Carpenter’s Church

A Ministry to Modern-day Lepers

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Luke 4:18-19

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
NIV
33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

NIV
Luke 5:12-13

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

NIV
Luke 5:17-20

And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

NIV
Luke 5:27-31

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and `sinners'?"

31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

NIV
Modern-day Lepers

• Unclean
• Untouchable
• Isolated
• Dis-eased
Ministry to Lepers

- Unclean
  - Clean them up
    - Physically
    - Mentally
    - Emotional
    - Situationally
  
  Showers, Detox, Rehab, Counseling
  12 step studies, legal counsel, family reconciliation
Ministry to Lepers

- Untouchable
- Touch them
- Pitch our tent among them
- Get our hands dirty
- Love them

The power of touch and proximity. Hug, shake hands, eat with them, hang out with them, spend time with them.
Ministry to Lepers

• Isolated / Marginalized

• Bring them back into community

• Incorporation

Welcome them, adjust environment for them. Remove barriers. Listen to them. Use them - purpose. Trust. Alternative community (church, family, mothers, fathers, siblings, etc.) Training how...
Ministry to Lepers

• Dis-eased

• Help them find Peace
• Ease of mind and spirit
• Physical, mental, emotional
• Bio, Psyco, Socio, Spiritual

Journey with them to the depths of their souls and past (12 steps). The problem is not the drug, etc. Provide them an environment and chance for peace.
Foundational Understandings

**Poverty:** Ruby Payne

- Financial
- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Role model
- Support group
- Spiritual
- Self
- Understanding - hidden rules
- Place
Foundational Understandings

Needs
- Universal:
  - Unconditional Love
  - Self Worth or Value
  - Sense of Belonging

- Particular
  - New people
  - New Places
  - New things
Foundational Understandings

- Not Child focused
- Not Church focused
- Not Benevolence focused
- Not Carpenter’s focused
- Jesus Focused
- Alternatives Focus

Fathers and mothers, siblings, family, community.
People, Places and Things
Foundational Paradigm

• From
  Believe
  Behave
  Belong
  Beloved

  Conformed

• To
  Beloved
  Belong
  Believe
  Behave

  Transformed
Foundational Principles

- Adult
- Reality Based - Authentic
- Consistent
- Patient - low pressure
- Safe
- Transparent

- Community based
- Contextual
- Personal and practical
- “unprofessional”
- Demonstrative - not cognitive
Adult Focused

• **Not Children’s Ministry**
  – although childlike adults (drugs stop maturation)

• **Non-enabling**

• **Mature discussions - in their language**

• **Sometimes “R” rated ministry**

• **Dealing contextually/systemically with their issues**
  – sexual abuse
  – physical abuse
  – abandonment
  – rape
  – war
  – social abuse

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Real / Authentic

• Experience based
  – wounded Healers
  – I am a …
  – competency

• Past does matter

• Change is slow and incremental

• They will (likely) relapse
  – Grace experienced is grace understood

• Minimal becomes monumental (infant)
Consistency

• **Long term focus**
  - years not months
• **Availability**
• **Compassionate Discipline**
  - grace and truth
• **Trust**
• **Creating Heritage**
• **Waiting**
Patient

- Transforming ministry - not conforming
- Patient, Kind, Tolerant (Romans 2:1-4)
- Internal influences external - internal is slow
- God bears fruit not us - we plant and water
  - fruit comes in different shapes and sizes (tears, guilt, language)
  - when we see fruit we are ready to...
- Start over as many times as it takes (70x70)
- Low pressure - Love and acceptance are not conditional
  - except where safety of others is concerned
Safe

- Physically - must personally police and not hesitate to call police (body and senses)
  - what we see, hear, smell
  - weapons, drugs, paraphernalia
  - memberships, privileges
  - security surveillance
  - clearly defined rules and expectations
- Psychologically - no head games allowed (truth sets you free)
- Socially - monitor visitors, calls, shepherd the sheep
  - wolves will come in
- Spiritually - non-judgmental (John 13; 16)
- Emotionally - we will move slowly and sensitively
  - not guilt or shame oriented
Transparent

• If it is safe we can be transparent
  – clergy privilege
• The truth will set “you” free
• Vomit theology
  - from the top down
  - weakness = strength
• Voluntary drug testing
• Confessional (confess your sins one to another then…)
• Intimate - we share secrets
Community based

- **Church is about community not benevolence**
  - inner city view of church fosters deception
  - remove the barriers (network)
- **Equality not superiority**
- **Everyone is valuable and included**
  - purpose found in community
- **Assemble to be together (one another text)**
- **Spur one another on…**
- **Not good for man to be alone**
- **Family to the family-less**
- **Involvement in broader “homeless” community**
  - become a voice for the voiceless
Contextual

• **Informal**
  – t-shirts and unwashed jeans (genes) welcome
  – church for people who don’t like church
  – buildings or barns? Sanctuary - Oh Lord prepare US

• **Comfortable**
  – couches and coffee
  – smoke breaks (un-avoidable - they have bigger demons than tobacco)

• **Explanatory and non-insistent**
  – assume nothing - explain everything (unchurched)
  – you do not have to participate (sing, give, answer)

• **Learner driven - Pew not pulpit driven**
  – we want to hear from them
  – what do they need to hear?
Contextual

• **Spontaneous**
  – not pre-planned or programmed
  – adjustable on the moment
  – sensitive to the spirits leading

• **Inclusive**
  – does anyone have a song, prayer, etc
  – this is your church (belonging)
  – trust demonstrated (keys)
  – sanctuary
  – memberships
Personal and Practical

• Work with each individual where they are
  – race not to the swift
• Birthdays, holidays, recovery days, are celebrated
  – personalized not generalized
• Street greet
• Reciprocal
  – we allow them the blessing of giving
  – they come into our homes just as we go into theirs
  – come to my campus, office
• Identify individual or family needs
  – physical, systemic, emotional, etc
  – network help
Un/Non-professional

- **Trust issues with authority figures**
  - authority is abused
  - power and change (Hershey Blanchard)
  - perceived weakness
- **More interested in STD’s than PHD’s**
  - what is your story not your vita
  - unity of the suffering
  - finding intrinsic value over external (who you are - not what you do)
- **Street smart not book smart**
- **Simple English only**
- **Must be willing to get our hands dirty**
Demonstrative

• What we do is far more important than what we say
• We are the Hermeneutic
• We are the sign, symbol, foretaste of the Kingdom of God
• You will know them by their love!
• ...that the world may know
• thy kingdom come on earth...
• and I beheld people of every language, nation and “people”
• unity in the midst of diversity
• As the father sent me - so send I you
I thought

• I was taking God to the city. But when I got there I found He was already there. Why was I surprised? Has not God always chosen to dwell among the lowly, the weak, the marginalized? Has not God gone into the depths of hell, or crack-houses or bars to rescue the fallen? I have bowed low and looked into the eyes of a leper and there seen God. (when you do it for one of the least of these - you have done it for me - Jesus)

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