

The Trelis and the Vine: Ministry and Mentorship in God's Community

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 October 2010

Preacher: Eric Thurston

[0 : 00] Thanks for having me. Appreciate it. Me and Bill always have a bit of a laugh, a bit of a talk about soccer when we're together.

I know a lot of you guys from church, obviously, from St. John's, and especially from the early morning service, which if you're not there, you should be there. You should be there at the 7.30 service.

I'm going to talk today. Now, Bill, the way this works, I've got about half an hour to 40 minutes, and then I'll take questions. Yeah, you've got an hour to talk, and then we have 20 minutes to talk. Okay, because I'm kind of thinking 30 to 40 talking.

Why stand up? You're doing it. Okay, I think I'm going to be under. I think I'm going to be under, which is always a good thing, isn't it? Okay, I'm going to talk about something which I think a lot of you will be familiar with this, right?

I don't think it's going to be that radical to all of you, but to some of you might be thinking, I never thought of ministry and church in this way before. In which case, it's a really good thing.

[1 : 01] And if you're hearing this is all new to you, well, it's a good thing for us to go over again. Okay, I've chosen this topic in particular because to some degree it's what I do.

I'm director of training for the Artidza Institute. I don't actually run it. That's run by a board, and I work for the board. And my job is to do what Artidza does, which is to encourage and identify and train young people with gifts for ministry so they'll take up ministry leadership in the future.

And so what we're going to talk about today is where Artidza came from. And hopefully that will make sense at the end. Okay, I'm going to be talking today based on my experience in the Artidza program in Australia, working with two people who actually started the program, someone named Philip Jensen and someone named Cole Marshall.

Philip Jensen was an Anglican clergyman at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, and Cole Marshall was a navigator, the head of navigators at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

And they came together and they kind of started something called Campus Bible Study, which is a big student ministry. And out of that came Artidza. Okay, so Anglicans, yay! Navigators, yay!

[2 : 14] Two of them came together, which is always a good thing. And they're best friends still, and they're still really heavily involved in running Artidza in Australia, which is called the Ministry Training Strategy. Now, usually you take questions at the end.

If I'm saying something you don't understand, I don't mind asking questions along the way. That's okay. I don't think I've got an hour to talk, so that'll be all right. So it's based on my experience.

It's based on what we're doing here in Artidza. It's also based on this book, which has just come out. It's called The Trelis and the Vine, and it's put out by the guys who kind of started MTS in Sydney. And so a lot of what I'm going to say from here, and a lot of it's just common sense.

Hopefully it's biblical, too. We're going to pray that we understand what's going on, because we are going to be looking at the Bible today, so why don't we pray together? Dear God, we thank you for your grace and your mercy.

We thank you that you bring us together on a Sunday morning, and it is a blessing for you to gather your people. It is a foretaste of heaven. We pray as we think this morning about what you are doing in this world and what we are supposed to be doing to serve you, that you'll give us clear minds and soft hearts.

[3 : 20] And we pray these things in your Son's name. Amen. Okay, well, The Trellis and the Vine is the name of the talk today. It's also the name of the book. And the illustration, who here is a gardener, right?

Come on, there must be gardeners here somewhere. Okay. So the illustration is obviously here's a vine, and here's a trellis in behind it. Can the vine survive without the trellis?

This is interactive. You can just shout out your answer. Kind of, but will it bear fruit like if it's on a trellis? No. Okay, so you've got the vine.

Had the vine. Had the vine. And you've got the trellis behind it, right? The trellis is the framework behind it, which holds the vine off the ground. The illustration is going to actually be applied to church. Okay, and so the question for us is to figure out what is the vine and what is the trellis, right?

What is the vine? What is what God wants us to do in church, right? What are we supposed to be doing in church? And what is the framework behind it, which is not really the main game, but it supports what God wants us to do in church.

[4 : 25] And the reason we're talking about it is a lot of times in churches and over the past, and especially over probably the last few decades, we've concentrated a lot on the trellis, and we've neglected the vine.

We've concentrated a lot on the support without actually thinking about what is the main game of what we're trying to do as a Christian community, right? Maybe not necessarily be the case in St. John's, but let's see if it applies to some degree here.

So we're going to actually look at three questions today. What is God doing in the world today? What practical part does a church play in this?

And finally, what mind shifts might this mean for each of us? The answer to number three may mean nothing. It may be completely, you're on board with this. You may disagree with what I say, which is okay.

We can ask a question at the end or just yell at me at the end. That's okay too. What is God doing in the world today? What practical part does a church play in this? And finally, what mind shifts might this mean for each of us?

[5 : 23] Let's go to the first question. That's basically the structure of the talk over the next 30 minutes. What is God doing in the world today? Okay. We're going to take a look at part of the Bible. It's called Matthew 28.

It's called the Great Commission. I don't know if you can read. Can you read that at the back? Okay. Actually, I've got to put this down a little bit because we're missing the very, very top of it. You were right in the first place, mate.

I should have left it the way you said it. There we go. Okay. Thanks. So, you know, if you've got a Bible, you can open it. But you can just read it up here, of course, too.

Okay. So, Matthew 28. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. It's a Great Commission. It's at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. So, what is God doing in the world today? This is Matthew 28, verse 16. Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted, and Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 26] Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. We're going to focus in on part of this. We can't actually do a great, huge exposition of this.

