



**TONY PRICE**

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”  
(Galatians 2:20, NIV).*

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It is a razor's edge of distinction between the compelling desire to preach the gospel and the realization and the reality of personal spiritual failure. Like the Apostle Paul, I am compelled beyond word's description to proclaim the Word of Life without apology but understand all too well the personal cost of doing so. Paul said in unequivocal terms, *"For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16, NIV).

The challenge Paul set forth, of course, is audacious at its core *"to proclaim... the whole will of God"* (Acts 20:27), all the while embracing the brutal truth that, dare I, a fellow sinner hold forth this "word of life" to fellow sinners knowing full well the stain of my own sin? Nevertheless, I fully embrace Paul's admonition to unashamedly *"preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction"* (2 Timothy 4:2, NIV).

Though, perhaps out of step with some of my contemporary counterparts, I believe in preaching. Its sacred place in our assemblies and in our shared spiritual formation is not diminished in its ever-evolving forms. Preaching has changed through the years, but its value is firmly rooted in who we are as God's people. From the great, if not often misunderstood, prophets of old, to the timeless truths of our Savior delivered to the masses, preaching is Godly, it is necessary, it is relevant, and, it is absolutely vital. I stand as a witness in this generation to the grace of God which still, after all these years, captures the imagination and gives rise to faith. I am honored, and humbled, to have been used by God through preaching to reveal the glory of God.

It is a "cracked jar" sort of exercise, mind you, the revelation of God's Word. Each preacher, and this one in particular, revealing the greater, more perfect, truth of God's glory, despite the personal frailty of being human. *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair"* (2 Corinthians 4:7-8, NIV).

## A Philosophy of Spiritual Giftedness

In ministry, it is of particular relevance the Spiritual giftedness of each soul. Being created in the "image of God," has with its cosmic consequence, a practical reality. We are a complex symbiotic creation designed to be sanctified *"through and through,"* and our *"spirit, soul and body"* should be *"kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NIV). We are spiritual, and thus, are gifted spiritually to contribute to the great work of Christ in His Body, the church.

The gifts of God's people are a testimony of His purpose and grace. Not every Christian possesses the same gifts of ministry, but the ones they do own, are a call to ministry. That is to say, they are intended to be used for the great work of God's Family. *"So Christ himself gave the*

*apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV).*

A particular gift, or ability, given by the Spirit of God, is measured through the effectiveness and utilization of that gift. Not every Christian is called to be a preacher, or evangelist, but some are. Those who are called to this sacred service are expected to use it for the glory of God. This Philosophy of Ministry arises out of a conviction for, and evidence of, the call of God to minister to His people through the talents and abilities given, and developed, over thirty years of ministry.

## A Philosophy of Preaching

Preaching is so many things to the worshipper dedicated to knowing God more fully through the proclaimed message. Preachers are called upon to *“do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Peter 4:11, NIV).

Preaching has changed through the years, mind you, but the message has remained the same. Every sermon must be “cruciform” (cross-shaped) and is “good news” to all who hear it. It isn’t the preacher who gives power to the message, nor does it lie in his ability to communicate truths in contemporary ways. Paul made certain his purpose was clear which was *“to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power”* (1 Corinthians 1:17, NIV). It’s not about the preacher, but is about preaching “Christ crucified” which is *“a stumbling block”* to some, and *“foolishness”* to others, *“but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:22-24, NIV).

Practically speaking, I believe and practice many homiletic devices of conveying, through preaching, the message of Christ. I hold a very high regard for Scripture in its literary form and historical context. When preaching from the direct teachings of Christ, for example, I employ the same methodology as He did. His direct commands are authoritative, and I treat them as such. I respect the many genres of literature in the Bible and both interpret and proclaim them within their literary shape. The wisdom literature, for example, with its many parallelisms and descriptive metaphors, is interpreted differently and, consequently, taught differently.

I possess a passion for preaching expositively, which is to say that I allow the text to guide the sermon. I emphasize the truth of each passage viewed in light of its general, and then specific, context, so as to avoid using a verse, or verses, out of its context. I believe that the Holy Spirit does a perfect work in convicting the hearts of listeners as He, the Holy Spirit, chooses the

message, and its relevant application. Put succinctly, by following the shape of the text, allowing it to do its probing work on the heart, preaching then becomes effective, relevant, and dare I say, holy.

