

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

What characterised the ministry of Jesus? What should characterise our ministry?

A. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The ministry of Jesus and his disciples is a ministry of the kingdom.

It was not a ministry of establishing church denominations.

(1) The kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is more than the visible Church, the Body of Christ or the world-wide community of professing Christians.

Read. Psalm 24:1. In general the kingdom of God is the kingship or sovereign rule or reign of God in heaven over all people and everything from eternity to eternity (Psalm 145:13; Psalm 146:10; Jeremiah 10:10; 1 Timothy 6:16).

Read. Matthew 28:18. In particular the kingdom of God is the sovereign rule or reign of God on earth through Jesus Christ (John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16).

Read. Revelation 1:5-6. The kingdom of God is based on the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ during his first coming (Matthew 21:39,42-43; 28:18; Acts 2:36) and the application of that work in believers through the Holy Spirit today (Romans 14:17).

Read. Luke 17:20-21. The kingdom of God is the sovereign rule or reign of Jesus Christ that is recognised in the hearts of believers and operative in their lives (Matthew 6:10,33; Matthew 25:34-40).

(2) The kingdom of God results in four visible areas.

Read. Mark 10:25-26. The kingship of God is manifested in the believer's salvation from beginning to end: his election in eternity (Ephesians 1:4-5), his rebirth in time (John 3:3-8), the transformation of his life (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and the resurrection of his body at Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). This God-given salvation includes all the spiritual and material blessings for the soul and the body, which result when God's sovereign kingship is recognised and obeyed (Ephesians 1:3).

Read. Matthew 16:18-19. The kingship of God is manifested in the constitution of all believers as God's one Church on earth (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 2:4-5,9-10). The Church is the community of people in whose hearts and lives God's sovereign kingship is recognised and obeyed.

Read. Matthew 25:34-40. The kingship of God is manifested in the good works of believers in every aspect of human society (their influence in intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual areas like education, justice, mercy and love (Romans 14:17).

Read. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. And finally, the kingship of God is manifested in God's redeemed universe, which will be the new heaven and the new earth with all its glory in the future, the final realisation of God's work of salvation in the people he called (Matthew 25:34; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15; 21:1-2).

(3) The kingdom of God has five characteristics.

Read. Matthew 12:28. The kingdom of God was particularly established at the first coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:43).

Read. John 18:36. The kingdom of God is in the present world, but not of the present world (Luke 17:21).

Read. Matthew 13:11-17. The kingdom of God is a revelation for believers and a riddle for unbelievers at the same time.

Read. Matthew 13:24-26,36-43. The kingdom of God has a present form on this earth and a future form on the new earth.

Read. Matthew 13:31-33. The kingdom of God begins small, grows and will finally pervade all (Daniel 2:34-35,44-45).

2. The ministry of Jesus and his disciples is a ministry in houses.

It is not necessarily a ministry in special church buildings.

Read. Mark 2:1-5. Jesus preached, taught and healed people in the ordinary houses of people (Mark 3:20,32-35). The apostles went from house to house and never stopped teaching and preaching (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:20-21). They preached the good news to their relatives and close friends in their own homes (Acts 10:24-27; 28:30-31).

Read. Mark 2:15-16. Jesus had *fellowship* with ordinary people around meals in houses. Christians came together to break bread in a house (Acts 2:42; 20:7-9).

Read. Acts 12:12. Christians prayed together in a house.

Read. Acts 16:31-33. People were converted and baptised in houses (Acts 9:17-18; 18:7-11; 22:16).

Read. 1 Corinthians 16:19. Christian congregations gathered together in houses (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2).

3. The ministry of Jesus and his disciples is a ministry of equipping (training).

It is not necessarily a ministry consisting of a weekly worship service.

The equipping or training took place on the basis of relationships and discipleship. The key words of equipping are:

- teaching the truth
- training in skills
- transmission of an example in everything and
- sending out those that are trained.

(1) Jesus made disciples (mature and functioning Christians).

