

OUTLINE

Effective vs Efficient ministry

Ways to effectively minister to yourself and others

- 1. Lead yourself well before you can lead others (you are your toughest ministry challenge)**
- 2. Retreat regularly. Divert Daily, Withdraw Weekly, Abandon annually.**
- 3. Effective ministry casts and re-evaluates vision.**
- 4. Create a “Made for Monday mentality” in your messages**
- 5. Create a “culture of prayer”**
- 6. Invest in professional development. Learn, Grow, Advance**
- 7. Implement inclusive gospel-centered teaching (be aware of the different learners)**
- 8. Develop a culture of contribution not just consumption**

Good morning from my side. For all the Africans and others from around the world, it's good afternoon or good evening.

Please make sure that you jump into that group chat area and do a post of your name and where you're from. Everybody enjoys seeing that. So glad to have all of you here.

For those who are new to the class, the best way for you to post questions during the class is to do that directly with me on WhatsApp.

I'll be reviewing those as our teacher continues, and at the end we will handle what we can.

If you have a comment you want to share with everybody about the class or the subject you can post that right there in the group chat within zoom, and that would be a great thing to do so everybody can see your comment.

As I requested, when you are admitted, please open the chat window within zoom and post your name and the country you are from.

Andrew Itson is one of our preachers at the Madison church and will be our teacher today. Andrew has been at the Madison church now for, I believe, about two years. might be a little bit longer than that. So,

Andrew, you can correct me later if you want to. Those of you who either log in to the live Facebook broadcast of the Madison Church worship service, which is about 6 or 7 or eight hours after most of you have had your worship periods, will recognize Andrew. You also have seen, Brandon Pressnell preach, because Andrew and Brandon trade back and forth each Sunday in doing the preaching. Brandon taught this class in January of 2025, and his recording is available on the UCBC website.

Today's lesson will be especially valuable to all of you who are preachers, because what Andrew will be talking about today is the preacher and his work. I expect him to spend some time talking straight to you, who are preachers. I expect that he will begin his class talking directly to your hearts and your spirits and your minds. And the reason for that is Andrew is an experienced preacher and he knows what's involved in being a preacher in the Lord's church. He knows what the challenges are, and of course, what the benefits are. And he will address to start with your OWN spiritual walk. If your own personal walk with God is not what it should be, you will not be effective in preaching in the pulpit.

As a matter of fact, your work will be hindered. So you must have your own life correct first. And if you're married, that's even more important so that your wife can be supportive of you as a preacher in the Lord's church. But when those things are in place, then Andrew, I know, is going to spend some time talking to you about the work of the preacher. I'll repeat again. After you have been admitted to the class, please post in the group your name and where you are from.

Nathan Oloumo has joined us. Nathan is from the Maasai tribe in Kenya, and was trained at a preaching school in Tanzania. Nathan, in a few moments would you lead us in an opening prayer?

After the prayer, the teaching will start.

Please go ahead Nathan.

Everlasting Father, we are so very thankful for the gift of life, for the precious blood of your son Jesus Christ on the cross for us. We come this morning to study to encourage others, brothers and sisters in Christ. Father, we pray that as we meet this morning, we pray that you will open our hearts. Lord help us to will be willing to listen to you and make the right decisions that are going to affect us, that are going to bring great encouragement to your Kingdom. Father, we pray that you bless our families, our countries, and even the congregation that we worship with. Father, we pray for your encouragement and Lord, we pray that you will continue to strengthen us and give us the ability to serve you continually as we continue doing other things.

Father, we pray that you are going to be with us, in the name of Jesus. We pray for trusting and believing. Amen.

<< Andrew's lesson... >>

Good morning. My name is Andrew, like Barry said, and I am so excited about today. I have been looking forward to this for a while, and I appreciate the invitation to get to be with you guys.

I have a wife and we have three kids, and we have been here at Madison for about four years, actually a little over four years now. And we have absolutely love it and enjoy it so, so much. And I did give Barry this heads up last night that I wasn't feeling the best. And as you can tell, based on the way I sound, I don't feel the best.

But, I'm excited about the topic that we're going to talk about today, which is the, ministers lifestyle and work. And I just want to say I love that topic, because it doesn't just deal with the preacher's work.

