, there were pastors and evangelists and others and then there were the missionaries. Missionaries were always in a category of their own.
- Among the missionaries, there were the medical people and agricultural people and engineers (well drillers) and the administrators and then there were the “real missionaries.” These were the evangelists, church planters and those who taught the Bible. These were the ones who were doing the real work of the Lord. All others were in a supporting role. They were there to help the evangelist win that person to Christ.

We believed that you were working for God whenever you were preaching or teaching Sunday school or passing out tracts or praying. To us, the good news was that Jesus would forgive our sins and take us to heaven. We believed that evangelism and missions were practically synonymous. A missionary went to the mission field primarily to present the good news of repentance and faith and forgiveness and eternal life. We also believed in sending medical doctors and people to dig wells and provide education. However, their role was always a supporting role. They were there to aid the “real missionaries” to do their jobs. The primary reason that one would start a hospital or perform some other ministry of compassion was to get people who were sick and needing help in other ways to see the goodness of Christianity and respond to the gospel. The compassionate ministries were all preparatory, supporting and secondary to the preaching side of Christianity.

In other words, almost the total focus of our Christianity was on the spiritual part of the gospel. We listened carefully to the teachings of Jesus. We loved the red letters in the gospels and built our theology on them. We loved the stories about the deeds of Jesus but we were convinced they, too, were only there to support his message.

On the other hand, we were aware of those who promoted the “social gospel.” They were involved in leprosy ministries and providing food for hungry people. They started schools and hospitals; it did not appear they were evangelizing. It seemed they were doing compassionate ministries as an end in themselves. We always viewed these people against the background of Jesus’ statement “*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?*” (Mark 8:36). This verse convinced us that it was the “soul” that was important and not so much the body. Did not Paul say, “*bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things*” (1 Timothy 4:8 KJV). These verses suggest to us that we should minister to the body to reach the soul.

I recognize that I have overstated the case a bit but I am doing so to make a point.

This kind of Christianity has helped to create what we now call “secularism.” It was the French who first developed this. When the USA was first formed, our founding fathers decided that, unlike many of the old countries from which they had come, they did not want to formulate a “state church.” Therefore, they built into the constitution a very mild form of “separation of church and state.” However, in the last several decades, this has been interpreted in a much more narrow sense than it was originally intended. The part of our religion that the government recognizes as continuous is the “believing” part. You believe what you believe 24 hours a day. However, the government recognizes the “doing” part of our religion as things like praying, reading the Bible, and worship. This is the spiritual part. And in the minds of most people, this is the religious part. However, the government does not recognize that “*healing the sick*” is a religious function.

Unfortunately this philosophy has even affected missions. Some of our early missions works was influenced by this “secular” philosophy that divided our lives into two parts. However, this is not a Biblical description of Christianity. True Christianity is wholistic. It touches every part of our lives.

- It affects our work.
- It affects our education.
- It affects the way we care for the needy.
- It affects the judicial system and the penal system.
- It touches all parts of our lives.

Any time we are trying to correct or address a problem in life, we are “*healing the sick*” and fulfilling the mandate of Jesus. And this is part of our faith.

When we believe and practice this kind of “secular” Christianity, we are like a boxer who had one arm tied behind his back. We were right-handed Christians. It is true we had a strong right hand but, by failing to develop both of our arms, we have believed and practiced and reproduced a weakened and unbalanced form of Christianity.

Wholistic Service

When studying the life of Jesus, we cannot help but notice the balance between the spiritual ministries and the practical ministries. This reflects very much of a wholistic philosophy of life. God is not just concerned about one aspect of our being, the soul or spirit. God is concerned about the whole person. To use the illustration used above, God is concerned that we develop a two-handed understanding of Christian service.

This is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the balance of Jesus' ministry that I have demonstrated. Certainly God is concerned about truth and is very interested that we communicate the truth of the kingdom as clearly and forcefully as we can. Jesus spent a whole lot of time preaching and teaching. He said, "*you will know the truth and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:34).