Read. John 1:39. Jesus taught his followers and transmitted an example to them. “Come and see”. He involved people in his life and got involved in their lives.

Read. Mark 3:14. Then he called them to be “with him” and “follow” him around so that he might teach them how to become fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). He trained them to put his teachings into practice (Matthew 7:24-27).

Read. Matthew 4:23. Jesus and his followers went throughout the province: teaching, preaching and healing people. Their ministry was holistic (the whole is more than the sum of the parts): they not only taught and trained, but also showed mercy and served the needy people.

(2) Jesus trained (equipped) workers.

Read. Matthew 9:10-13. They learned to go to those who needed mercy and righteousness (Matthew 11:19; Luke 19:10)

Read. Matthew 9:17. They had to pour the message of new life into new forms and structures (cf. Matthew 15:1-9).

Read. Matthew 10:5-8. They practised to preach, to heal and to freely give what they had received (1 Corinthians 9:18-27).

(3) Jesus sent leaders.

Read. John 20:21. Finally, Jesus sent his disciples to do what he did.

Read. Matthew 28:18-20. They had to go to all the nations of the world and make them disciples of Jesus Christ through preaching the gospel, baptising believers and teaching them to obey all that Jesus had commanded them.

4. The ministry of Jesus and his disciples is a multiplying ministry.

It is not just a ministry maintaining the traditional status quo.

(1) Three key groups.

The large group: the crowds in society

The small group of disciples: the house fellowship or the house church that meets together regularly

The individual: one individual person meeting another individual person for specific goals (mentoring/coaching)

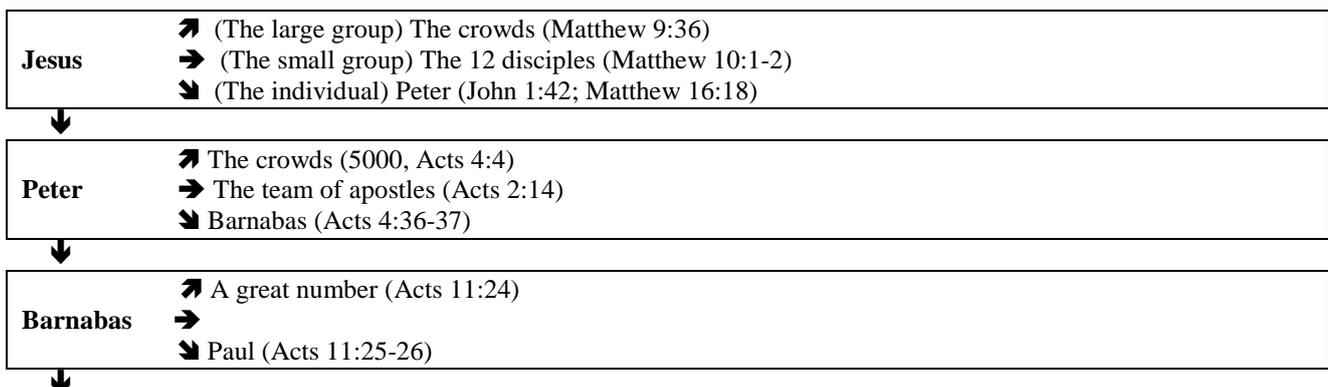
(2) Three different emphases.