I often preach series of sermons based, of course, on the needs of the audience, but also on the emphasis of Scripture itself. Some homiletic devices often used are the Narrative Inductive Method (Teachings of Jesus), the Imperative Deductive Model (Epistles), and the Textual Historical Literary Form (Old Testament History and Prophecy). I believe the sermon should flow from the text, not the other way around.

From an intensely personal perspective, sermon preparation is a grueling exercise. The exegesis, interpretation, linguistic exposition, and most importantly, personal application, all result in a process whereby the sermon is preached first to my heart, and then to the audience at the appointed time. I learn, apply, and most certainly repent and grow personally, before a single word is uttered to my audience in the hopes that everyone, including, and especially me, can be transformed by its life-giving purpose.

## A Philosophy of Leadership

It is of personal conviction, and Scriptural precedent, that the Lord's church is led by anointed men fully qualified to oversee the Body. These elders (*presbyters*) are appointed by the church to oversee the flock. *"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed"* (1 Peter 5:1, NIV). As Overseers (*episkopos*), they keep watch over themselves first, and then to *"all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you [them] overseers."* Paul instructs them to *"be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28, NIV).

Though I have often been called upon to serve as one of the appointed Shepherds in the congregation for which I serve, it has been my joy, however, to serve as Evangelist, Preacher, or designated Minister. My relationship with Godly Elders who have watched over my soul, supported my gifts, and empowered my ministry has always been a great blessing to my life, and ministry. The Godly counsel and accountability they have provided me have been integral to my own personal walk and has been a cherished experience for my soul.

I have a very high regard for the role of Elders in the local congregation and embrace fully a divine partnership that helps the church grow. Whether I am a fellow Overseer who works alongside the others to shepherd to flock, or, if I faithfully devote my time to the work of an Evangelist being supervised by their faithful instruction, I am truly blessed.

## A Philosophy of Discipleship

When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He established, and perfected, a model of leadership which involved selecting a capable, albeit imperfect, group of servants who would carry on His ministry after He was gone. The group of men He chose were as diverse in their world as we are in ours. He recognized the value of utilizing varied gifts of service to the advantage of His important work on earth, and His relationship with them was always directed towards this end.

A healthy congregation of our Lord is filled with people from various backgrounds, socioeconomic circumstances, demographics, and levels of spiritual maturity. A church who recognizes, and embraces, this reality is poised to grow as each one fully connects themselves to Christ's mission and purpose and embraced their important role in it.

As a Minister of the gospel I fully embrace this model and use it to create spiritual formation. By knowing the gifts of the servant Body, and through careful and deliberative mentoring, it is of primary importance to help individuals rise to the calling for which they have been called. Peter adds emphases to this process when he commends the brethren to *"make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:10-11, NIV).

## A Philosophy of Teaching

The early church devoted themselves to the Apostle's doctrine, and in doing so, grew immeasurable in their faith. They met often, and even daily, for periods of study where they could dig deeper and "flesh out" what it means to be a believer. Their view of God's Word rested upon the teachings they received from the first-hand witnesses, and then, applied it to their lives. The Berean brethren, for example, were known for their devotion to this necessary, and vital, exercise.

Thankfully, we now are in possession of the Scriptures and place emphasis on their importance in the life of a congregation, and to the lives of its many members. We recognize Scripture as *"God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV).

Of the many functions of a gospel preacher, the high calling of teaching, in its various forms, is one of the most rewarding aspects of ministry to my walk. I love the Word of God and hold a very high regard for its instruction, guidance, empowerment, and contemporary application. Simply put, I believe the Bible is just as relevant to our walk today as it has always been. A very careful, dutiful, hermeneutic gives flight to the real purpose of Scripture itself. We must always ask of our teaching of God's Word, "what is God calling me to believe and practice?"