However, God is also concerned about our bodies. God is concerned about sick people. God is concerned about the handicapped, the poor and the downtrodden. And God expects His followers to have the same attitude toward these people that Jesus Christ had. To only preach and never engage in compassionate ministries is to be a right-handed Christian. To only be engaged in compassionate ministries and never link these acts of mercy to the big truths of God's kingdom is left-handed Christianity. God is calling us to holistic Christianity.

John captures this balance very well when he says, "*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*" (1 John 3:17-18).

Application

How does this truth apply to us today? How can we develop and maintain this balance in our lives? There are three specific areas of application I want to present. Before I make these points, I will make some qualifying statements.

Qualifying Statements

First, I understand that not everyone can do everything that Jesus did. Though Jesus predicted the total body of Christ would see all of the things he did (John 14:12), it is highly unlikely that any one person will ever be able to do all the supernatural things Jesus did or achieve the balance Jesus achieved in his life.

In addition, the Apostle Paul states clearly that God has given to some people gifts associated with communication such as wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, and tongues, (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10b), and teaching (12:28a) while others have been given gifts associated with service such as healing, miraculous powers, the gift of miracles (12:10a), helping others and administration (12:28b). Some seem to be more capable of focusing on what we might call "spiritual ministries" while others are more comfortable working in what we might call "compassionate ministries." And this is perfectly legitimate.

Therefore, this presentation is not a call for us to abandon the gifts and training that enable us to concentrate and be effective on one side of the divide or the other.

Second, I understand and have actively taught over the years that the sharper the focus in ministry that a person or organization has, the more likelihood of success. An old proverb says, "If you shoot at nothing, you will likely hit it—nothing."

We have many entrepreneurs in Nigeria who are trying many different kinds of work to make a living. Sometimes, I will have a person come to my house to solicit work. He will give me a complimentary card that reads something like this:

Chinedu Boloadé Danjuma

Building Contractor, Road Contractor, Importer of Medical Supplies,
Business Consultant; Management Consultant; Health Consultant;
Education Consultant; Communication Consultant; Book Printer,
Binder and Distributor; Dealer in Spare Parts; Seller of Food, Used
Clothing; Automobiles, Computers and Cell Phones

And when the person comes to see me, he probably came in public transportation. The fact that he was supposedly a specialist in many things actually proved that he was a specialist in nothing.

When we try to do too many different things, we guarantee mediocrity in all things. The point is that our likelihood of success is often directly proportionate to the how sharp our focus is.

Therefore, this presentation is not a repudiation of that truth nor a call to abandon focus in our lives, in our ministries or in our organizations. Rather it is a call for all of us to examine our lives and see if there are ways that we can be more balanced in addressing the spiritual and practical needs of those we are serving.

Application to the Church

It seems abundantly clear from the scriptures I have discussed above and from the overall emphasis of the New Testament that God is calling the church to “*preach the good news of the kingdom*” and also to “*heal the sick.*” Did the early church have a balance between preaching and healing? Certainly the early church preached. Peter preached the gospel at Pentecost and 3000 people were converted. There are seven sermons recorded in the book of Acts and several other short speeches and testimonies that are designed to communicate truth.

However, the church was also involved in “*healing the sick.*” Immediately after Pentecost, we read (Acts 2:45), “*Selling their possession and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*” The first internal problem in the church was over the distribution of food to the needy widows that resulted in the creation of the office of deacon (Acts 6). Note: there was an organization to take care of widows before there was a missionary journey.

One of Paul’s first responsibilities after he joined with Barnabas in Antioch was to take gifts from the church in Antioch to the people in Jerusalem who were experiencing a famine (Acts 11:27-30). Thus, the example of the early church is clear. They were clearly involved in preaching but they were also involved in healing and helping the needy.