So, some of the stuff I'm going to talk about today, we're going to go over quite quickly. I realize that. We're going to concentrate on here. This is, in the original Greek, it's an imperative. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Okay. Let's take a look at that in a bit more detail. Now, first of all, Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.

What does disciple mean? Disciple, in the original Greek, come out as mathetes. That sounds like a name. Do you know what the name is?

It's Matthew, right? Matthew means like a disciple, right? It's mathetes. Yes, and in the original language, it meant a pupil and follower of a teacher. But in New Testament use, a disciple of Jesus

is someone who accepted Jesus' claims and followed him.

[7 : 33] And sometimes that meant literally followed him, right? Like, everything down, I'm going to physically follow you. It didn't mean that for everyone, all the disciples, but in this case, it meant tools down, we're going to follow you, right?

Okay. So that's what mathetes means. It means a disciple of Jesus Christ. You not only believe what he says, his claims to lordship over all the universe and your life, and you follow him.

Okay. Very, very basic. Here's the second thing to look at as we look at that verse. Sometimes when we look at this passage, people really emphasize this, the go. The go, right?

The structure of the passage actually emphasizes the other verb, which is to make disciples. That's actually, the grammar of that sentence hangs around the make disciples verb.

That is the emphasis of this passage. Okay? It's not go. Go is good, but make is actually the main verb. Therefore, our focus goes in on making disciples of all nations, right?

[8 : 30] Making disciples. Here's the third thing. Teaching them parallels the becoming disciples, right? So remember the disciples? I said disciples is about being a pupil, of following somebody, right?

Teaching them, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded actually parallels that in this passage, right? So if I'm going a bit quick for you, sorry. So basically what it's saying is the emphasis is on making disciples and teaching them.

Teaching them what Jesus has taught them. That he is Lord and also follow him, right? And all that entails. Okay? The emphasis is on discipling as they go.

It's not on foreign mission. Okay? So a lot of people take this and say this is a great commission to go and do mission overseas. And that's absolutely true. That's a fair application of it. In fact, William Carey, I think William Carey and Dr. Packer will be able to correct me on this if I'm wrong.

William Carey is the first one that said, you know what? This is not just about the apostles. This is about everybody. And the missionary movement started from William Carey's work was in the 1700s in England.

[9 : 39] When he actually understood this was about everybody, not just the disciples, right? So the emphasis is on discipling as they go, right? Discipling as you go. Not just go. It's actually as you go, as you live your life, make disciples of all nations.

And the final thing, which is a big question, is it just the apostles who do this? It's just the apostles.

And up until the 18th century, theologians said, well, this is actually an apostolic commission.

It's not actually for everybody else. And I think probably our thinking has changed about that. I think our thinking has changed about that. In particular, it is given...

No, so no, it's for everybody. It is given to the 11 as disciples. Therefore, it's a paradigm for all disciples. It's not to them as apostles. It's to them as disciples.

This is from Don Carson, his work on this passage, which is... He's a pretty good New Testament exegete. The commission is to be passed down to all generations until the end of the age.

[10 : 40] Right? Until Christ returns. That's the commission. So the commission is for each one of us to go and make disciples. Now, that means, first of all, what is God doing in the world today?

We're answering that question. Well, the first point as we look at this is this. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a disciple maker of Jesus. Right?

To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a disciple maker of Jesus. Does that make sense? That means if you're following Jesus, you're part of making disciples of Jesus.

Right? That's what it's actually saying. Here's the second thing. The practical goal of Christian ministry is to make and nurture disciples of Jesus.

Now, I say the practical goal because theologically, from 30,000 feet, there is a greater aim. And that's to bring glory to Jesus Christ. Right? And even if you come down a little bit further from there, what is actually happening in the world today?

[11 : 46] Well, God is gathering his people. Right? God is gathering his people right now. The great blessing of God is I will be your God and you will be my people. And that is worked out through God actually gathering his people.

What's the opposite to gathering? Scattering. Right? That is the judgment of God. God is actually gathering his people. That is the blessing of God. Right? But on a practical level, the practical goal of Christian ministry is for us to make and nurture disciples of Christ.

That's all pretty simple so far, isn't it? Well, we've kind of skated over Matthew 28 and you might have some questions about what I realized at. But, okay. Okay. Now, here's another implication. Point number three. The growth God cares about in our churches is in people. Right? It's in people accepting Christ and growing to maturity in Christ.

That's what God cares about. Now, I don't think this is actually new because we've actually had to go through the whole issue of the building, not the building. Are we going to have the building?

[12:55] And you know what? We've got sentimental attachments to this building. And to some people, if we have to leave this building, it will be like leaving your family home. I realize that. But ultimately, I think we all understand that what God cares about is growth in disciples of Christ and maturity in the disciples of Christ.

Right? But the problem is sometimes we actually, in churches, church communities, we measure other things as being the important stuff. So we can actually think about stuff like dollars.

Right? How much money are we collecting? Which is important, but it's not actually the end game. We can talk about numbers. How many people we have at church? How many people we have in our youth groups? How many people we have? And that's important to an extent.

And, you know, I'd be lying to you. A minister is saying that, you know, numbers are not important. They are important, but they're not the end game. We can talk about how many events we have going on. We can look at the PLN every week and say, we've got this X number of events here. Wow, it's fantastic. But that's not what God cares about. That's not what God cares about. He cares about this. This is actually what he cares about. It can, you can look at your staff team and think, we've got a huge staff team.

