

PERSONAL MINISTRY TECHNIQUES

by Marvin Gawryn

What is it that moves us to minister to our brothers and sisters as we pass by? Dedicated and moment-to-moment communion with our Thought Adjuster alerts us to the spiritual needs of the people around us. If we seek the Father's will in the midst of daily interactions and if service is at the forefront of our thoughts, personal ministry is spontaneous. And personal ministry is motivated by love -- love based on constant efforts to understand why people do what they do.

Jesus ministered as He passed by. Opportunities and the need for personal ministry exist all around us. Being sensitive to people's unexpressed needs and yearnings can be built into a habit. In most situations, it is desirable to use concepts and terms relevant to the other person's experience. Rather than opposing error in another's belief, find that which is true in what he says, and expand upon it. By doing this, we plant seeds of advanced truth with which the Adjuster can work.

Asking questions and being sincerely concerned with the response is a good way to initiate a conversation. Meaningful questions can be an effective teaching tool.

Of Jesus it was said, "To those he taught the most, he said the least." It is extremely important to be a sympathetic and understanding listener. Only a few words are needed if they are to the point and interspersed at important junctures in the conversation.

When people have problems we can offer comfort and consolation, practical suggestions to help with their real underlying problems, and the soul-satisfying truth of the Father's nature and his love for us as his spiritual children.

Methods For Counseling Someone with a Specific Problem

Clarify the problem - Do a general exploration using open-ended questions. Mostly listen, with a goal of thoroughly understanding the person's problem. Periodically repeat your understandings of the situation and ask for confirmation to ensure you are understanding accurately. Continue asking for further clarification and amplification of the person's situation until you both feel that the goal of thorough understanding has been reached.

Explore solutions - Once problems are well understood, begin helping the person generate practical solutions. Think of as many feasible solutions as possible. Evaluate the different solutions, eliminating the unworkable ones and developing the promising ones. Help the person decide on the solutions to be implemented.

Plan the implementation of solutions - Having helped the person decide on the solutions, help him/her project the details of how to implement them. This

results in concrete "next steps" to pursue - "When to do what"; a schedule for implementation.

End with a spiritual "capper" - Jesus always provided spiritual inspiration as well as practical advice. Share how spiritual practices are central to finding satisfying solutions to problems. God is our loving Father, our best Friend, and our all-wise Advisor as we work through life's problems.

Methods for Personal Spiritual Ministry

Explore the person's spiritual framework - Ask open-ended questions about the person's spiritual experiences and beliefs. Try to note the key words and concepts he/she uses. The goal is to achieve an overall understanding of and acknowledge the worth of the person's spiritual viewpoint.

Introduce new insights - Try to present some new truths which parallel and begin to stretch beyond the highest concepts expressed by the other person. Present them simply as something that has been experientially relevant for you, not as "The Truth." In expressing new truths, try to relate them specifically to something the other person has shared.

Later stages of ministry - Wait until the conversation has developed a strong momentum and respect for differing viewpoints has been well established. Then stronger personal convictions and more directly stated spiritual ideas can be introduced without threatening the quality of continuing conversation. A ministry relationship can be much like a fire: when first started, anything heavier than light kindling will put the fire out. However, when there is a full bed of embers, even a large log will eventually begin to burn.

Love and respect - Those who most require love are those who are least able to give it. These are the people who are least able to express their inner desires and who are in the most desperate spiritual need of personal ministry. Respect people for their spiritual potential, as the Father respects them. As did Jesus, respect people more than they respect themselves. Because Jesus had so much faith in people, and because he showed them his faith, they gained self-respect and blossomed. We can aspire to such ministry as we serve our spiritually hungry fellows.