- That means that we, the worldwide body of Christ, should be concerned about theology and ministry—about communication and application.
- That means that individual denominations should be involved in preaching the gospel as well as addressing the practical needs of humanity.
- That means every local church should also be involved in both kinds of ministries.

Our church is incomplete and unhealthy if we are only using one arm.

Application to the SIM Mission

What is the ministry of SIM Mission? It is to continue the ministry of Jesus—the whole ministry of Jesus. This obviously includes evangelism, church planting and training Christian leaders. SIM has been doing this from the beginning. This obviously includes compassionate ministries as well including:

- Healing the sick people
- Making communities more healthy
- Making life more comfortable and convenient for people
- Addressing issues of justice in society.

I think that SIM has done a very good job at that as well, from the very beginning. And I believe that SIM is continuing in that same balance.

Are there any weaknesses in the SIM approach? I will only point out one thing that I think that SIM and most missions overlooked. We have not done very well in teaching about politics and governance. Is this not an important part of society? Does government not address issues of justice for the society? And was not justice a very important issue in the Old Testament and even in the ministry of Jesus?

I do not want to overstate the case and I do not want to second-guess our missionary forefathers who did an outstanding job of planting the church in Africa. However, when the missionaries came to Africa and got converts and started training them, naturally, they encourage the bright ones to go into the “ministry.” Therefore the best and brightest were selected to become our Christian leaders. That meant that the second echelon was left to go into “secular work.” I believe we are now paying a big price for that neglect or that omission.

I want to encourage the SIM mission to think seriously about what it can do to help ECWA and the body of Christ as a whole address the issue of

- Civil servants
- Political officers
- The philosophy of governance.

I believe the recent Jos Crisis grew out of a failure to have a Biblical view of governance. Unfortunately “Christian” politicians were willing to use manipulation and fraud to rig the election so that a “Christian” would become the Jos North local government chairman. Unfortunately, the other side was willing to use violence to make sure that their man got that position. Why did this happen? Because neither side had a proper understanding of governance. And hundreds of people paid for that lack of understanding with their lives.

I challenge the SIM mission leaders, here in the field and in Charlotte to think through your goals and your policies to make sure that you are developing and implementing a holistic and balanced ministry.

Application to Individual Christians

I recognize a strong case can be made for individuals focusing on more specialized ministries, consistent with their gifts, training, experience and calling. Having said that, I

have a growing conviction that all Christians should have at least some exposure to both the communication side and the compassion side of our faith. We need to use both of our arms in promoting God's kingdom.

Jesus' disciples were a fair representation of all future followers of Jesus. As far as we know, none of them started out in "communication" professions. However, when Jesus sent them on their first assignment, they were instructed to communicate as well as do practical ministries. Preaching and teaching became an important part of the ministry of the apostles. The apostles are referred to as preaching two times and teaching eight times in Acts.

On the other hand, Paul was a professional communicator before becoming a believer. He was a rabbi and rabbis are primarily teachers. Though Paul wrote most of the New Testament and is referred to as preaching 15 times and teaching 8 times in Acts, he was also involved in practical ministries. He healed several people including the lame man in Lystra (Acts 14:9), Eutychus, the young man who fell from the window (20:9-12); and Publius' father (28:8). He was also said to have been able to perform "*miraculous signs and wonder*" (14:3; 15:12) and "*extraordinary miracles*" (19:11). I assume most of these miracles would have been associated with helping people. Paul was personally involved in delivering funds to people suffering from a famine (11:28-30) and later took up "*gifts for the poor*" (24:17). Although he was a trained rabbi who had a right to receive his remuneration from his teaching and preaching (1 Corinthians 9:7-14), he chose to work with his hands in making tents to subsidize his ministry (9:6; Acts 18:3).

What these examples show us is that the earlier followers of Jesus did not so specialize that they got out of balance. All of them were involved to some degree in "*preaching the good news of the kingdom*" and "*healing the sick.*"

I believe that the most healthy Christians are those who know how to communicate the gospel but are also aware of and involved in helping to address the practical needs of people. It is likely and even good that we concentrate on one of the other of these kinds of ministries. However, when concentrating, we should not ignore the other.