I've gone to a lot of different ministry workshops and ministry leadership seminars, and one of the things that I know that for years was kind of just focused on is what we do, not who we are. And so I want to spend some time first talking about who we are. And I'll explain why that is important later.

But before we get into that, I did want to say, too, that all of the main points of what I'm going to mention today are emailed to Barry. So you should be able to have some time soon. You'll either get that from email or however he sends that out to you.¹

As we begin, I want to tell you about my first few experiences in ministry, because this will help shape the points that you're going to hear about effective ministry. When I was growing up, there was a little church, that had about 15, 20 people, about 30 minutes away from us.

I was about 13 years old, and they were trying to find somebody that would come once a month and preach. And so, I went there and my sermons, were only about five minutes. Now, in America, people love that because they don't mind a short sermon-lol.

But I know in other parts of the world they would say, like what? But anyway, so we preached about five minutes and, you know, I was 13 years old, had never put together a lesson before. And so, I did that for two years. I would go to that little country congregation in a place called Marbury, Alabama, and I would do a sermon, and I'll go ahead and tell you after doing that for two years, I said, I don't want to ever preach. That's something I don't want to do. I think when I said that, God probably laughed at me and said, well, I'll show you, Andrew. And so, I end up going to Faulkner University (a church of Christ University in the USA). And I was actually studying education. I was planning to teach exercise science and science classes.

And that was kind of my plan was to be a teacher and a coach. But then while I was at Faulkner, the youth minister at the church right near that

college campus called me and said, hey, would you mind kind of helping me with the youth ministry? And so I agreed to help him with the youth ministry.

And about 3 or 4 months later, he ended up getting a preaching job. And so the elders at the church came to me and said, would you mind being the youth minister till we find somebody? So keep in mind, I'm about 19 years old. And so what ended up happening was at 19, I started doing youth ministry that next Monday.

The very first day I get a call from one of the elders and he said, hey, could you go to the Camp's family's home? One of the girls in the youth group, her dad has passed away my first day, and I was 19 years old, very unprepared.

And I remember getting in my car and driving to their house trying to think... What do I say? What do I do? I was very nervous about the whole thing, and so I remember, I got in my car and I started praying. I said, God, help me to say what this family needs me to say.

So, I was scared to death. I pulled up to their house, knocked on the door, and the mom answered the door and she hugged me and she was crying. And their daughter came to the door and she was crying. And she came up to me and said, Andrew, can we play a board game? Board game? You know, just a little game that you can play like, something between two people or something. And I was like, sure. And so for two hours, she and I played a board game called Monopoly. And it's a very long board game. And the reason why I give you that illustration is that was my very first day in ministry.

But number two, the other part of that was I had prayed that God would help me to say the right thing. And guess what? He didn't want me to say anything. He just wanted me to be there. And so that was a very eye opening thing for me as I started ministry, was to learn that not everything is dependent just on my performance and what I can do and what I can bring.

So that was my very first day as an intern, as the youth minister. Well then fast forward. I end up being the college minister at University Church of Christ near Faulkner University. And, this was my first time in full time ministry. And again, keep in mind, I said I would never preach. All right, hold on to that for just a second.

And so my very first day was on a Wednesday, and I get to the office, and I had been there maybe an hour, and the secretary told me, there's a young lady here that would like to talk with you.

I was like, okay, and she sent her down to my office and I said, hey, well, what's going on? And she said, well, last night I've been struggling with my faith and struggling with all the things that are going wrong in my family. And I, thought about committing suicide. And I thought, What?

So again, those are my first two ministry experiences.

And I kept thinking, what do I do? How do I lead in that? Okay. And so I remember kind of back to that moment where I was trying to think of, you know, what do I say? What do I not say? And truthfully, kind of like that moment with the Camp family. It's not so much about what you say, it's just that you listen and you that you're there.

And so that was my second 1st ministry experience.

Then a few years later, the church that I was working for as college minister, the preacher woke up kind of like I did today. He woke up one morning sick, but it was on a Sunday morning, and he asked me if I would preach that morning. I had never preached there before. I'd done devotionals and things like that.