Practically speaking, I utilize whatever appropriate means necessary to teach the truths of Scripture. I consistently use a fair number of visuals and utilize PowerPoint to help in the instruction process. I recognize that people learn differently and try, as I am able, to utilize a variety of methods to accomplish this end. For those who are verbal learners, which is to say they learn best through the spoken word, I pay close attention to homiletic devices to impact their learning experience. For those who are visual learners, which is to say that they learn best through visual charts, diagrams, and video instruction, I use PowerPoint to create multimedia illustrative experience wherein they learn best. For the hand-on learner, I use, from time to time, physical learning illustrations where they can touch and feel their way towards faith.

I believe learning the Bible can be fun and exciting. I thrill at the experience of witnessing Bible students “get it.” Teaching is among my most rewarding gifts and I hold its practice very core to my role as an Evangelist. Jesus instructed His disciples not only to spread the saving message of the gospel, but to follow that up with teaching. *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”* (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV).

## A Philosophy of Worship

Among the earliest memories of my youth, worship with my church family has always been my joy and privilege. While I recognize worship to be integral to my person walk and engage in it daily, it is the collective worship of the saints each Lord’s day that thrills my heart. I embrace it as a seminal event each week and “lean in” to its intended purpose in my life. Each week I launch into my personal walk with Christ having been inspired and empowered as I have joined with others to give glory to God on the first day of every week.

As a minister of the gospel, I see my role in corporate worship as that of supporting a greater, grander, picture of God’s presence and love. While I do view preaching as vital in our assemblies, I recognize that it is merely part or a greater whole. The prayers offered in faith, the music inspiring as it may be, the thoughtful deliberative communion as it is intended, and the thanksgiving expression of the offering are enjoined with the preaching of God’s Word to build a living edifice to God’s glory. The people of God through worship are like *“living stones, [and] are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5, NIV).

I believe that worship should be inclusive and utilize the many gifts of the worshippers. Worship leaders should be thoughtful and dedicated to their service as ones possessing a sacred responsibility. From my perspective, there should exist in every congregation a constant movement towards the inclusion of fresh faces among the leadership in worship.

I believe that worship should be reverent and thoughtful. It is a holy exercise and should reflect the respect that it has in the lives of Christians. This doesn't mean that it should be formal to the extent that it is uncomfortable, particularly to the unchurched seeker who visits the assembly, however, it should be entered into with gravity of purpose. I believe in a "come as you are" sort of atmosphere coupled with a determination to be relevant.

I believe worship should be planned, if not thematic. When worship is thoughtfully planned with all aspects of it contributing to a greater purpose, the worshipper leaves with a meaningful experience upon which they can grow. Music, prayers, communion, and sermons should all "fit together" to create a cohesive worship experience. To this end I devote a significant amount of time working with worship leaders to provide the worshippers with an experience of grace, and truth. Jesus declared that *"a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23-24, NIV).

I believe worship can be creative, and uplifting, while still being reverent and awe-inspiring. Through the years I have been blessed to work alongside of faithful and highly creative souls who were passionate about making worship relevant. I have learned that as the times, and people, have changed through the years, so has the methods of inspiring them have become. Creativity should be encouraged, but always with an eye towards the value of tradition in the experience of the worshipper. Simply put, there is a value to both tradition and creativity in worship.

Practically speaking, the corporate worship of a faith community is likely the only impacting spiritual exercise Christians participate in each week. Thoughtful, Scriptural, and creative worship is vital for the growth of the church numerically, and essential to challenging Christians to live for Christ far beyond the confines of the church building.

## A Philosophy of God's Love, and Ours

A stark reality of ministering to people are that they are not only deeply flawed and broken but are often on a painful journey affecting every area of their lives. I come to this realization out of my own life experiences and feel compelled to meet people where they are. Abuse, addiction, divorce, financial hardships, strained marriages, out of control parenting, and personal brokenness color the lives of many, if not all of us, in one form or another. Ministering effectively to people, particularly within our current culture, requires a profound sense of acceptance and love. There are no perfect souls, save Christ our Lord, and a mandate of ministry is to introduce the "sick" to the "great Physician."

It is my belief that ministry is never borne out of a legalism of exceptionalism, but more nearly out of a desire to love the way God loves. John, the disciple whom "Jesus loved," clearly identifies the very nature of God as being love, for *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, NIV). In context, he

connects our love with His. *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 John 4:7-11, NIV).