[14:06] We're doing really well. Or we've got our own publishing house. Or we've got our own whatever. Right? But that's not what God cares about. He cares about this stuff. The other stuff might be the trellis, but this is actually the main game.

Okay? And that's important because we actually think about prioritization of what we're trying to do in churches. What we're trying to do in our programs. Because in churches, we always have a limited budget. And we have limited time.

And we have limited emotional energy. And resource and all that stuff. And we always got to be thinking, what's the most we can be doing to achieve this within the sovereignty of God with the limited resources we have?

That's a very difficult question. That's something we always have to be thinking about as a church, isn't it? Okay. So churches don't exist to create and maintain structures.

Whether it is a building or whether it is a church government. We don't exist for that. That we exist to have people come to know Christ and have people grow in maturity in Christ.

[15:06] It's about people. Okay? It's about people. Once again, none of this stuff is new to you guys. None of this stuff is new to you guys. We grow people. We grow people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ.

That's what we're supposed to be doing. Obvious question. Here's the next question. How is God making disciples of Christ? How is God making disciples of Jesus?

This 1 Peter passage is an amazing part of the Bible. It kind of spans all the way from the Old Testament on the ground to God speaking through his prophets all the way to the present time and all the way up to heaven.

As it finishes up with angels longing to look into what is actually happening here on earth as God is working. I'm going to read it for us. So 1 Peter 1, 10 to 12. And Peter is actually talking about what was happening in the Old Testament when the prophets were writing through the power of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

Concerning the salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[16:13] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels will look. Look. Okay. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit, God's Holy Spirit worked through the prophets to speak God's words into God's people.

Right. And he was pointing towards God was pointing towards what was going to happen in the future, which is Jesus Christ. Right. That's what he's actually pointing towards. And what the New Testament passage tells us is, you know, those guys were writing back then.

That's for us today. Right. It's actually for us. That's actually what's happening. And what's happening today? Well, he's talking about what's happened to the people that Peter's writing to. And the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. That's how they were converted. Now, if you remember in the book of Acts, we were doing Acts last year in St. John's.

[17:14] And the book of Acts is really about Christ continuing his ministry on earth from heaven, the ascended Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

It's continuous. Right. Luke, Acts. And the mission that Jesus started in person on earth in the book of Luke continues in the book of Acts for the work of the Holy Spirit. And what happens again and again?

They proclaim the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. People are converted. Right. That's actually what's happening. That's what's happening in the world today until Christ returns. Right. That's what God is doing right now. So, point number four.

How is God making disciples of Jesus? This happens when the Holy Spirit applies God's word to people's hearts. Right. That's what's happening. This happens when the Holy Spirit applies God's word to people's hearts.

Now, if you keep all these points together, we're going to end up somewhere that makes sense at the end. Point number five. We bring the word.

[18:19] Okay. Perhaps the most controversial one I've put up there so far. We bring the word. Right. We bring the word. That's one of the ways that God works through us is we actually bring the word of God to the world.

Okay. We don't convert people. The Holy Spirit does that. Right. But we bring the word. We are people. I don't know if you realize this. We are people who bring a message. And in fact, if you're a Christian, you bring a message.

If you're a Christian minister, the only difference between you and other people is you bring a message. And a more formalized thing. And for more time of the week and stuff. But we bring a message. In a way, we bring ourselves. But we don't actually bring.

We actually bring a message. That's what we do as Christians. Right. That's what we bring to the world. It's part of God's plan to work in the world. Here's the last point. I didn't do the sound effects. I don't know why it's doing that. I didn't have the speaker. I don't do the screeching, tired thing.

Okay. Here's my last point. This is my, this is one of my first conclusions.

[19:23] This is the vine work. Everything else is trellis work. Okay. So us bringing the word of God to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit is the vine work.

Everything else is trellis. Everything else supports it. Right. And so remember when I went back and I said sometimes we concentrate on the trellis and not the vine. Sometimes that's what we do in church.

Right. We can concentrate on having something look fantastic physically, but not spend a lot of time thinking about how are we actually going to get the word of God to this group of people.

Sometimes it's easier to do that, isn't it, than to do the other stuff. But this, and this is every church I've been in, you know, I think I've been on five or six ministry teams now. This is always something we struggle with.

We always struggle with, we have to have some type of infrastructure, but that's not the end game. That has to serve the people ministry. The bringing the word of God to people and the power of the spirit.

[20:25] Right. That's the end game. Okay. Any questions so far? Get the trellis and the vine thing? People who aren't gardeners, I'd like to give you some other illustration from sports or something like that.

Bill, I don't know. That's going to work. Soccer illustration. I don't know what it is, man. The ball in the field, right? We don't play for the field, we play for the...

Yeah, wait, wait. Thanks. Okay. Okay. Now, here's probably a question you have. I would think some of you have. It's an obvious question, isn't it?

You should feed that duck. Okay. So we bring the word. We are people who bring a message. In our churches, in our churches, who exactly brings the word to the world? Who? Who does it? Who does the vine work? Okay. Who does the vine work? Big question, isn't it? It's a big question. Who is actually the one who's supposed to be doing this?

[21 : 27] Okay, let's take a look at some passages in the Bible here. Ephesians 4, 1 to 15. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the ways and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Okay, first thing we look at is we look at that passage. There is a special place for the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers.

Right? Now, as we read further in the Bible, they're not more important in the eyes of God than the other people of God. They've just got a different gift, and a different gift for the body. But there is a special place for them, and I take it as actually to teach and protect the word of God, so they can equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.