But I said, I told you, "I'm not going to preach". Well, I did what he asked, and I preached that Sunday morning, and the only Sunday that I just so happened to preach at that congregation there was a family that was driving through town from Robertsdale, Alabama that was there to hear me preach. Right afterwards, that man said, would you ever be interested in preaching full time?

And I kind of laughed. I said, no, the one thing I said is, I would never preach. You know, I like doing college ministry or youth ministry and I like coaching and teaching and things, but I don't see myself doing that. And he said, well, maybe God has other plans. Well, about a week or two later, they reached out to me, talked to me, and fast forward now I'm preaching.

So I say all that to tell you...we all have expectations of what things are going to be like. I had an expectation of what my first day in ministry was going to look like. I had an expectation of what my life was going to look like. But God loves to take sometimes our expectations and flip them upside down because He has something better in mind.

And so as we get started, I want you to think about that from the perspective of being open to what God can do. Being open to God, changing a course, to changing your plans and and not to see those as inconveniences or interruptions, but divine opportunities from God to set a new course and and to see what He might grow.

And so that's a little bit about my background in ministry, which is kind of odd when I know, because now I've been preaching for, let's see, 13 years. So the person that said he would never preach has now been preaching for 13 years. So it's just kind of funny how things like that happen.

So I want to start with the difference between being effective and efficient. I don't know if those words are understood or not, but, I want to say that again, the difference between being effective and efficient. In ministry, there is a big difference between being effective and

efficient. When I first got into ministry, one of my goals was to try to be very efficient.

Here's what I mean by that. Trying to get things done, trying to get a lot of things accomplished. I had my "To-Do" list, and I was like, I'm going to check off everything on that To-Do list. And I'll give you an example. My very first week at the Robertsdale church, when I'm the full time preacher, behind me, kind of like on this wall here, here at my office, I had a a to do list for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, of all the things that I was going to do. And so the man who was one of the elders there was also a preacher for 25 years and also an elder for 20 something years. He walked in and he was like, well, you know, I hope you have a great first day.

I said thank you, I appreciate it. I'm excited about it. And he noticed on the wall behind me was my calendar of all the different things I'm going to do in every day of the week. He said, what's that behind you? I said, that's my to do list of all the things I'm going to do every week.

That's my routine. And he laughed at me and I said, are you laughing? What's so funny? He said, oh, well, you you see, ministry has a way of taking our plans and kind of throwing them out the window. He was right. After about two weeks, I realized I wasn't able to keep my schedule.

There was people that just stopped in for encouragement, or to visit, there was a funeral that I ended up doing in town. There was somebody going through a hard time spiritually. Two people popped in my office to pray. There was a Bible study that I had. There was a local school that I got asked to speak at. And so, I think it was Barry I've talked to about this and other missionaries that when it comes to our plans, especially when it comes to sharing the gospel, you write your plans in pencil, not pen, because they need to be erased at times.

So, I was focused more on being efficient, not effective. See, efficiency is about checking items off of a list and getting things done quickly. But being effective is about doing the right things and the doing the right things well. And so that's what I want to talk about for the rest of our time here, talking about ways that we can not just be efficient, but more importantly, to be effective in our work.

I know a lot of ministers and I know a lot of people that do a lot of stuff, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are effective. And so let's talk about how to be effective. Maybe you're you're sitting there and maybe you're writing notes and thinking about, all right, he's about to give me some tip about how to reach my community, how to reach the world. That's not where I want to start.

The first thing that I want to start with, is YOU. The most important first step in your ministry work is leading yourself. I want to say that again, the most important work in your ministry is you leading you. You will always be your toughest ministry challenge.

I want to say that again. You will always be your toughest ministry challenge.

I'll give you a few examples. Think about David. David was a guy, that had the title of a man after God's own heart. And he at times led a nation so well. But one thing you might remember is that David struggled to lead David.

You might remember David had been at a place where he wasn't supposed to be looking at Bathsheba, which he was not supposed to do. And then on top of that, he ends up committing adultery with her, and then he puts Uriah on the front lines. But then you fast forward because of those decisions, his family wasn't what it needed to be so he could lead everybody else well.

