



*The Podcast Focused on
Revitalizing Conventional Christianity
—One Person at a Time*

Inside Jimbo's Head™

Series 1, Cultural Christianity Versus Kingdom
Christianity

Episode 18, Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty: Be-
coming a Disciple and Growing in Christ Part I—
Sacrificial Invested Ministry and Developing Re-
demptive Relationships©

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Introduction

I have promised you something special, and here it comes--

Sound Effects: Opening Jimbo's Head Part 2

Alright, I know that it took twice as long as before to get this old head open. That's the joys of old age. But I have one question. Where did that last sound come from, and who put it in there. I think I will have to talk to Hershimer about that one.

Oh, well. Let's dig in, shall we? We have covered a lot of ground over the past episodes of this all-important series on Cultural Christianity Versus Kingdom Christianity. But we must always remember that none of this would be relevant if we had not listened to the multitude of voices screaming at us over the past twenty-five years that we are failing. That's right! The modern church has fallen flat on its face, and it's time we stop walking around in a drunken stupor believing we are sober and living in success. Why? Well, remember the leader from Iran who moved to America and talked about the satanic lullaby?

And then there are kids like Brad. How about his brother and parents and all the people around us. Most Christians today know they are out there but are so intoxicated by the American Dream that they seemingly don't care? Oh, if you challenge them, they may tell you they care, but just try this interesting exercise. Ask them how many people who are different from themselves have they befriended lately. For that matter, how many people have they befriended with the hope of sharing the gospel with them? And if they have tried, how many have they given up on and just walked away from?

And then there is the way they connect with people they see every day who are like them. Remember the one-minute comedy skit with a punch from LifeLine Productions? Do you ever sound like those guys struggling to say something without saying anything? But I get ahead of myself.

So let's just jump right into the deep end as we begin to look at the Nitty-Gritty of how cultural Christianity and kingdom Christianity look at becoming a Jesus follower and growing in Him.

Inside Jimbo's Head Theme Music

Opening—Where We Have Been and Where Are We Going

Was that opening a little too strong for you? By now, I hope you have caught the same vision I have caught for what we, who claim to follow Jesus, can be in this age. It is so much more than what we see and hear. And yes, I get frustrated, but my heart is still filled with a love that drives me to build sacrificial, invested relationships with people caught in the power of culturalized Christianity. I tend to see these as transformative relationships. Why? If they are in Christ, I hope to see the transformation necessary for them to move into a more kingdom form of life in Christ.

Suppose you tracked with us through the last three episodes of this podcast as we dissected Philippians chapter three verses seven through ten. In that case, you will have to admit that transformation is needed if those of us caught up in an American style of culturalized Christianity are to live the life exemplified by Paul. After all, the New Covenant commands us to live with that same attitude and take those same radical actions. Then there is the reality that Paul's attitude exemplifies the attitude of Jesus we are also commanded to live.

But hey, does that word "command" mean anything to you, or do you just ignore it and say, "I get it, Jim, but at least I'm going to . . ." Oh, please don't finish that sentence!

I know it may not seem like it, but up until now, I have been sharing generalized ideas about the differences between culturalized Christianity and kingdom Christianity. Now we get down to the nitty-gritty and start getting into the specifics. By doing this, I hope to give you a reflection of what an authentic life in Christ is expected to look like in this age—you know, the age before the return of Jesus. What if, once we get started, you see another reflection coming from your life while looking into the mirror of God's word? If that happens to you, I pray you will seek

Father for the transformation needed so He is glorified and others can see Him first in your lifestyle and then in your words.

And that my friends gets us to where I want to go today. Today I want to talk to you about the power of sacrificial invested ministry and how to develop redemptive relationships with people who are not in Christ. Most people caught up in the clutches of culturalized Christianity are more interested in getting people into the church so a professional can preach the gospel to them. And why do they focus on this? So people can go to heaven when they die.

But not in kingdom Christianity. Once a community of Jesus followers is formed in an area, their lives are to speak the gospel first so the words they speak will come alive and make sense. That is what this episode is all about. In the next two episodes, we will look at how to share the gospel of the kingdom with people through our words and finally, how to grow new disciples in Christ. You may say, "Hey, Jimbo, I already understand that? Really? Do you really understand that from a kingdom perspective? We will soon find out, and you may not like the radical change necessary to function from a kingdom perspective. Of course, if you took the last three episodes seriously and went in repentance before the Lord, you already see those changes in your life. You don't? Well, maybe you should go back before you move forward.

