

# Devo 2 – A Community of Wise Counsel

Tim Miller, August 14,

2011 Cannon Mennonite Church

**Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- **I have a huge team of pastoral staff!** I wonder if you think of yourself as pastoral staff? You are. You are the front lines of the church's pastoral ministry.
- **Hat tip to David Powlison.**
- **The “Ministry of the Word” has three spheres**
  - 1.) Public Sphere
  - 2.) Private Sphere
  - 3.) Inter-personal Sphere [face to face, conversational ministry, community of wise counsel]
- **The one-anothers of Scripture.**
  - Rom 12:10 outdo one another in showing honor
  - Rom 12:16 live in harmony with one another
  - Rom 14:13 don't pass judgment on one another
  - Rom 15:7 Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.
  - Rom 15:14 you are filled with knowledge and able to instruct one another
  - 1 Cor 11:33 wait for one another
  - 1 Cor 16:20 greet one another with a holy kiss
  - 2 Cor 13:11 comfort one another...agree with one another
  - Galatians 5:26 let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another
  - Eph 4:2 bear with one another in love
  - Eph 4:32 be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.
  - Eph 5:21 submit to one another in reverence to Christ
  - Col 3:9 do not lie to one another since you have put off the old self...
  - 1 Thess 5:11 encourage one another and build up one another
  - 1 Thess 5:15 See that no one repays evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
  - Heb 3:13 exhort one another every day...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
  - Heb 10:24 let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works
  - James 5:9 do not grumble against one another
  - 1 Peter 4:9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling
  - By far the most common exhortation linked with one another is Jn 13:34 “love one another.” Over and over.
- **Now, what these one-another passages convey** is not intended to be fulfilled in a once per week public meeting with 200 people, and it could never be fulfilled in the private devotional time. The “one-anothers” are intended to remind us of our Gospel-ing responsibilities within deep, committed, daily, ongoing relationships of brotherhood in the Gospel community. The one-anothers are calling us to live out the Gospel toward each other – to take the grace of God we've received and to extend it to each other. To provoke each other to continue in the good of the Gospel. To grow up into the love and freedom of Jesus.
- **Small groups** are one way this third sphere of the ministry of the Word finds expression. (Word, Prayer, Fellowship, Food Acts 2:42)

- **Jesus' ministry – Public** (sermon on the mount, sermon on the boat, teach in synagogue, in crowded homes), **Private** (alone in prayer at night, early morning, drew apart to lonely places), **Conversational** (in the house, in the street, interruptions, explanations, responses). We see all these happening. The “ministry of the Word” in Jesus life was completely embedded into the everyday fabric of his thinking and speaking and responding. MUCH of his ministry is interruptions and ad hoc responses to people. In other words, the inter-personal ministry of the Word.
- **Public Ministry** tends to move from truth toward life. **Conversational ministry** tends to move from life toward truth.
- **3 Things Jesus consistently went after** in his conversational ministry
  - 1.) People’s heartaches and sorrows – examples? [his mercy ministry and healings/exorcism are rooted in this compassion.]
  - 2.) People’s Heart-orientation – What has you in thrall? What are your functional gods? [“tell my rich brother to divide the inheritance with me!” Jesus responds to greed. The guy didn’t even go there. But it was his functional god.]
  - 3.) People’s lives – how they treat each others, how they respond in relationships [who is my neighbor, forgiveness]
- Everywhere Jesus went, marketplace, homes, “church,” in every relationship, he was a healing presence. Now imagine for a moment if everywhere you went there were healing words – imagine that. Imagine *a community* that did conversational ministry like Jesus did.
- **Sigmund Freud’s Dream** – A community where everybody was a trained psychoanalytic professional so that parents, co-workers, teachers, friends, everybody contributed conditions that were healing. He recognized that for healing to take place, more than just a few healing voices were needed in people’s lives. A healing community was the thing he kept wishing for. Where do you suppose you might find a healing community?

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,<sup>13</sup> 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,<sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (**Eph 4:11-16 ESV**)

- **Ephesians 4 implies that** the third sphere – a community of wise counsel – is the telos or end-game of the other two ministries of the Word. If church leadership is working, and the individual callings are functioning, it leads to a community of wise counsel.
- A community of wise counsel would be **saturated with God’s truth**, wouldn’t it?

<sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.<sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.<sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.<sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (**Deut 6:6-9**)

- **God-conversations** a normal part of our family culture. Normal part of our church culture. Then we’ll be a community of wise counsel. A community that “lets the word of Christ dwell in us richly.”
- **You might say, “I don’t feel I have much to contribute.”** Nonsense. If you’ve received God’s grace in any form, you have something to give. You give what you get.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (**2Co 1:3-4 ESV**)

- Here's the principle of **you give away to others what you receive from Christ**. Whether we're talking comfort, knowledge, insight, gifts, anointing, faith...we're always blessed to be a blessing. In the kingdom, the expiration date says, "Stays fresh if given away."
- **Be filled and spill.** Again, there's such a strong relationship between getting help and giving help. Getting help qualifies you to help someone else in that area, even if you continue to struggle and aren't perfect yet. Actually, getting help does more than qualify you. It obligates you. Receiving from the Lord is *always a stewardship for his purposes*. This is true whether we're talking about spiritual gifts, financial blessing, comfort in suffering, increased faith through answered prayer, increased knowledge and understanding. All of this is meant to spill out on others.
- **Cannon Corporate Prayer.** Why we do corporate prayer at the end of services and what our hope is for that time.
- **You really want to be of help to others? Live in the good of the Gospel.** Learn to receive and submit to God's grace. Stay faithful in receiving regularly from the means of grace. Empty yourself before Him in corporate worship. Don't just sing. Put your heart and voice and body and soul into it. Surrender to Him. Eagerly search for God's truth and voice in the preaching. Carve out time for the kingdom of God and eat the daily manna of prayerful meditating on Scripture in private. And really, I hope to talk more about this next week, but to be the most help you can be for others you have to be living in the good of the Gospel. If you are living under shame or holding onto sin or neglecting to feed your soul, you will reap a shriveled crop – just like a lot of the Delmarva corn fields are this year because they were parched and deprived of life-giving water. **Living in the hope and joy and love of the Gospel requires discipline on our part.**
- **Put on your oxygen mask, then help others.** Self care is imperative. It doesn't mean you wait until there's no crisis in your life. I mean, the presence of the oxygen mask tells me you're in need. Ministers of grace are always themselves in need of grace.
- **But sometimes our task isn't so simple as affixing an oxygen mask.** It isn't one-size fits all. It requires some skill. It is *wise counsel*.

"...admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted..." **1 Thess 5:14 NAS**

- **Notice that there is a different fitting response to each person based on their heart-posture.**
  - **You shouldn't encourage the unruly. You shouldn't admonish the fainthearted.**
  - **Some of us** are more emotionally oriented toward sensitivity, so **encouraging the fainthearted** will be easier for us. Others of us are more truth oriented. Things appear more black and white to us. We'll have an easier time **admonishing the unruly**. All of us are somewhere on the continuum. Each of us, because of our makeup and experiences, will struggle with some aspects of really loving people with grace and truth. Jesus was brilliant at both, and calls us to learn how to deal bravely and sensitively with both.
  - **Transition - Not just sensitive to what people need, but also looking for opportune moments when they're more receptive to help...**
- **Life Stressors Often Open Doors** – That's often when people are more receptive and responsive to the Word. This is when they're more open to revising their life's narrative. This is when they feel their weakness and interdependence more keenly. Rush to help. They're already sad. Broach the topic.
- **You are strategic in God's design for ministry.** You are uniquely situated with people. They already know you. They already trust you. And trust is what's required to really help somebody.

- People need to know that if they open up to you, you will take good care of their hearts. You won't reject them because of the mess you find there. You won't be one more in the "long line of leavers."
- **Concluding Point - Here's a commitment we're called to make to each other. "As long as it takes."** An attitude we must learn to take with each other – we often look for the quick fix, the one and done, "if you just did x, then your trouble would be gone or better." This takes the Red Sea Crossing reality and makes that the only controlling metaphor. We also have the metaphor of a slow 40 year journey. Sanctification is sometimes like that. And we need to commit to each other to walk together "as long as it takes." I'm praying for the quick deliverance because I've seen the Lord do it, but I'm prepared to suffer with you through slow growth and hard won inches of progress. Love suffers long. When you get stuck, I'm not leaving you behind. As long as it takes.