But you know what David struggled to do? David struggled to lead his own family well, but he struggled at times leading himself. I'll give you another example. What about Samson? Samson in the Bible is one of the greatest examples from the Book of Judges. If you remember, in the book of Judges, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Samson, and God had appointed Samson to do this.

So it's not like God saw Samson as someone that couldn't do it. He saw someone that could do the job and could lead well. But do you remember the Nazarite vow? The 3 things that he was not supposed to do? Well, he broke all of those. And there's a verse in the book of judges that says this about Samson, and it mentions it twice, that he kept walking to places he shouldn't go.

So you might not think that that's a big deal, but it said he went down to Timna. That's about a 30 mile walk. And so I've heard this quote, A journey of a thousand miles begins with one singular step. And so the, the, the place we're going to be one day is impacted by the decisions we make right now.

And so as we know, Samson again, he was physically strong and God had even given him all the things he needed to lead. But who did he struggle leading the most? It was himself. And so I say all that to say when and if we can start with leading US well, everything else will go how it needs to go.

In fact, one of the classes that I took in my doctorate was leadership theory, and the first few chapters really talked about how we lead ourselves. In fact, they had this graph. And I want you to kind of picture it like this. Here is your life right here. Okay. And then I want you to view your life in like three concentric circles, one here, one here and one here.

And the way that they talked about it is a lot of times as preachers, teachers, leaders and any way we lead, even if it's just in your family, we first try to focus on the big circle, which is the community, the people around us. And so we try to first focus on that. But what happens

is if we're only focusing on that big circle and not first this small circle, then we're not going to be able to lead other people well.

So the circles look like this. The first circle is you. The second circle is your family. Those that are kind of immediately close to you. And then the third circle is those that you know and you don't know. And so in order for you to lead all of those other people well, leadership theory says you first have to be able to lead yourself well.

Let me illustrate this way. There was this man named Hawk. And Hawk is very popular in America as far as, like, leadership. And one of the things that he said is that he studied all of the greatest leaders all around the world. And what he found was that these leaders had in common, was that that they spent 50% of their time focused on leading themselves.

So you think, well, how do I lead myself? Well, I'll go ahead and tell you.

Number 1:

I think obviously part of it is in your own prayer life. It's important for us to develop a very intentional prayer life. I know for me, I try to make it every morning before I get on my phone, and pray before I go to bed.

Pray. I'll tell you even before I preach, I pray that God will help nobody to see Andrew Itson, but help everybody to see you. And so incorporating prayer into everything, but not as just a means of checking it off a list, but as a means of dependance.

That understanding you have to have Jesus. You have to have the Lord. And so, that that's part of it.

Number 2:

Your own personal Bible study. I know for me, one of the things that I kind of struggled with is I would focus a lot of my Bible study was really just to prepare for sermons.

That's not necessarily wrong. But at the same time, I needed that personal study for myself to grow it... think it deep into my heart. And so getting back to that other thing I want to share...there's a guy named Goldman. He said exceptional leaders distinguished themselves because of superior self leadership. And again, I want to bring you back to this.

You will always be your toughest leadership challenge.

So again, the first point is to lead yourself well. Lead yourself well. And then we're going to get to point number two.

The second point that I want you to write down is to retreat, or to rest. I don't know what is a better word to use, but maybe retreat or rest. And again, you're thinking, we haven't even got to the ministry part. We're getting there. So hang on in just a second.

One of the things that we know about God is that God is a God of rhythms.

You see it all around, right? If you were to go to the ocean, you notice that there is a rhythm between the moon and the tide. Depending on where the moon is, the ocean will pull in and out. God does that in rhythm. And the waves, they crash in perfect rhythmic motion.

Think about the seasons of the year here in the USA. We have Fall and Winter and Spring and Summer. In most of Africa you have rainy seasons and dry seasons. Those seasons happen in perfect rhythmic motion. God is a God of rhythms, and one of the things we learn from Jesus's life is that he had a rhythm to life, and one of the things that Jesus routinely did was rest. He retreated.

And I'll tell you this, I used to feel really bad about retreating and resting when it came to ministry. I thought, well, I don't need to rest. I'm not, you know, I'm a minister here and I need to be, constantly doing things. Yes, but what happens is, if you don't take time to rest yourself, then you can't be for other people what you need to be.