I am a right-handed person. I will always be a right-handed person. My right arm is the strongest arm and the most skilled. However, I use my left arm every day and would be considered a handicapped person if I could not use my left arm. Do you have the same balance of service in your life that Jesus had? Is God trying to tell you that you need to use one arm more than you have been using it? Do you need to "preach" more? Or do you need to do more practical ministries?

Personal Application

Few if any persons in Jos has been more focused on "*preaching the good news*" mandate than I have been, including literal preaching and preaching as a metaphor for communicating the gospel. I would guess that I preach more than any other expatriate in this area. During the last six months, I have preached 50 sermons. Though it is almost a joke that I am involved in so many projects, when you examine them carefully, they have all been tightly focused. Believe it or not, I have said "no" to a lot of things over the years because they were not part of "*preaching the good news*" as I understood it. I have pushed the communication part of the gospel as much as I could. I have preached sermons; I have taught

classes; I have made speeches; I have written books; I have helped to develop curriculum; I have created training programs.

All of these are related to “information.” They involve transferring ideas from one person to another, which is a fair definition of communication. In my communications, I have explored all kinds of ideas related to the Christian faith. I have been very happy “*preaching the good news of the kingdom*” and have resisted and even resented attempts to get me to do other things.

Helping the Needy Focus

However, God is a master teacher. He knows exactly the path along which He needs to lead us and the things to which we need to be exposed in order to become the persons He wants us to become. Living in Africa has forced me to be more concerned about other people. For example, in a six month period, I am sure that I can count on both hands the days when we have not had some non-family member eat a meal at our table. In addition, God has particularly given me a lesson in supporting the weak and needy and vulnerable people in society. A couple of years ago, I kept track of the people who came to me seeking assistance. From September 9 through September 17, in a nine-day period, I had 11 people come to me seeking assistance. The following is a sample of those needs and my gifts:

- 10 September N 500 to the security guard who came to request money because he and his family were “hungry” and his money “did not reach.”
- 13 September N 2000 to a former prostitute, Cynthia, who is HIV+ and came to request money so she could “go back to the village and die”
- 15 September N 1500 to a former student for who came to request money for his wedding preparation
- 15 September N 500 to, my neighbor’s brother who came to request money for his children’s education
- 17 September N 500 to a university messenger who claimed that two of his children were sick and had been taken to the hospital.

During that 9-day period, I gave a total of 8800 Naira to the 11 who presented needs to me. And amazingly, that was not a particular unusual nine-day period.

You cannot live in Africa without either becoming very hard and cold to suffering people or else becoming more and more responsive to the needs around you. God has given me a very thorough course in being compassionate by bringing many needy people into my life. I pray that I am being a good student.

AIDS Focus

In 1999, God brought another opportunity into my life. I was overwhelmed with conviction that I had to get involved in the AIDS battle. AIDS ministries represent the “*healing the sick*” part of Jesus’ ministry. Prior to that time, I had left the AIDS problem up to others. However, I became convinced that I could no longer minister in Nigeria with only my right hand. I felt like Paul when he said “*Woe is me if I preach not the gospel*” except my conviction was “Woe if me if I do not get involved in the AIDS battle!” I did not know much about the AIDS ministry. In fact, when I first mentioned my interest in this to my wife, she had to remind me of who was doing AIDS ministries in Nigeria at that time. However,

believing that I was called to do this, I jumped into it with all of my heart. I have tried to bring all of my theological training, pastoral experience, negotiation and communication skills together to help fight this battle. And now AIDS ministries occupy a good percentage of my time.