Section 1—The Power of Sacrificial Invested Ministry

Today, the first thing we need to do is look at the power of sacrificial invested ministry. If you read through the pages of the New Covenant, you will discover that Paul preached the gospel of the kingdom every time he entered an area where it had never been proclaimed before. However, as we see it exemplified in Thessalonica, once new disciples were made, he and his companions began to focus on developing them. They did this through the quality of their lives and by coming alongside these new disciples as nursing mothers and fathers who trained, comforted, and served as an example to their children. You'll discover this in the first two chapters of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. But be careful. Be sure to look up the meaning of Paul's words used in defining his relationship with them as a father, or you will be confused by the typical English translations and slip right back into the religious experiences of culturalized Christianity.

An important verse from this epistle, which is often overlooked or misinterpreted, is found in chapter one, verse eight: "For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything." Does this passage say either the Thessalonians or Paul did not share the gospel with words? No! Absolutely, not. But it does say their faith in God spread everywhere, and the context speaks volumes. Throughout these first two chapters, Paul focuses on living the gospel, not just preaching the gospel.

In verses six and seven of chapter one, just before verse eight, he says of the Thessalonians, "you became imitators of us and of the Lord . . . so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." In verse five of the same chapter, Paul spoke of the character of himself and his companions when he said, "You know what kind of men we proved

to be among you for your sake." Paul, in chapter two, verse eight, continues to speak of the manner of life he and his companions had as they shared the gospel, "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." However, the real kicker here is Paul's statement in chapter two, verse twelve, where his entire purpose in ministry was to cause people to "walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."

By the way, that word, "Calls," is a present tense indicating that now, in this age, God continuously, habitually, as a lifestyle invites or summons you into His kingdom. This kingdom is not a kingdom to come but a kingdom which we are to dwell in now! Have I talked about that enough already? I hope you understand that all-important point so that kingdom Christianity is what you live instead of the conventional culturalized Christianity we see all around us. Culturalized Christians live feckless lives waiting to be snatched away to a kingdom that comes sometime down the road.

Do all these passages indicate that the gospel can be shared without speaking words? Again, absolutely not! But it does say one thing you have heard me say before. If you can't walk the walk, don't talk the talk because if your walk don't talk, your talk won't walk. Need me to say that again? If you can't walk the walk, don't talk the talk because if your walk don't talk, your talk won't walk!

In other words, if the sharing of the gospel of the kingdom of God does not include a demonstration of the culture of the kingdom in the life you live, your words will fall flat on their face. Oh, and don't forget, that does not refer so much to your life as an individual, but the way the community of disciples you belong to live in relationship with one another. Oops! Are those two things another reference to how and maybe why the modern culturalized church in America has failed? Maybe!

Why do I share this with you here? Let me tell you a story. After close to ten years of pastoral ministry, I found myself back working with youth. But these were not the "normal" youth I ministered to in the past, nor were they like my friends or me as I was growing up. I was asked to run a youth center in a blue-collar town over six hundred miles away from my family and friends. During my first visit to the youth center, I met some of the rudest, most obnoxious, most disrespectful "little brats" I had ever seen. The better I got to know them, the worse it got. Not only did these kids live in sin, but they also reveled in it. Not only did they revel in it, but they were also proud of it! I soon learned most of the community's adults had given up on these youth, including the school, the police department, the courts, and many of my fellow ministers. Many of their families had also given up on them.

I had many long conversations with God and spent many hours sifting through the Bible's pages, trying to understand how to minister the gospel to these youth. These young people did not respond to any of the traditional ways I was taught to minister nor any of the ways I enjoyed doing ministry. I asked Father to open my eyes to whatever He expected in my ministry. Wow, did that ever change everything! Soon I no longer thought of these youth as rude, obnoxious,

and disrespectful little brats. Where they still rude, obnoxious, and disrespectful? You bet, by all means and every measurement you could use. So what changed? I did. As I sought Father, He had one message for me. As I asked, "How do I minister to these kids?" His answer became clear. "Shut Up and spend time with them!"