Now, that's you guys. Believe it or not, you're the saints. Right? We're all the saints. That's who we are. So, what's the outcome of growing to maturity?

We no longer be children, tossed about by every false doctrine. Right? We're growing to maturity to understand the word of God. And finally, what's the final thing we're told to do? Speaking the truth in love.

[22 : 56] We are to grow up in every way. So, I take that as speaking the truth in love to each other. Right? Not to ourselves, to each other. I think it's fair to say from that passage that, at the very least, we're supposed to be proclaiming the word of God in our families, because that's a family of believers, but also within our churches to each other.

Okay. I think that's, and there's other passages in the Bible that we can talk about, but at the very least, we're supposed to be speaking the word of God to each other. Now, what would that look like? Anyway, if you lead a Bible study, you're doing that, aren't you?

You're actually helping to equip the saints for works of service by the word of God. Right? By teaching them right doctrine and teaching them what's wrong doctrine and stuff. Right? You're equipping them for works of service.

It might also mean doing a Bible study with somebody one-to-one. So, when I'm talking about the word of God, I'm actually talking about the Bible. Right? I'm actually talking about the Bible. That's what I'm actually talking about.

Might maybe doing the Bible study with somebody in your church one-to-one. Maybe someone has, they're suffering through a difficult time in their life. You bring the word of God as another Christian in their community to them, to encourage them as a Christian.

[24 : 11] If you're in a family, you're leading a family, I believe our responsibility is to teach our wife and kids the Bible. Right? That's the foundation for their lives. So, that's within a small community, your family, within the bigger kids.

Which is the church. I think you're probably all okay with that. But, here's the bigger question, isn't it? Oh, before we go on, I think just here, this is a controversial thing in theology.

The evangelist. What does that actually mean? And I think, I'm saying that there are a group of people within our Christian community which are particularly gifted at proclaiming the gospel to people who are not Christians.

And I think some people have a gift for that particular, Aaron Roberts would be one of those people. He's very good at talking to people who are Christians about Jesus. Does that mean that no one else does it?

That's a big question, isn't it? Do we all bring the word to non-Christians? Oh, come on, you can't answer it. Do we all bring the word to non-Christians?

[25 : 18] Here's some passages. You know, strangely enough, as we look at the Bible, there is not kind of one verse that says, all Christians, you need to go and teach the Bible to your neighbors. It doesn't actually say that.

Not that I can find it, right? So there's a few possibilities. Well, the Bible doesn't want us to do that. Or, it takes it for granted that we will be doing that. Because there are verses that kind of revolve around that idea.

Here's one of them. In your hearts, honor Christ, the Lord is holy. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect.

So, that would be for people who are Christians or non-Christians, but particularly people who are saying, why are you a Christian? Which actually happened to me last night at a Halloween party. When you least expect it.

When I was dressed up as a loaf of bread. That's a different story. And he was dressed up as Albert Einstein. Strange conversation.

[26 : 17] What do you believe? And we want to speak the truth. We want to speak the word.

There's another one. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous gift.

This is actually a reference from the Old Testament, right before the giving of the law in the book of Exodus. Just brought into the New Testament to say you are truly, because of the Holy Spirit, you are a royal priesthood. You are a chosen race.

You are proclaiming Christ in this world. Each one of us. Each one of us. Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Let your speech always be gracious. Season with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. That would be a more responsive thing, right? But answering a person in truth with the word of God.

That's actually what I was talking about. That's what equips you, right? You're equipping the saints for works of service. This would be a work of service, so that you can answer someone faithfully.

[27 : 20] Finally, and there's more than this. It's just a selection. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast and movable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. Okay. We all bring the word.

We are all ministers of God's word. Here's Luther talking about this point. Martin Luther. The ministry of the word belongs to all.

To bind and to lose clearly is nothing else, and to proclaim and to apply the gospel. For what is it to lose if not to announce the forgiveness of sins before God? What is it to bind except to withdraw the gospel and to declare the retention of sins?

Whether they, that is, a Roman Catholic Church, want to or not, they must conceive that the keys are the exercise of the ministry of the word and belong to all Christians. That's Martin Luther talking about the ministry of the word, which is obviously, you guys realize, is a big reformation thing.

A big reformation issue. We're going to talk about this in a second, why it is. So, this is a vine work, right?

[28 : 40] Everything else is trellis work. What this means, what this means is every one of us, every one of you, me, every one of us is involved in vine work. We're all involved in the ministry of the word, ministry of the word by the Holy Spirit on this earth right now.

Okay, until Christ returns. Now, how does this work with outsiders?

It's kind of got the church thing, right? How would it work with outsiders? You can think of your own examples. Here's some. These might be trivial.

These might be trivial. Maybe it means you're going to be preaching in church a month from now. It could mean that. It could mean that. If that's the way God's gifted you to proclaim the word, that's great. It might mean that when you're asked at work on Monday morning what you did on the weekend, that you don't leave out that, oh, I went to church.

You might say, I went to the Halloween party, but you don't, because that's actually proclaiming the word. What you're actually saying to someone is, you know what, there's important stuff in my life. What's important is that I meet together with God's people. That's a problem.

[29 : 52] It doesn't actually mean, sometimes it means you take out the Bible and say, this is what it says. It doesn't always mean that. So, everywhere you go, you know, you're in the elevator with somebody, hey, I want to show you the Bible. It doesn't actually mean that. It could mean, but what it means is you actually bring the word of God into your life all the time.