Wheel Chair Focus

In 1977 Ron Rice came into my life. Ron came to Nigeria to help us “*preach the good news*” by developing teacher’s manuals for the teachers of Christian Religious Knowledge in the public schools of Nigeria. He later met Ayuba Gufwon and the ministry to handicapped people was born. It has provided over 700 wheelchairs to handicapped people. Though I have tried to stay out of it and allow this to be a Ron Rice ministry, it is impossible to stay out of a ministry that is being run out of your house.

It is even more impossible to run away from a ministry when you see glimpses of hope in these little children as they drag themselves along on the ground to occupy a wheelchair being given to them. And most of all, it is impossible to stay out of this ministry when I continue to hear in my heart the simple words of Jesus: “*heal the sick.*”

Summary

During my first 10 or 12 years of ministry in Nigeria, I would guess I was focusing 99 percent of my time on “*preaching the good news of the gospel*”—preaching and teaching and communicating theological truth. However, during the past six or eight years, that has gradually changed. I am still not as balanced as Jesus was but I estimate that during this past year, I spent perhaps 20 to 25 percent of my time on “*healing the sick*” ministries. During this next year, I hope to get much closer to the balance that Jesus had by obeying the command of Jesus to “*heal the sick.*”

Conclusion

Jesus said, “*As my father has sent me . . .*” We have gained a little insight into what it meant for the Father to send Jesus. The Father created the whole person so the Father was interested in the whole person and the whole society in which he lived. Therefore, when the Father sent Jesus to this world, he sent him to minister to the whole person and the whole society in which he lived. The implication of that is that as certainly as God sent Jesus to minister to the whole person, Jesus is now sending us to minister to the whole person and the whole society.

Peter declared: “*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*” (1 Peter 2:2). Paul wrote: “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). According to the verse that I read in the beginning, Jesus sent his disciples out to “*preach the good news of the kingdom and to heal the sick.*” And they did exactly as they were told. A few verses later we read: “*So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere*” (Luke 9:6).

In 1969 when I was 18 years old, I started attending a Bible college in Florida. This college was associated with a missionary organization that worked in the Bahamas which was not too far off the Florida coast. I was invited to go one weekend to the Bahamas to do some

“ministry.” We flew over there in a mission plane. The plane was being flown by a man named Mark Vernon, who had just gotten out of the Army after serving two tours as a helicopter pilot in Viet Nam. However, this was his first flight as a “missionary pilot.” He had never flown over water, to the extent that he could not see the shore. When we arrived and started packing the little Cessna 172, it was obvious that he was nervous. He took our little possessions and stored them in the back, adjusting them two or three times. He also experimented with one person sitting in one seat and then he would say, “No, I think you better sit on that side.” What was he doing? He was trying to achieve balance. He knew that when he took off, he was going to be out over the water where there were no land marks. He did not want his airplane to be out of balance which might cause it to veer off to one side. We finally took off, we crossed to cast and in ten minutes we were out of sight of the Florida coast. There was no much conversation in the vehicle. Mark was constantly checking his compass and his radios. We droned on and on. Would we hit West End in the Bahamas or would we have veered off too far to the north or south. I remember after about fifty minutes of flying, a big smile came on Mark’s face as he pointed out to the front of the plane and said, “There it is. I can see land.” It was relief to all of us. We had balanced up our plane well. We had successfully made our trip. We were happy.

The point of this little story should be obvious. We are all on a journey. We are heading to the heavenly city. We want to make sure that our ministry is balanced because we all want to reach our destination in good time and in good shape.

Here are some questions for your consideration:

- Is your church or ministry committed to wholistic service to the whole person?
- Are you as an individual committed to serving the whole person?
- Are you involved in ministries that will reach out to people who are less fortunate?
- Are you only a right-handed Christian?

And here are also some challenges:

- Let us see that serving whole person is a part of our duty if we are followers of Jesus.
- Let us make a deliberate effort to reach out to those who are less fortunate than we are and thus fulfill the command of Christ.
- Let us restore something of a balance in our churches and our lives—the same balance Jesus had when he “*preached the gospel of the kingdom*” and “*healed the sick.*”

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