That, my friends, began a journey that changed my life and perspective on ministry as well as the lives of many young people and not a few adults. It led me into a ministry model I now call Sacrificial, Invested Ministry. Once I obeyed Him, I was soon calling them "my kids." You can read an in-depth explanation of this form of ministry, what I now consider authentic kingdom ministry, in my new book entitled, "Invested, A Personal Journey From An Event/Message Driven Ministry Model Into the Attitude of Jesus." It's packed jam-full with many interesting and moving stories of how Father used these youth to turn my world inside-out and upside-down.

As I moved deeper into what was, for me, a strange approach to ministry, I began to understand how we are all called to minister through relationships—however, not just any kind of relationship. Today you hear about friendship evangelism and lifestyle ministry. Those are great ideas and move us in the right direction, even though they tend to be very programmatic. One important thing I discovered was that friendship or lifestyle ministry, in any form, misses three key elements: a self-emptying attitude, sacrificial actions, and personal investment.

You see, I soon learned the approach I was taking was not new at all. It is exemplified by the very attitude and actions of Jesus when He came to minister to us. Philippians chapter two tells us that even though He held equality with God, the Son did not grasp on to it but emptied Himself and became a willing servant, actually, a willing slave. He then identified with us, even though, as God, our sins were a stench in His nostrils. Jesus then obediently sacrificed Himself on the cross to prepare us for the kingdom He was establishing by the same sacrificial action.

While I don't have the time to go into all the background and ramifications of this here, you can read a more in-depth presentation of these things in my latest book. The one thing I need you to latch on to in this podcast is how important it is that we have an authentic walk with God from the beginning of being "in Christ." We must have an authentic walk with God brought about through faith that produces obedience as we live and walk in the Spirit. Those two sentences are far deeper than most people will realize. However, they are two of the most important ones I will ever make.

Yet, without us being in more than a casual relationship with people, those people will never see or feel the impact of that kind of transformed life. In fact, they will never see or understand the kingdom of God if they do not see us living that kind of life with other Jesus followers in authentic communities of communion. They will simply buy into the "going to heaven when you die" mentality of culturalized Christianity's easy believism and its ugly stepsister, "the I'll fly away mentality." As you will learn in a subsequent episode, life in Christ is not taught. It is caught! What will be the result of not realizing the depth of relationship we are to have with each other and those outside of Christ? What will be the result of living in a fake faith that does not produce

obedience as we live and walk in the Spirit? Well, our failures will only increase, and Father will never be glorified in Christ Jesus through the church.

Ok, here we go! I need to give a very short, and yes, I mean very short, introduction to the three key elements of this kind of lifestyle, leading to authentic kingdom ministry. These are the three elements left out of friendship or lifestyle ministry.

The first is the term self-emptying. In Philippians chapter two, we read that Jesus did not grasp on to the equality He had with God but emptied Himself and became a willing servant. If you were with us in the last three podcasts where we looked at Paul's explanation of how this part of Jesus' attitude played out in his life, I should not have to say much more. More importantly, if you took a stance of active faith in the passages we studied in the past three episodes, I should not have to say much more. Remember, Paul commanded the Philippian disciples of Jesus, and thus us, this is the way we are to live. Paul put it succinctly when he told Timothy that "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him"

There is one reason the average American Christian has no time or energy for the kind of relationships we are commanded to have in the New Covenant with each other and those outside of Christ. We have been told that to be entangled in civilian pursuits, in other words seeking an American lifestyle over the kingdom's way of life, is somehow pleasing to God. Actually, most have been lead to believe there is little difference. Hopefully, you understand this and just how false that way of thinking is from all the preceding episodes of this podcast.

The second key element of an authentic kingdom ministry lifestyle is the term "sacrificial" To make this short, let me put it this way. Any group or person can meet others' needs with things they have in abundance or those they no longer use. But that is not what Christ-like ministry is all about. Christ-like ministry is always sacrificial. Giving what we need to meet others' needs is the authentic way to show, first, our trust in Father to meet our basic needs as He promised, and then the sacrificial attitude of Jesus. When Christians and the church, in general, give out of their abundance, we are simply showing we are like moral thinking people in the world. However, when we give sacrificially, out of what we need, we demonstrate the attitude of Jesus.