We are most like God when we love the way He loves. Ministry, for me, is the daily living out of this holy cause to extend God’s extravagant love to every soul. Whether it is expressed over a cup of coffee at the local Starbucks, in our dining room as a part of a shared fellowship meal, in the foyer of the building extending a hug and kind word to a visitor, or within the confidentiality of the counseling office, God’s love fuels a magnificent obsession to love the unlovable.

## A Philosophy of Evangelism

Our Lord came to *“seek and save the lost”* (Luke 19:10, NIV). It is of primary importance for the Body of believers, and their Evangelist, to be fully devoted to, and engaged in, the spreading of the glorious gospel. It is not only a commandment of Christ but is a passion of convicted souls. Without Christ, and His redemptive work on the cross, the world is lost and without hope. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16, NIV).

The definition of a preacher, and evangelist, is one who evangelizes. That is to say, a preacher should be devoted to winning souls for Christ. He makes no apology for his many conversations and Bible studies that instruct seeking hearts to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. It has been my privilege through the years to walk with people through this journey and assist them in their obedience to Christ. At any given time, I typically am studying with numerous individuals and families as they make this journey.

Generally speaking, when it comes to the many ministries and activities of the church, it is my believe that evangelism is the underpinning upon which every program is based. Every effort, every communication, every exercise of collective faith is founded upon the primary truth that it is our business to *“seek and save the lost”* just it was the business of Christ.

## A Philosophy of Grace

Since the beginning, it has always been a difficult sort of reality for the seeker of God’s heart. His unmitigated love for His creation has been borne out in the lives of generation after generation of sinners. We learned in the garden that there is grace, but also the dark stain of sin that evokes the judgement of God. They sinned, Adam and Eve, but so has every created



soul since. It has always been a “push-pull” relationship mankind has experienced in this exchange. God’s love is complete and all-surpassing, but, so it seems, man’s inclination is to reject this perfect expression and disobey.

The great “schoolmaster” of the Old Testament is replete with narratives that point to the reality of, and necessity for, a sacrifice worthy to atone for the countless sins of mankind. For centuries they carried their sins to the altar of the Tabernacle, and then Temple, to record them there. We are told in Scripture that these sins were not, and could not, be atoned for even through the spilt blood of animal sacrifices without blemish. *“But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me”* (Hebrews 10:3-5, NIV).

In Revelation, we witness the “behind the scenes” of an altogether different transaction of grace. When the seven seals were produced, a cry went out throughout all of heaven with an ominous silence. The angel implored, *“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”* *But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it”* (Revelation 5:2-3, NIV). But behold, there was one who was worthy. John’s witness brings hope with these words: *“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders”* (Revelation 5:6, NIV). Jesus, our slain lamb of redemption, was a sufficient sacrifice and the transaction of grace was sufficient.

What do we do with this amazing gift of God’s grace? Try as we may to earn this divine favor, we cannot, lest it loses its living-giving power. Paul reminds his readers of their condition prior to God’s gift, but also warns them of the sin of appropriating this grace by works of righteousness. *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:1-3, NIV).

At the very moment of our sin, we are compelled to recognize the source of grace that brings forgiveness. *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:4-9, NIV).

The disturbing truth about our salvation is that we contribute not “one whit” to it. We cannot earn it, purchase it, or acquire it apart from its gift expression. We are saved by grace, period. However, we accept this grace by faith. Without one, or the other, there is no salvation. In this

cosmic exchange, His grace and our faith, there is the redemption of the soul. *“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).

The basis of all ministry is the grace of God. It fills every corner of ministry paradigms and is the platform upon which ministry does its work. Grace is received by God, but there is a “grace” in receiving. A full expression of this grace colors every form, and every function, of ministry. From the proclamation of truth to the dutiful shepherding of broken souls, grace colors each moment, each relationship, and each activity. An evangelist, though burdened with the reality of personal sin and its ongoing struggle, is reminded daily, and then reminds others, that God’s grace is sufficient for the journey.

As a minister of the gospel of Christ, I fully, unashamedly, preach a gospel of grace that saves. I also, to the degree my personal maturity allows, strive to exemplify a life *“crucified with Christ”* (Galatians 2:20, NIV). Admittedly, I often feel unworthy to this task, but embrace it because God is bigger than me. Much bigger!