I'll give you an example. If you look in the gospel of Mark, in Mark chapter 4 you'll notice Jesus has had a really big day. He's calmed a storm. He's healed a demon possessed man.

In chapter five, You also see how he heals a woman, and then he gets rejected by people. That's his day in ministry. Okay, so quite a busy day. Now we get to chapter six.

In Mark 6:30, look at what it says. The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all they had been done and taught.

And he said to them, go away by yourselves to a desolate place, and rest a while. For many were coming and going in. They had no leisure, even time to eat, and they went in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. This is not the first time, but an example of many, many times, where Jesus encouraged his own followers to get off by themselves.

And so one of the ways I like to put it, there's three different ways that I want you to experience rest. I have a weird way of kind of trying to remember things, so I made it try to make it simple. One of them has to do with daily, one of them has to do weekly, and the other is annually.

So here's the first one about retreat and rest. We'll call it divert daily. Divert daily. This is a time every single day where there's no phone. Maybe you go into a closet, maybe you go to, like Jesus did here, a desolate place. And you just go and pray by yourself. Spend that time in prayer between you and God.

The second one is Withdraw Weekly. Have a time every week to go outside and read the text by yourself. And it could be something that you're preaching on that week, but to withdraw weekly, one of the things I like

to do is just to go on a walk, or to go on a run, that's kind of something for me that helps me to clear my mind.

Is to get some exercise to get out walking or running and clear my mind.

The third thing is this we'll call it Abandon Annually, which is every year, spend intentional time getting away, taking time, like, maybe it's a little trip. Maybe it's, you know, just going to a place for a while where you've taken off of, of ministry.

So again, the reason why I mentioned all of this is, remember, the first thing that we talked about is that you will always be your toughest leadership challenge. In order to lead the church well, you have to be very, very intentional about leading. You will. And so Divert Daily, Withdraw Weekly and Abandon Annually. Spend that time.

And, you know, I think even about how, you know, this was a big deal to Jesus. So it should be a big deal to us.

And I want to say this too, when I first got into ministry, and part of why this is so personal to me is my wife and I had been married for about a year, and when I got to my first ministry job, one of the things I did that was not the right thing to do was every single time, because I was a college minister, every single time there was an activity on campus, I was there.

Every single time there was a opportunity to lead a devotional talk, I was there. If some of the college students called me to play a sport late at night, I dropped what I was doing, left my house and my wife, and I was there. I thought I was doing the right thing by doing everything, but guess what ended up happening?

I was more focused on my ministry than my own wife. And so that's why I'm telling you that there is a big difference between being effective, and efficient. I was more focused on being efficient, and because of that, I was not effective. When I started taking time to focus on myself spiritually, and also when I started to take time to lead my wife spiritually.

That's when ministry got better. And so lead yourself well. Burnout is a real thing, and so lead yourself. If you have a family, lead your family well. All right.

So now we're going to get to the ministry part.

The 3rd point. Effective ministry.

Cast Vision and Reevaluate Vision. I want to say that again.

Effective ministry. Cast vision and reevaluate vision.

And if you're just joining us, Barry mentioned earlier that I've been dealing with a little bit of, sickness and cold, this morning. So, my

apologies for having to take a few breaks to, get my voice where it needs to be.

So, point number three, effective ministry - Cast Vision and Reevaluate Vision.

Proverbs 29:18 says this.

"Where there is no vision, the people will perish."

The word vision is a word that has been thrown around a lot. But it's important to define what vision is. Vision is not the same thing as a goal. Vision is also not the same thing as a theme. Those are all different terms.

You might have themes for your church.

Something like... you're going to focus on sowing the seed of the kingdom or making disciples. Those are really good themes. But vision is the picture of where you want to be, say, in one year or five years.

And when you think about vision, it's the bridge between the present and the future. So one of the things that's so important in your ministry is that every year, every single year, is to evaluate your vision and cast a vision.

Now what do you talk about? Well, here's what I mean. One of the things that we started when I was at the Robertsedale congregation was when I was with our shepherds, once a year we would get together with our elders and our deacons. Now, it depends on your context. Some of you may not have elders.