Finally, the third key to authentic kingdom ministry is the term "invested." When you look up the word "invest," you generally get definitions that have to do with financial economies. However, the Oxford English Dictionary's first subdefinition under its first definition fits our purposes, "devote (one's time, effort, or energy) to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result." Notice the word is devote, not think about or do just a little toward that worthwhile undertaking. Oh, yes! That is the same word the describes the first-century church in the book of Acts. Check it out!

When we invest our lives into our children, we must make the sacrifices necessary to devote our time, effort, and energy into them relationally. Anything less is poor parenting, and the result is seen in the kind of people the children become as they get older. Many have failed with their children by thinking of the normal usage of the word invest. By developing financial security

based on a human economic system, most American parents, especially fathers, believe they are invested in their children. But children thrive, even in poor economic conditions, if parents (or other adults) invest their lives into them. In fact, children can't thrive without that personal investment. If you want a living example, please listen to the video from episode 14 of the Diggin' Deeper Inside Jimbo's Head live broadcast after listening to its associated podcast. You'll find them at www.jimbospeaking.org/episodes.

Here is where conventional culturalized Christianity has fallen flat on its face. The more time we, who claim the title Christian, continue allowing the American culture principles to drive our lives both individually and corporately, the greater the failure we see in the kind of people we produce. We studied these American cultural principles in the first six episodes. Do you remember the devastating results of the conventional church uncovered by George Barna in 2020 at Arizona Christian University? That one study made all other studies' bad results from over the past twenty-five years look like they were not that bad.

How about one, "Houston, We Have A Problem?" Do you remember that one? When these cultural principles express themselves in a church based on a twenty-first-century business model of organizational development and growth, a twenty-first-century educational model, and all the programs associated with an event/message-driven model of ministry, we get exactly what we deserve.

Do you remember this quote from the end of episode one, "There is much in the showroom window but little in the storeroom?" The problem we have today can be found in the adage, "you can't see the forest for the trees." We are so deeply invested in conventional Christianity's culturalized processes that even though our failures abound all around us, we can't see them. We think this is normal and thus make all kinds of excuses, culturally and theologically, to underpin our failed systems. It does not help that they have been linked to American patriotism. These things sap our time, energy, efforts, and resources to live an invested lifestyle. If we are focused on these things, as most of us are, it becomes impossible. Yet, a self-emptied, self-sacrificial, invested lifestyle leading to deep relational realities is the basis of kingdom ministry.

Thus, authentic Christian ministry cannot be based on an event/message ministry model. We must go through the huge paradigm shift necessary to move from the failing model into the attitude of Jesus and lived out by the Apostle Paul. This authentic form of Christian ministry is a self-emptying, self-sacrificial, invested lifestyle, not a series of meetings, messages, and programs.

Section II—Developing Sacrificial, Invested, Redemptive Relationships

As I move us into the next section of this episode of Inside Jimbo's Head, "How to Develop Sacrificial Invested Redemptive Relationships," you must keep one thing in mind. As exemplified in the Thessalonians, the whole of the New Covenant points to the fact that our lives speak louder than our voices. My good friend, Kevin Birky, loves to point out that the speed of light is much faster than the speed of sound. Thus what people see becomes clear far quicker than what they hear. Jesus put it this way, "You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the

world . . . Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Notice He said, "You." He did not say your message or even what you do to or for people are salt and light. The heart of authentic ministry is never only what we say or do to or for people, but who we "are" with people.

Suppose you have been paying attention to this episode and all the previous episodes. In that case, you may feel either convicted or even motivated to change the way you live and thus the way you minister to people. Moving from an event/message-driven ministry model to self-emptied, sacrificial, invested relationships is difficult because it is the opposite of the modern church's culture. By now, you should understand how each of us is called to live a life of ministry through a self-emptied, sacrificial, invested relational lifestyle. If this is the case, I cannot leave you hanging in the air because your first question will be, "How do I do this kind of ministry?"

The youth centers we developed, at a considerable cost, were places where we could have common ground with youth. Do you have such a place? Maybe you know of such a place that could serve as a common-ground meeting place with adults or youth. Whichever the case, the basics of sacrificial invested relationships are the same. Almost any place you are in contact with people on an everyday basis will work. Ok, maybe this won't work if all you do is small talk to avoid people, as we heard in this episode's one-minute comedy skit with a punch. You knew I just had to bring that up again, didn't you?