It might mean a discussion over the back fence with your neighbor. The discussion I had last night was actually two, this is weird. I was at a Halloween party. There's two people, and they both had discussions.

One guy was Albert Einstein, and the other guy was the planetary system. So, I don't know. It was a Halloween party, right? And I got the question from one guy.

He had a really tough life, and he said, I would believe in a God. I said, I'm a minister. He said, I would believe in a God if there wasn't so much suffering in the world, right? Okay. Okay, let's talk about that.

And the other guy was someone I knew better, and he said, I said, this is what I do. I work with young people in ministry. He said, you must love doing that. I said, I love doing it. It's part of, we've lost the idea of community in our world.

[30 : 55] And the Christian community works by mentoring. It works by older people taking care of younger people. That's what it works. And he's like, yeah, you're right. It does. And we just got into this whole conversation about the Christian worldview versus the Bible worldview.

And it doesn't always go like that. And I didn't have a great answer for the first guy who said, yeah, he's been through a civil war, and he's actually a political immigrant to Canada. He's a refugee. And I'm like, you've seen a lot of stuff in your life, and this is actually a really big question.

But we bring the Word of God into our life all the time. And sometimes it's a small conversation.

Sometimes it's offering to read the Bible with somebody in your work one-to-one because their interest in Christianity, which sometimes people are a lot more receptive to than we think, but we're scared to do it.

We're scared to do it. We are all ministers of the Word. We all bring the Word to our world in the power of the Holy Spirit. Okay. Now, that's going to have some pretty big implications for church, isn't it?

I told you this was a big Reformation doctrine because what did it actually do? When people understood this, that everyone is a minister of the Word, what did it actually do? Any ideas? Dr.

Packer, you can't answer this question.

[32 : 08] What do you think? Think about church. What would it do? Turn the system upside down. Why is that? You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right.

Why would it turn upside down? Well, suddenly we were all saints and we all had the ability to seek for God.

Yes. That's right. Yep. The common man wanted to know what God was said. Sure. It meant we were all, we were a kingdom of priests. Not a kingdom under priests.

We were a kingdom of priests. Every one of us. And all of a sudden the division between the clergy and the laity, theologically to a large degree, disappeared. That doesn't mean there isn't the office of the teacher and the evangelist.

And that's still there, but it's actually a partnership in ministry with the laity. Paul talks, Christ of Philippians, about being partners in ministry with them. So the first thing is the laity-clergy divide kind of disappears.

[33 : 16] And you're a partner in ministry with your ministry team. They might have different gifts than you, but you're a partner in ministry with them. They don't exclusively have the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the world.

Because we all do it. That's a really big thing. Right? Because traditionally in churches, who's done the trellis work and who's done the farm work? Who's done the trellis work?

The lady. The lady is supposed to have done the trellis work to some extent. They maintain the buildings and they make sure people are paid and they run the events and stuff. But a lot of times they've depended on the clergy to proclaim the gospel to the world.

Right? And what this is actually saying is we're all vine workers. We're all vine workers. Okay?

That's quite a radical thought for a lot of churches even today that we're all vine workers.

Okay? But we're also all trans workers too. Including the minister. Yeah. Including your clergy.

That's right. That's right. Okay. Let's take a look.

[34 : 23] In the church. The clergy and mature laity equip all people for works of word ministry. What do they do? They teach the truth. They defend the truth. They care for the flock.

And here's the last two which is probably one which maybe in some churches in Canada doesn't happen. I'm not saying it's not here but in some other places. I don't know if it happens. They train

the flock.

They train the flock to proclaim the word. And they release the people to do ministry. Right? It's actually them as trainers.

Because every minister is a trainer. To actually train the laity to proclaim the gospel. To proclaim the gospel. Right? And then release them. Release them to do it. That is.

Yeah. To not actually hoard them. But to actually have a bigger picture of ministry. To release people to do vine ministry wherever they may go.

[35 : 21] In fact. It's hard within a church to let people go. Especially when they're your really good lay leaders. But sometimes it's the best thing for the kingdom of God. That's a really hard thing if you're a ministry leader. Believe me.

To see people go. But sometimes it's the best thing for the ministry of God. Now. One of the models of ministry leadership. And this is a goofy picture.

I'm sorry. It's the best one I can find. Is a pastor as a holder of the umbrella. Right? So. I guess if people get married. He holds the umbrella. But it's for everybody else. And the idea is that the minister.

Or the ministry team. Actually create an environment. For the church to actually proclaim the word. Right? Now. To some degree. You know David Short's done that for us. Because he's been the lightning rod.

For a lot of the stuff that's happened in the parish. So that we can get on with ministry. That's actually what's happened. He's held the umbrella for us. In a lot of ways. So that we can get on with ministry. To release us forward ministry.

[36 : 18] Right? It's the idea of the pastor holding the umbrella. To create an environment within a church. For people to do ministry. Once again. It's not just a minister doing ministry.

Okay. Now. Before we get to some possible shifts in thinking. I just want to say one more thing about training. The pattern of training in the New Testament is a mentoring discipleship.

Life and doctrine is a foundation. And this is a whole different discussion in itself. But what I want you to think about is this last point here. The training is not only done by the clergy.

But it's possible for all mature Christians. Right? So sometimes we think. Okay. The minister is supposed to be training people to do word ministry. Right? So the minister is the one that has to run the catechism course. The minister is the one that has to do everything else.