It may just be with some different leaders in the church. But what we did is we got together and we spent time in prayer first. And then what we did is we the way we did it is we looked at all the different ways that God has called the church to lead and to make a difference, and we said, all right, so how are we doing that here at this church? Are we leading in this way.

And we ranked ourselves. Then once we figured out what we were doing well and what we weren't doing well, we would honestly ask ourselves, how can we do better at that? And what does that actually look like? And so what we did is we cast a vision for ourselves of it.

One year we said, "By the end of the year, the Robertsedale Church of Christ is going to be more outreach focused and getting to know people in our community." Very intentional. That's the vision. But then what you do after you cast that vision, you then put in goals, goals or how the vision takes place. That's why I'm telling you there's a difference between vision and goals.

Vision is what it looks like, but goals are how you get there. And so we would establish for ourselves no more than 2 or 3 goals. You don't want

20 goals. That's going to be difficult to keep up with. We had just a handful like 2 or 3 goals and we tried to accomplish those.

Then we would check back in about 5 or 6 months and say, How are we doing with those goals? How are we doing with that vision? So if you'll notice kind of what we did here, it wasn't just casting vision, it was also reevaluating vision. So my encouragement to you is this.

However, you need to do it in your context, I encourage you to spend time in prayer and discussions with your church leadership. We had to spend a whole day doing this. We retreated as a staff for the whole day and said, all right, what do we need to do better? Where can we grow?

Where have we seen the most spiritual growth in our life? And how can we bring that to life at Robertsdale, at Madison, and wherever we are, and then establish some goals...just 2 or 3 of how you get there. Then six months later, reevaluate that and see where you are.

Here's the next point.

Create a Made for Monday mentality.

Create a Made for Monday mentality.

Our first day of the week when Americans go to work is on Monday. And of course, like you, we worship on Sunday. But then Monday is the day we first go to work.

So one of the things that we try to do in our ministry, and that's in our preaching, our teaching, is to connect what happens on Sunday to Monday. That's why I call it a Made for Monday mentality.

There's a man named Sebastian Trager. He wrote a book and he said the gospel spreads the fastest on the wings of business.

I want to say again that the gospel spreads the fastest on the wings of business.

He's basically saying that one of the greatest ways and the greatest opportunities to spread the gospel is through the work that you're already doing. So here's what you need to do. You need to think about your church members. Maybe they work in a market, or they fish, or they farm, or drive.

Maybe they work in an office. Whatever you preach about have points of how they can bring that message in that gospel to their work, and to teach them how to have that Made for Monday mentality.

One of the ways that I've done it before is after I preach on Sunday, on Monday I will send a message to members (maybe on Facebook or Whatsapp) or a short point about what I preached about the day before, and it will say, for instance, this past week we talked about the narrative of Ruth

and how Naomi said, Ruth, I you stay where you're at, I'm going to go back to Bethlehem and and Ruth says, no,

I want to go with you. Wherever you go, I'm going to go where you go, stay where you stay. And she mentions that, remember in Ruth chapter one. And so one of the things that I did is just a day later, I posted on our churches Facebook page. I said, hey, a just a reminder of what we talked about on Sunday.

But if someone's going through a hard time, point them to the who, which is God, and say, hey, where do you need me? Like, what? Do you need me to bring you a meal? Do you need me to pray with you? Whatever it is? And so doing something like that, whatever you talked about on Sunday, give them a simple reminder and an what I like to call an action step.

Something that is easy to do. One of the ones we did before here at Madison was we talked about serving other people, and we gave them this, this reminder do for one person what you wish you could do for every person. And so that was really the idea of think about just one thing that you could do for somebody and do that thing on Monday.

So those are different ways to develop what we call a Made for Monday mentality.

Here's the next point.

Create a culture of prayer within your church.

Create a culture of prayer within the church.

A few years ago, right when I was about to leave Robertsdale and come to Madison, I reached out to Freed Hartman University, Faulkner University and Harding University (Universities supported by churches of Christ in America), and I asked them. I said, hey, could you guys please just give me, in your opinion, the fastest growing churches in America, who those are? And I took all of those different names, and I noticed that there were three churches that were mentioned in all of the list of what people believe were growing the fastest.