"But where do I start?" you may ask. I have found a simple acronym, which I share with people I train as active radical disciples. It simplifies how to put into practice what we have learned so far. It serves as training wheels to help us get started—B.L.E.S.S.¹ Dave Ferguson first introduced this concept. When I introduce people to this acronym's meaning, I also take them alongside me as I live "BLESSing" people in real-life situations. As they learn the BLESS lifestyle, many of them say with surprise, "Oh, that is what you were doing when we were at Starbucks!" Starbucks is a pretty good common ground place to get started. When they see how simple the initial contact is, that aspect becomes a natural part of their lives. However, they soon know why I encourage them to live a simplified lifestyle, so they have the time, energy, effort, and resources to invest in both the Lord and people.

By the way, speaking of discovering a common ground place to B.L.E.S.S. people, if your church has a food pantry, a clothing ministry, or even a program where you have hot meals for people, these are excellent places to B.L.E.S.S. people. However, not in the traditional style of social need meeting, but as places where your B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle builds redemptive or transformational relationships.

Before I break down the B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle, I need to share an important warning.

Though we have done it for years, authentic ministry, the kind we have been talking about, cannot be broken down into a simple process or procedure. It cannot be programmed or become a program. Authentic ministry, even B.L.E.S.S., is always a sacrificial, invested lifestyle for those who live and walk in the Spirit. In reality, my friend, the "B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle" is precisely how the Spirit drives us to live our lives. It must become a natural way of life if you are focused on living as a disciple of Jesus.

If B.L.E.S.S. is not a lifestyle, a natural lifestyle, it becomes just one more program in the failing modern church's arsenal. Living/walking in the Spirit and being compelled by the attitude of Jesus cannot be programmed. When we try to do that, it turns people into preprogrammed robots, not people who live in communion with Father as His image-bearers. Then what happens? We lose the reality of the kingdom!

With that firmly kept in mind, let's look at these life patterns instilled through God's love, which produce self-emptying, self-sacrificial, invested ministry. I will give you a short definition of each life pattern in this episode. You can read a more extensive understanding of them in my "Invested" book.

The first step in B.L.E.S.S. is "B"—BEGIN WITH PRAYER.

When I talk about prayer, I do not mean those few quick words thrown heavenward, hoping they stick. Nor do I mean those obligatory prayers we use to open and close any meeting we attend. By prayer, I mean communing with the persons of the Trinity. I have written extensively on this subject in the two-volume book *Communing with the Trinity, A Doctrine Experienced in Reality*.

Communing with the Trinity is primarily ministering to the Lord. It soon becomes a recognition of our unity, our oneness, with the Trinity leading to and becoming the foundation of authentic community. This relationship-building aspect of communing with the persons of the Trinity also becomes the basis of developing redemptive or transformational relationships. It leads us into a simple way to begin recognizing God's already present presence both in quiet seclusion and in everyday life. Communion-type prayer, as all aspects of authentic Christianity, must become a natural way of life. When it does, it forms the foundation for a life of living/walking in the Spirit. Once you enter into this recognition of the presence of the persons of the Trinity, it is then time for you to intercede for others.

One question people often ask me when I teach about these things is, "If I am going to a place like Starbucks where I will not know anyone, how do I prepare by beginning to intercede for people?" Being dependent on Father often causes things to happen while wearing a blindfold. We do not always know the people He will place in our path. Here is why communing with the persons of the Trinity becomes so important. Jesus lived a life in constant communion with Father and the Spirit. Both Father and the Spirit spoke to Him throughout His busy day. However, even He had to pull apart and spend time in seclusion and solitude with Them.

When I am preparing to go into my everyday life, I intercede for those unknown people Father will bring across my path. Then, as I go about my daily activities, I often hear that quiet voice saying, "That one. Over there. Ask if you can share their table with them." Often I hear, "Go start a conversation with that person," or "give that young person a compliment." Thus we do not have to know the people for whom we intercede as we "B"—BEGIN with prayer.

The second aspect of the B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle is "L"—LISTEN.

Even for those who think they are good listeners, authentic listening in our culture is as miraculous as someone raised from the dead. I am afraid that the lack of authentic listening is more

prevalent in the modern church than in our culture. Do you not believe me? Just google "good listening" and read what the experts have to say. Better yet, ask someone from your church if you can talk to them and see how much more they talk than you. Even though listening is a critical skill in any endeavor, we must realize it is imperative for authentic Jesus followers. It flows naturally out of a sacrificial servant's heart, becoming one key outcome revealing the authenticity of our walk in the Spirit.

