# THE IMPACT OF INTERPERSONALISM ON

# THE METHODS AND MANNER OF MINISTRY

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## I. In Anticipation of Ministry

Ministry to other people proceeds out of a relationship to God and then out of relationship to them. Vertical and horizontal interpersonal relationship reinforce each other.

In general, personal relationship with people must precede spiritual ministry to them. Authenticating yourself has to occur before are likely to let you lead them or turn to you when they need help. A minister is best able to influence other people if first they are convinced that he can be influenced by them—if he is listening rather than just telling or commanding.

The motives of ministry are love more than duty. When we minister out of love, we do it because we want to and we will work harder with less sense of being "at work." One result of this attitude toward ministry is less "burnout."

There are always certain jobs in ministry that you do not look forward to doing. If you take the attitude that you care about these people, you will have better luck overriding your impulses/aversion against doing what needs to be done. You will unconsciously communicate an attitude toward the persons involved that will disarm them in response to you. Love was a way of overcoming the fear of rejection: "Perfect love casts out fear."

## II. Practice of Ministry

Personal involvement contrasts with professional services and procedures as the basic feel for ministry. Otherwise ministry can turn into something like being checked out at the grocery store. You cannot minister to people "from a distance."

Ministry includes demonstration of the product you are trying to get people to "buy into." So to speak, people experience God by experiencing us (cp. John **14**).

The "connectors" in ministry are interpersonal influence rather than legal authority on conceptual transmission (words). Ministry goes on in the personal medium rather than the legal profession authoritarian one. Attitude toward ministry is as important as anything in it. Behavioral communication is more than non-personal skills, awareness of methods and procedures.

Ministry is individualized as much as possible rather than made into a routine, or unalterable process/pattern, where "one approach fits all." This recognizes the differences between people, but more importantly the importance of each one. We are not into a "mass production" system. Interpersonalism implies that the manner of ministry must balance individuals and groups so as not to let the group routine carry on to the extent that some individuals get lost in the shuffle. On the other hand, certain individuals' welfare and preference or desires for attention cannot be catered to so much that the (rest of the) group is neglected or offended.

Ministry behaviorally communicates to people that they are worth something.

Ministry is need oriented. It is, so to speak, "student orient" rather than "teacher centered." Doing every thing for them, however, is not the point because that would mean treating them as if they were not capable of functioning as persons–self-responsible beings.

Interdependency is the format of ministry (Paul's body figure). Ministry requires "getting in touch" with people and risking entanglement in their lives, which can be an emotional thing.

Ministry involves mutuality because "ministers" also need to be ministered to. It is not just a matter of some who need no help helping those who need it. Note Paul's concern to be made glad by the Corinthians (2 Corinthians). A minister is also someone who can be affected by other people; he is not the "unmoved mover" of others.

We have to concentrate on effectiveness more than efficiency.

"Team work" has a place in ministry. More than one person works in bring about the general result: "one plants, one waters, etc." We want to stay out of each other's way and encourage each other rather than concentrate on advising and bossing and evaluating each other. We do not want to structure things in ministry so we can take all the credit.

Interpersonalism de-emphasizes structure, authority, and following "channels." It minimizes the question of who has the authority here.

One strategy for evangelism is to build new relationships with non-Christians as a basis for evangelizing them. The same technique is be used within the church as well in the effort to help Christians grow. It is a technique for ministry that any Christian can use.

Ministry is a whole-person process. It is whole persons impacting whole persons with all the individual factors that that involves on both sides of the relationship. Persuasion/changing people is best brought about by appeal to emotion, will, and mind, not just mind or will or emotion.

## III. Consequences of Ministry

Ministry is for personal and interpersonal ends. It is for re-establishing personal relationship with God and for growing people into behaving more maturely to enhance that relationship.

The purpose of ministry is conversion before condemnation (John **3**:16). Our approach to ministry will not be aimed at producing guilt (guilt manipulation) so much as inviting people to start over.

Ministry has as its goal changing people to the point where they operate from internal initiative.

Ministry is not getting people into a saved state so much as it is into a growth pattern.

Ministry is directed to the whole person; so we deal with all aspects of a person–body, mind, emotion, spirit. When we care about a person, we care about the person, not just one aspect of him.