Now. What's great about learners exchange. Is most of the people who speak here. Are not ordained ministers. Right? It's probably good for. But that's a good thing. You have laity come and teach you. Which is great. Because we got lots of people in St. John's who can actually do that.

[37 : 15] Right? So. But it's not only that. It's actually the idea that. Discipling happens outside of the ministry team too. Right? And the discipling or training in the church. Is actually a model of adoption.

Is actually bringing someone into your family to train them. This is a whole big issue in itself. I realize that. But the foundational thing is life and doctrine. So are they defending the faith?

Do they understand the faith? And what's happening with their life? That's from 1 Timothy 4.16.

Keep close watching yourself. And on the teaching persistence. For by so doing you will say both yourself and your hearers.

Training is not just about programs. Go and do Sunday school. Go and do all that stuff. Sometimes artizo looks like that. But actually the heart of artizo is actually life and doctrine. Right? Everything else feeds into that. And so it has to be a personal type of mentoring relationship.

And what I'm actually saying is that if you're a mature Christian. You're capable of doing this with somebody. Okay? You're capable of doing this with somebody in the church. Actually mentoring them. Training them to proclaim the word of God.

[38 : 16] Okay. Let's just look. Some possible shifts in thinking if all this stuff is true. You move from running programs and events to training and building people.

Right? Because a lot of times we run events just to kind of for the sake of running the event. And if you run an event to train people in the Bible, that's great. But there's actually more than that that you're doing.

So do you know Christianity Explored? Right? We run it at this church. It's written by a guy called Rico Tice. You guys remember Rico? He's over here too. You know, I read an interview with Rico.

Do you know the main reason why he runs Christianity Explored at All Souls, Langen Place? Do you know the main reason he does it? But it's not to help people find out about Jesus and grow as Christians.

That's a secondary purpose. You know the main purpose he runs it? It's to train the people in his church how to do evangelism. So every time he runs a course, he gets a new group of four people to help him to run the Christianity Explored course.

[39 : 17] His number one reason for doing the course is to train people in his church how to be ministers of the word. It's actually the people that are his helpers are the main ministry of that course.

Do you realize that? That's what he says. That's the main reason he runs it. And I think it's because over time he's realized that's actually been the biggest payoff of the course. People come, they find out about Jesus is great, but it's actually those people that are multiplying.

You know, I work in Artizo and I think a lot of times you think, well, is Artizo successful? How do you measure that? And people will say, well, how many people from Artizo are in full-time ministry? Okay, to some degree that's right. And there's probably about 20, 25, almost 30 now come out of Artizo. They're in full-time ministry around North America. But I think just as important a measure of the success of Artizo is how many people within Artizo are actually training other people right now. Because if they come out of Artizo and they're not training, they're not replicating themselves, they're not doing what Artizo has done, then we failed. We failed in our training of the Artizo interns. So I think of Keith Ganser who finished last year, he's mentoring Julian Gibb right now.

[40 : 26] Jim Seldon is mentoring Jesse Martin and Dan Porter. Marianne Kirishak in Toronto is mentoring a young woman.

Sean Love is mentoring two other people. Dan Hsu, who's still in Artizo, is mentoring two other young guys. Gary Jones is in Los Angeles right now.

He brought a young guy with him from North Carolina who he's mentoring. Dave McElroy has gone out to Abbotsford and he's about to start Artizo out there. And that's actually just as important and, in fact, in the long run, probably more important than how many people we get into full-time ministry.

Artizo exists because of a failing for us to actually do this. And ultimately, I shouldn't be doing what I'm doing because we should be raising up our own leadership within the church, right? So I have to work myself out of a job so I can play more golf.

That's what it's all about. That was a joke. But ultimately, that's as important a measure as how many people are in ministry. It's George Sinclair in Ottawa actually bringing new leaders into his church because of the Artizo program.

[41 : 33] That's just as important as how many people go into ministry. It's actually changing the mindset of Anik to think about that type of stuff. From using people to growing people, a lot of times in ministry we use people to fill a hole.

We don't actually grow them. We don't grow them to become proclaimers of the word. From filling gaps to training new workers, instead of always chasing our tails, it's actually thinking about who's going to lead this ministry in the future and who's going to replace me in the future.

And I wish I did all this stuff myself. I don't always do it myself. From being reactive in the use of time to being proactive. I'll give you an idea. But clergy team, we've got so many hours in a week. You've got a possibility of seeing five or six people. A lot of times, the people that you will see are the ones that are in crisis. And that's okay to do that. That's part of what we do. We take care of the flock.

But what gets left out sometimes is mentoring the young leader or working with a lay person who's a mature Christian and could be moving into leadership, but we don't have time to actually work with them.

[42 : 37] And in the long run, we're not equipping them to be ministers of the word. That's a mind shift to think about what we're actually trying to do. From keeping people to releasing people, that's the whole idea of the big picture of the gospel, that it's more than just our church.

We're actually releasing people to do ministry. And we want St. John's to be an exporting church. We export leaders to churches all over Canada. That would be a great thing for us to do. But I'll tell you, when you're leading a ministry and you need your Bible study leaders and they come to you and say they're moving to another church and to Toronto, you're like, why are you doing that?

I know what it's like. It's hard. It's hard to train people and have them go, but that's part of what we do. From solving problems to helping people make progress. I guess that is the idea of instead of just kind of give me a fish or teach me to fish.