Why? Servanthood is always about the other person, not yourself. Some have caught on to this truth. Nevertheless, many of us are programmed to think we have to answer every problem a person shares with us. This preprogramming to have the right answer is why I have often talked more than I have listened. However, the concepts of active listening and communion with the Trinity have helped me overcome that self-centered, narcissistic problem. When active listening combines with learning to sit in quiet contemplation with the persons of the Trinity, things rapidly change.

The next key element in a B.L.E.S.S lifestyle which builds sacrificial invested relationships is "E"—E.A.T.

Eating a meal with someone, even a new acquaintance, helps build trust and closeness. It instills a feeling of security and familiarity by building bonds of connection. When eating a meal together, many barriers are broken down naturally by simply sharing food. Whenever I start a new life coaching or discipleship relationship with young people, I meet them where we can have a meal together. I have tried many other approaches. However, I have found meeting in a restaurant's safe environment brings more intense bonding sooner. Often when sitting down for a meal, even a hamburger and fries, the familiarity and friendship bonds cause many walls to break down. Usually, on just the first or second meeting at a table with food, youth begin to open up. Even those who have a hard time trusting begin to share more of their thoughts and feelings.

This leads us to the fourth aspect of the B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle, the first "S"—SERVE.

Inevitably, when you spend time listening to people over a meal or even a cup of coffee, they will talk about themselves. All people love to talk about themselves, and you should encourage the other person to do so. Like eating, this is also a bonding process that develops trust between you and the other person. However, when they ask you questions, you must stay as transparent with them as you want them to be with you. When you do this, the other person will soon begin to share their life. As this happens, you will notice the specific needs they are experiencing. Here is where *agápē*, Father's self-emptying, self-sacrificial invested love, will drive you to meet those needs sacrificially.

If we meet these needs, not as those from social service agencies, but from a kingdom centric self-emptying, self-sacrificial, invested heart, here is where the gospel begins to be seen. Remember, the gospel of the kingdom must first be seen to be understood, for **YOU** are the salt and light of the world, not simply a message.

Concluding Thoughts

This, my friends, brings us to the final "S" of the B.L.E.S.S. lifestyle, "Share." However, this will take most, if not all, of the next episode of "Inside Jimbo's Head." So, before I sign off, I would like to remind you of a few key aspects of what we have learned today.

First, we learned that the heart and soul of authentic kingdom ministry, both evangelistic and Christian growth ministry, is not so much what we do for or to people, or even what we say to people, but who we are with people.

If you find yourself standing in front of people "ministering" more than living life with people, you are missing out on the attitude, lifestyle, and ministry of the one you call Savior and Lord.

If you find yourself involved in programmed ministry opportunities more than being invested in people's lives, you lead people into conventional, culturalized Christianity and not into Christ and His kingdom.

I also gave you a cursory view on building redemptive or transformational relationships with people so we can invest our lives in them from a self-emptied, self-sacrificial perspective. Beginning with prayer, listening, eating a meal with people, and serving them must be a lifestyle and not a programmed process. As we learn to live/walk in the Spirit, these become a natural way of life that allows people to see the gospel of the kingdom so they can understand our words when we share the message of the kingdom with them.

Here is where some hard questions need to be asked once again.

Is your life based on doing ministry to and for people, or is it based on being ministry with them?

When you think of ministry or do ministry, are you focused on buildings, messages, and programs, or are you focused on people?

When you serve people, do you meet their needs from what you have leftover, or do you give sacrificially out of your need?

Is your life driven by a lifestyle of communion with the persons of the Trinity, or are you still trying to figure out how to do ministry?

For that matter, is ministry the basis of your life or something you fit into your modern American lifestyle whenever it is convenient?

Are you focused on fixing a person's problem and answering their questions, or are you focused on listening and being present with them?

Finally, how many excuses ran through your mind as I shared these questions with you? How many questions or excuses ran through your mind giving you a chance to jump off the hook and continue in your comfort zone of ministry. Or maybe, just maybe, did repentance drive you before the presence of the Lord?

ⁱ Dave Ferguson, Five Ways to Bless Your Neighbors, Verge Network; <https://www.vergenetwork.org/2012/12/27/five-ways-to-bless-your-neighbors-dave-ferguson/>