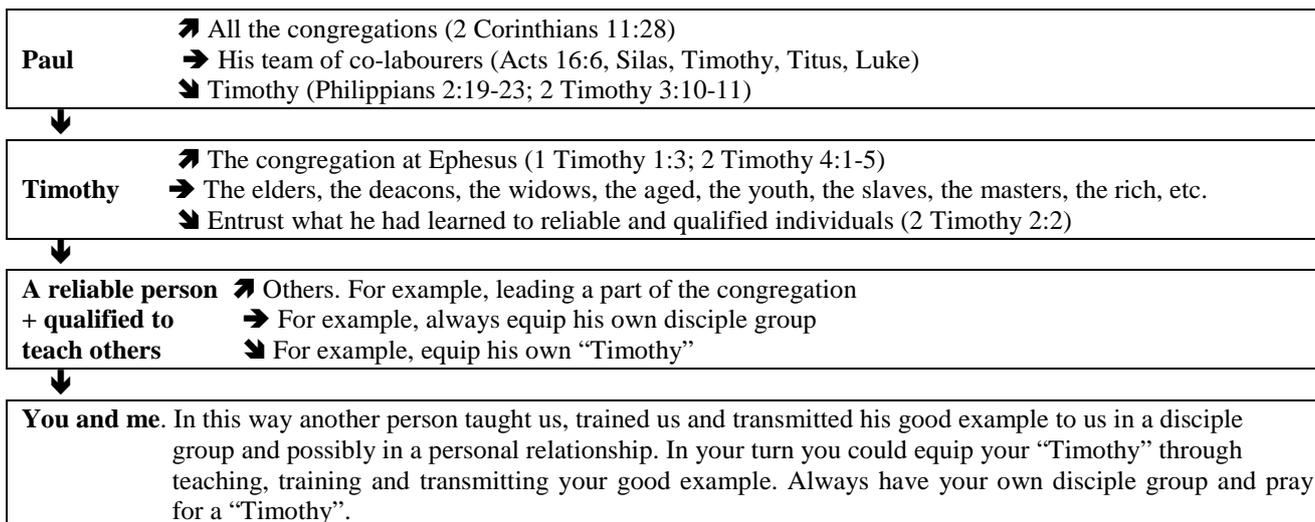
In a large group we emphasize teaching (and preaching) - knowledge, understanding and motivation to do good (Acts 10:38; 20:18-20).

In a small group we emphasize training - studying, interaction, possible applications, urging one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25)

With an individual we emphasize transmission of an example - personal application, change of character and habits (Colossians 1:28-29; 2 Timothy 3:10-11,16), actually doing good (Acts 20:34-35), equipping for specific tasks and ministering together in the kingdom of God (Ephesians 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:17)

(3) A biblical illustration of the value of the large group, the small group and the individual (the “Timothy”).





B. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES CONTINUES TODAY

1. The meetings of a small group: a discipleship group or a house fellowship.

A house fellowship meeting is a weekly meeting of a small group of believers generally within walking/travelling distance from where they live.

(1) Jesus continues his ministry.

Today, Jesus continues his ministry through ordinary believers

- by serving the larger group of people in society
- by equipping the believers in a small group (a house fellowship)
- and by mentoring or coaching a “Timothy” in skills and character

The believers try to do something good within their society. Small groups of believers meet together every week in the homes of believers: to worship God through Jesus Christ, to grow in knowledge and obedience to Jesus Christ and to train new disciples. Some mature and functioning individual believers develop as new group leaders.

(2) The seven discipleship disciplines in the small group.

In the Dota course the new believers are taught the seven discipleship disciplines on a regular basis:

- Worshipping the God of the Bible
- Sharing one of their quiet times (and lives) of the past week
- Teaching a discipleship topic
- Meditation and memorisation of God’s Word
- Bible study
- Prayer and intercession
- Preparation at home for the next meeting

2. The programme. For a disciple group or a house fellowship (church).

The Dota manual is designed to serve the group leaders in the first place. It suggests a weekly programme. See the contents of a manual. It is best when a house fellowship or discipleship group meets once a week. The minimum is once every 14 days.