Instead of just kind of always healing people and kind of trying to patch them up, it's actually getting them to grow maturity in God's word and in their own Christian walk so that they will actually become self-dependent and actually minister to others.

Big church in the States, Willow Creek. Remember Willow Creek? Kind of old school now. I realize that. Mosaic is a new place. Willow Creek, it's still a mega church. Bill Hybels, they did a study of the people in their church that were there for 10 years.

[44 : 02] They had an independent survey done. What they found out consistently across this thousand people they took a survey of is Willow Creek was an awesome church to become a Christian in, but not such a great church to grow as a Christian in.

Bill Hybels was like, wow, they need more teaching. We've got to teach them Greek. We've got to teach them Hebrew and all this stuff. They did a study and they realized the main problem was that one or two years after they had actually joined the church, Willow Creek had never taught the people to become self-feeders, to actually grow as Christians themselves.

They'd never moved from solving problems to helping people make progress. They never actually taught them how to read the Bible for themselves and to minister for themselves, become ministers of the word, and therefore their growth to a large degree stopped two or three years after they were in the church.

Isn't that interesting? It takes a lot of guts for them to say, we have literally wasted millions of dollars over the last 10 years. We have to change what we're doing. Very, very courageous. From clinging to formalized ministry leadership to developing team leadership.

Formalized ministry leadership, I guess I'm talking about ordained leadership. If we concentrate on that, and I think St. John's is pretty good at this. But the problem is, if you concentrate on that, you kind of, you've got a question about the square peg in the round hole.

[45 : 25] So somebody comes up, they've got ministry gifts, they don't quite fit into the ordained box, therefore what do you do with them? Do they go to another church or do you actually train them and release them to do ministry?

They could be a leader in your church also. So I guess it's also the idea of the elevation of the minister as being the only one that can teach and the only one that can proclaim the word and do word ministry.

And so it's actually flattening that and saying we're actually all part of that structure. That there are leaders within our church which are not ordained, but are very important to our church. From focusing on church quality to forging ministry partnerships.

What that actually means is that sometimes we spend a lot of our time thinking about structures and not thinking about the main game which is the vine work. It's proclaiming the word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So you can't do this because someone else is doing that. Or even though you've got gifts to do this, you have to go through these hoops to actually do that ministry. And it's the structure becomes more important than the end game.

[46 : 31] And in a big church sometimes that happens, right? That's very easy to happen. And the last one, from receiving to being trained for mission. Why are you here? Why are you here at Learners Exchange?

Do you know why? You're being trained. You're being trained for the ministry of the word. For your ministry of the word. That's why you're here this morning.

If you're here just to receive, you're here for the wrong reason. It's good to be built up as a Christian. It's good to be built up in the word. But there's a bigger plan for you. God's got a bigger plan for you. You've got a ministry of the word. You're actually being trained for mission right now. When you go to church, you sit in church, and you hear the Bible, you sing together, you hear prayers, you're being built up as a Christian in the Christian community, but you're also being trained to be a disciple maker.

That's what's actually happening. And if you get that, that's a radical mind shift. That's a radical mind shift. Okay. That is all I have to say, mate.

[47 : 32] A lot of stuff in a short time. So I have to lead at 11, so I can take about 10 minutes of questions, and I have to go home and get changed, and come back looking like an Anglican

minister. Okay?

So, yes, Betty? I'm thinking back to when I first became a Christian. The love of Christ filled us. You know, filled us in Christians around about the same time. And we wanted to tell everybody about it. Now, we weren't trained up, but the Holy Spirit heard us through that message.

Yep. In our own personal testimony. Yep. From 13, about standing there was an Anglican, we became Christians. So, that's aside from, you know, people that we, our colleagues, and people like that.

So, I think that's pure, that sort of witness. Yeah. In a sense. because you're bubbling over, you want to tell everybody about this, this beautiful face that you found.

[48 : 40] Yeah, that's great. Yep. Yep. So, I'm just adding that to what you said about, the experienced witness.

Yeah. In the programs. Christian maturity, isn't always, um, corresponding to how long you've been a Christian. Do you, don't you realize that?

Do you think that's a baby? Yes, I've seen very mature Christians, who've only been Christians for a short time. I'll give you an example of, this is an exceptional person, but a young guy, I was working with him in Australia.

He became a Christian. We actually went to see, The Passion of the Christ, right? Mel Gibson's movie. And, I've been talking to him, for quite a long time. And, he actually became a Christian, that night, after seeing that. The next day, he was like, we have to go to the high school, and talk to the kids about Jesus.

And, we actually were working as a group, in the local high school, which was a tough high school. It was actually a tough high school, in the western suburbs of Sydney. And, I was like, are you sure you want to do that? He's like, yeah, these kids have to know about Jesus.

[49 : 41] And so, he came in with us the next day, and he was great. Now, I'm not saying, you all have to do that. But, for him, he went from, Jesus has saved me, these people need to find out about Jesus, really quickly.

And, that was awesome. One of the signs of Christian maturity, that I've seen, is actually, are you serving? The people who are, mature Christian wise, they actually realize, it's more than just about them, they're actually serving other people.

