

# Philosophy of Ministry

johnallanloughlin@gmail.com  
johnallanloughlin.wix.com/gospel  
214.250.8036 (c) 214.227.8459 (h)

**My Philosophy of Ministry.** In its weekly assembly the local church exalts Jesus in his Person and his saving work, comforts the elect and exhorts them to good works, urges the lost to repentance & faith in Jesus, and teaches new believers to observe all of his commands. In its public community, the church exalts Jesus by loving one another, proclaiming the gospel, seeking & making disciples, and caring for the poor & destitute. Whether gathered around God's Word or on-mission together, the local church makes all of its life a fruitful act of worship to the glory of Jesus.

A **"Successful" Church** is chosen by God for a particular work in a particular place & time; is fueled by prayer; is enthralled with the gospel; is lead by selfless imitators of Jesus; is holding to operational simplicity as a biblical ethic; and has a reputation with outsiders for its loving unity. (*cf* 1 Thess 1)

**Preaching.** Hearing & heeding God's word preached is the central focus of Christian worship, and all singing, fellowship, giving, praying, confessing, and responding are healthiest when in deep accord with it.

**The Sacraments** are a lifeline of grace to God's church. I like to set **Baptism** aside as a separate service in which the church gathers around the new believer(s) to encourage, to promise faithfulness & support, to read Scripture or give testimony, & to praise God for what he is doing. **The Lord's Supper** should be practiced often, at least once a month. Where possible, I prefer that believers come to the front of the sanctuary to receive the elements, and to eat & drink after all have returned to their seats (with special consideration given to the elderly and to those unable to walk). Communion should always be followed with a joyful hymn of thanksgiving.

**Church Discipline** has two objectives: first, to restore a person to fellowship with Jesus & the church, and second, to testify to the world & to powers in high places that Jesus is Lord (Eph. 6; Matthew 5—7; 20:28). The local church *must* practice loving, biblical discipline *in order to be* a New Testament church.

**Stewardship** is "Discipleship 101," and is a God-ordained pattern for every believer's sanctification. We steward every gift of God, including money, talents, spiritual gifts, relationships, the Church, the family, time, and especially, the gospel.

**Elder-led Leadership & the Diaconate.** Elder-led leadership comes closest to apostolic governance in *Acts* and in the pastoral epistles. Where possible, a *plurality* of elders will function as teachers, as well as shepherds, administrators, counselors, etc. The "Senior Pastor" is no more than *leader-among-equals*, and is wholly accountable to all elders for his fruitfulness, faith, and family life. Accordingly, **the Diaconate** must be freed once & for all for its authentic biblical mandate, which is to meet the needs of widows, poor & destitute members, and orphaned/neglected children—so that the Word of God may be glorified publically, and that the pastor & elders may dedicate themselves to prayer and to the Word.

**Worship** is a "24/7/365" proposition. The Bible commands every person to worship God in both public & private. As to public worship, services that utilize doctrinally sound & uplifting music of varying styles, Scripture reading, public intercession, corporate confession, and assurance of pardon should be the norm. Pastor & Worship Leader(s) must plan worship together, with constant input of the elders. Patience, communication, transparency, & ready willingness are the keys to this collaboration.

**Brotherly Love** is a two-way street. Christians are *free* in conscience with regard to eating & drinking, but are always obliged to accept, forgive, & love one another, according to Christ's command. Thus, it is never lawful for me to destroy through my actions the conscience of a weaker brother; nor is it proper for a weaker brother to judge my actions by his zeal. The Apostle Paul admonishes stronger believers to eat & drink *in love toward the weak*, and weaker believers *to give grace* to those whose eating and drinking they may not yet understand.

**On Casting Vision.** *An un-owned vision belongs to no one, and absolutely no one will see it through.* A pastor leads a congregation not only to know & understand God's vision for the work, but to own it as a gift from God. Crafting ownership takes time & incredible patience; thus, the great need for prayer, for listening, and for constant clarification.

**On Family Ministry and Church Programs.** While not opposed to age-specific Bible Study and youth & children's education, etc., I include these under a larger ministry umbrella: the *family-oriented* church prays, studies, disciples, & serves with an eye toward doing as much as possible *together*—this is especially so in regard to its worship. I love preaching to whole families (I often take a moment during sermons to speak directly to children), and noisy children/babies *never* disrupt my concentration in the pulpit. I want mom and dad to worship with their little ones in church just as at home. In reality, the term, "family-oriented," is not intended to center upon the "family" *per se*, but to encompass all of *God's* family—noise, diapers, antsy-ness, and all—into his presence at the same time & place, for he is Father of us all, and in his presence is rest.

**Leading Ministry Staff.** I am definitely a "designer/creator" who delegates development & execution. As leader among equals, I thrive on visioning, facilitating, & encouraging the ministry staff to improve their roles as ministry partners. This takes spending much time with them. Candor, transparency, & unconditional love must be the rule here.

**Leading Ministry Volunteers.** A church survives on the willingness of its volunteers. Period. I try to communicate & work with volunteers in a way that honors their personal time; to extend their involvement through both training & rest; and to keep the vision always in front of them.

**My Ministry Strengths & Weaknesses.** First, besides preaching, I feel particularly useful when visiting families in hospital or in distress, and sharing the gospel in local homes. Second, I do not hesitate to enlist others to help expedite major projects. Finally, I am the greatest champion of the church's ministry staff.

As to weaknesses, first, is my lack of formal training in *pastoral counseling*, although I do have positive, practical experience in this area. As a safe-guard, I am much more likely to refer someone to a professional counselor sooner, especially when abuse-related emotional wounds become evident. Another weakness is that I do tend to take criticisms a little too much to heart, meaning that I am likely to respond with a little too much paralyzing self-loathing.

**Controversial Issues.** Jingoistic preaching never demonstrates to the flock that I am crucified to the flesh. It is more "crucified," I believe, to preach God's word *compassionately* and truthfully than it is to machine-gun people without the provision of first-aid. Truth & love together make for the hardest road—but that is the road of Christ.