Week 1. Discipleship training [A]

- WORSHIP (20 min)
- sharing quiet times (20 min)
- TEACHING (70 min)
- reaction/response in prayer (8 min)
- preparation at home (2 min)

Week 2. Discipleship training [B]

- MEMORISATION (20 min)
- sharing quiet times (20 min)
- BIBLE STUDY (70 min)
- intercession (8 min)
- preparation at home (2 min)

Worship service [C]

- singing (30 min)
- PREACHING (15 min)
- PRAYER and intercession (15 min)
- Lord's Supper, baptism, fellowship meal (30 min)
- drinks and fellowship

Midweek activity [D]

As *discipleship group* together you take on an activity in your area, for example:

- an evangelistic workgroup
- conduct language learning for asylum seekers in your area
- set up some sports with young people in the area
- a project in which a women club teach other women to make clothes
- a project in which a men club do odd jobs in homes of needy people
- a children club, a painting club, a walking club, etc.
- a community service to pick up rubbish in your area once a month
- a community service to organise an outing for the handicapped, old people or strangers once a week

Training only in a discipleship group

Discipleship training [A] every 1st and 3rd week: worship and teaching.

Discipleship training [B] every 2nd and 4th week: memorisation and Bible study.

Training also in a house fellowship

Discipleship training [A] in 1st week and house fellowship (church) meeting [C] in 2nd week.

Discipleship training [B] in 3rd week and house fellowship (church) meeting [C] in 4th week.

Training also in the area or district

Discipleship training and a meeting with the congregation as above together with an activity during the week.

3. The individual: Train your own "Timothy".

If possible, select at least one person in every house fellowship or small group on the basis of 2 Timothy 2:2. He or she should be reliable or faithful and qualified or able to teach others. Meet this person regularly once a week to equip (train) and encourage him or her. Set a personal example for him or her. Emphasize the transmission of an example in especially the following areas: personal application and change of character and habits. Equip this person to become a group leader. Then mentor him or her when he or she leads a small group and train their "Timothy".

4. The method: make use of the DOTA manuals for group leaders.

(1) Always begin with the DOTA manuals 1 to 4 called "Go and make disciples"

The goal is to train disciples and group leaders.

The manuals 1 and 2 develop basic discipleship.

The manuals 3 and 4 develop advanced discipleship.

They teach the five steps method of Bible study and six important questions of Christian life.

Each manual contains twelve lessons of about two hours each.

(2) Then use the DOTA manuals 5 to 8 called "Go and build Christ's Church".

The goal is to build up Christian congregations.

The manuals 5 and 6 develop services in congregations.

The manuals 7 and 8 develop ministries in congregations.

They teach the Gospel of John.

Each manual contains twelve lessons of about two hours each.

(3) Finally use the DOTA manuals 9 to 12 called "Go and preach God's Kingdom".

The goal is to develop leaders in congregations and Christian ministries.

The manuals 9 to 12 particularly aim at teaching leaders in the congregation and group leaders to preach or teach the parables of Jesus about the kingdom of God.

They teach the letter to the Romans.

Each manual contains twelve lessons of about two hours each.

(4) Also make use of the 390 DOTA radio programmes.

The DOTA radio programmes teach the introductions to all the Bible books and much about prayer and quiet time.

The above materials have been translated in several languages and function within these languages. The materials will help you to understand the Biblical truths, to hold on to them as personal convictions, to learn Christian disciplines, to do Christian ministries and to bear fruit.

(5) Make use of the INDEX.

The DOTA INDEX lists hundreds of topics and the place they may be found in the DOTA manuals and Radio programmes. Suggestion. Make a print copy of the INDEX and keep it next to your computer.

5. The vision: The blueprint of a multiplying ministry.

- (1) The key to a multiplying ministry is group leaders that train a small group and an individual as his Timothy.

If every house fellowship or discipleship group starts one new house fellowship or discipleship group each year, there will be 256 house fellowships or discipleship groups in 10 years!

- (2) The key to multiplying group leaders is a trainer of group leaders in every town.

Begin by appointing one trained man and one trained woman to train more group leaders in your city or country. Later every congregation could appoint one man and one woman to train more group leaders.

- (3) God's command and promise

The cultural commission of God in Genesis 1:28 said, "Fill the earth" with people in God's image.

And the great commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 says: "Go and make disciples of all the nations".

God's plan cannot and will not fail. God says, "As I have planned, so it will be" (Isaiah 14:24,27; Psalm 138:8).

In the end, there will be a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before Jesus Christ (Revelation 7:9).