And, sometimes it happens quickly, and sometimes, for some people, it's ten years later, and they're not doing that. I don't know why that is, except, you keep praying for them, and, you know, and, we've all got, we're not, not only some perfect Christians, but, sometimes it's instantaneous. I don't know why. But, thanks, Betty. Yes? Eric, thank you for this. Most interesting, and I loved your outline, and I also want to say, thank you for, letting us have some access, to your artisanal students, because we are, very much enjoying, their visits to us, and what they have to tell us. My question to you is, how are you training people, for mentorship? Because, I see that, as a separate skill, from the others, yeah, yeah, well that's a great question, isn't it?

[50 : 54] Over, the last, this is my fifth year, in our TINZO, and, the answer to your question, is not very well, because, the idea for all these, all the interns, when they come into first year, I've told them, by the end of, first year, I want you to have someone, you're going to mentor, for your second year.

You have to, you know, this is part of what you do, in ministry. I think, out of the 20 people, we've had, maybe three people have done that. Okay, so, you have to have someone, a mentor, to be a mentor.

So, so, you know something called, the 222 program? Okay, 222 is from, 2 Timothy 2.2, it's, you know, pass the gospel on, to faithful men, who will be able to teach others, to do the same.

The 222 program, is for university age people, it's an artisanal program, it's not a 12 hour per week program, it's a mentorship program, we've got five people in it, it started in September, this year, they're all being mentored, by artisanal interns.

So, it's got the added advantage of, it helps us know, who's going to be in artisanal, five years from now, but it also, is a mentorship, where the artisanal guys, are taking care, so they're teaching them, how to preach, they're bringing them, on their ministries with them, they're having them, in their homes for meals, they're having them for coffee, they're checking in with them, every couple weeks, to see how they're going, as Christians.

[52 : 12] So, I've had to formalize that, to have them. I wish it, you know, in my heart, I wish that the other guys, had actually picked it up, and to tell you the truth, they're at region college, they're running a thousand miles an hour, and it doesn't necessarily, anything about the character, they're just trying to survive, some of them.

So, to ask them to mentor someone, without setting it up for them, is perhaps too big an ask, maybe I should have never done it. So, well, and is there some kind of structure, about like, when you find somebody to mentor, yeah, these are the components of mentoring, how is that going to fit, what you're currently doing, yeah, can you work out something, that is a fit, or is there any kind of a formula, for this?

If you want to mentor someone, I'd be happy to sit down with you, and tell you what you should do, but I don't actually want to be that prescriptive. With the, with the Artizo guys, I actually, when I meet with the interns every week, part of what we spend our time talking about, is what they've been doing with, their, their guys that they're working with, right?

So, you know, you're going to, obviously, you pray with them, you're going to find out how they're going, as a Christian, you're going to, you're going to, talk to them about their ministries, you're going to, read the Bible together, sometimes that's in a structured format, sometimes it's just, I think it's kind of what I've been doing with them, sometimes we read the Bible together formally, sometimes I'll say to them, what have you been reading?

You know, what have you been reading in the Bible? I've been reading the book of Psalms, which Psalm? Which Psalm did you read this morning? This Psalm. Okay, let's look at it together. So, that's training them in the word, as well as getting into the word together.

[53 : 44] So, here's the danger, right? You don't want to be overly prescriptive, and say, here's, here's your hour with your intern, here's the hour with your trainee, here's, I've broken it down into minutes, right?

This is what you do with each minute. You don't want to do that. At the same time, if they're not doing that stuff, you want to actually give them some help. But most of that, the artisanal interns by second year, they kind of know what they're supposed to be doing, to raise, to help a young leader to grow.

That's been my observation anyways. Yeah. I'm still going to take you up on your offer. Sure. Love to meet with you and talk to you about that. Mighty answer for you to meet with. Bill?

Sometimes I wonder, that if it really is good news, why are we so silent about it?

Let me read you a quote. That's a great question. I was going to read this, but I didn't have time to put it in. But since Bill's asked me the question, this is from someone called Penn Teller.

[54 : 53] He's a magician, right? But he's also a well-known atheist. He said this, he was evangelized by a polite and oppressive man and had this to say about the experience.

So this guy's an atheist, right? He's not a believer. I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it's not really worth telling them because it would make it socially awkward, how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize?

How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe that, and a truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is way more important than that. That's an atheist. So, I agree. Yeah.

Yes? I have noticed that delivering the word doesn't mean that you are responsible for the outcome. Yeah. That's a good thing, isn't it? It is.

[56 : 07] It's quite a, it was quite freeing for me to realize that all I have to do is show up and say it and that it was the work of the Holy Spirit to do. If I had given the word of God to work with the Holy Spirit.

The sovereignty of God within bringing people to himself has two important applications for all of us in particular if you're in ministry. The first is exactly what you're talking about.

You tell somebody about Jesus, you pray with somebody, you meet with somebody every week for a year and finally they walk away from Jesus. Is it your fault? That's the sovereignty of God.

Okay. You talk to somebody about Jesus, you pray with them about Jesus, you meet with them every week to talk about Jesus and after six months they become a Christian. Is it your fault?

No. It's God. See, it cuts both ways. If you think it's all about you and my church is growing and I'm doing fantastic, no it's not. It's not about you, it's about the sovereignty of God. And if you're doing everything which God tells you to do and you're being faithful and nothing happens is about you, that's the sovereignty of God.

[57 : 12] It's very important to look in the mirror every morning and say that Jesus is Jesus and I'm not. Now, if as ministers we can only separate our ministry from our egos, we'll be great.

It's a lot of self-interest in our ministries. I'm going to have to go, I'm sorry. Okay. Thanks a lot, guys. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, everyone. Thanks, guys. Thank you.