This means that the most people coming to their buildings worshiping and being involved. So then what I did is I called those three churches and I said, what would you say is the main reason that you think you have grown? And one of the churches is interesting.

Both of them mentioned the exact same thing. They mentioned a different way, but they mentioned the same thing. One of them said this. They said, well, at our church, one of the things that we have is what we call a culture of prayer. And what that means is, is that whenever we have somebody going through a difficult time, if they if you're out in the at the church building and they and you're like, hey brother, how are you doing?

And they said, well, I'm not doing very good. I've had a tough time at work. You don't just say, we'll pray for you and walk away. He said. We

spend the time right then, right there and pray with people. And one of the points he brought out is he said we did a study of prayer. And one of the things that you'll notice in Scripture, unless it was Paul writing a letter that people didn't just tell each other they were praying for him.

Like if there was a time that needed to have prayer, guess what they did? They prayed. They didn't talk about it. They did it. And and so he said, that's one of the things that we've done. The other church I called said, one of the things that we focus on a lot is is praying with each other.

It helps us to, number one, bring God into the room. But it also, number two, gives us, a deeper connection with each other. He said, imagine for just a second if you told somebody, hey, I'm praying for you. Well, that'll mean something. But don't you think it means way more when you take the time right then, right there to stop what you're doing and pray with that brother and sister in Christ immediately, not later.

And so we did this at Madison a few years ago, and we had a whole series on different moments in Scripture where people stopped and prayed with each other and in. And what we did is we noticed it made a huge impact. I mean, we're still seeing it today where people are stopping and praying with each other immediately.

And and it has been awesome, awesome, awesome. And so here's how you could start this at your church. First, I got to tell you, it starts with you. It starts. It's not just something you preach about. It's something you are going to have to do that if you see a need here, a need in you, take the time right then to bow your head and pray for that person.

What I'm saying is it becomes, kind of contagious... that other people do it and it starts to catch on. And so what happens is it's not about then the location, but it's about just taking advantage of every single moment. So that's the next point. Create a culture of prayer.

Here's the next point. This one's kind of quick.

It won't take as long. Invest in professional development. Invest some time in professional development. Professional development. That's the way in America. And it may be there too, where we talk about maybe going to a ministry workshop, doing something like you're doing right now, getting on these zooms with Barry, to grow yourself spiritually.

One of the things that I try to do is every year I try to go to at least one ministry workshop, but the other thing that I try to do is I always try to be reading something like, right now I'm reading a book on leadership theory, and so that's really helping me in my family.

It's helping me in my own life. For me to learn how to lead myself well. So invest, make sure that you're always doing something to invest yourself into helping you get better at what you do. Maybe it's reading preaching books, maybe it's going to a workshop or doing things like this. So that's the the next point.

Here's the next one.

Implement inclusive gospel centered teaching. Implement inclusive gospel centered teaching. Here's what I mean by that is in your audience. Every time you preach, you're going to have little kids, you're going to have adults, you're going to have people that have been in the church for years, and you're also going to have people that have never stepped foot into a church building.

You're going to have people that can read. You're going to have people that cannot read. And the reason why I mention that is that they have done studies that most people today, and a large part of this is because of cell phones and social media. Most people right now are actually visual learners. They learn by watching and seeing things.

And so you think, well, what does that have to do with my preaching? Well, I would encourage you in your lesson whenever you preach, not just to only give words or to say it again whenever you preach, don't just give words. Maybe what you can do in the middle of your lesson if they if it's maybe you're talking about being the light of the world for Matthew chapter five and you tell them right.

Light changes things. So in your work, maybe what you can do is, is say, all right, during your sermon, when you get to Matthew 5:16, you talk about being the light of the world. You say, I want everybody in the audience to write down one way that I can be light. And so everybody in the audience takes that time and writes that.

Now that's an example of a way to kind of not just preach words, to let them put themselves there. Maybe it's a visual I like to show either. Maybe it's like a video or a picture of something for people to see it. What's interesting is most learners are visual learners, so it helps them to see something. But then being engaged, like writing something down, is the second biggest group, which is kinesthetic.

And so I guess what I'm saying is think about the fact that you have a lot of different people in your audience with a lot of different backgrounds that learn in a lot of different ways. Find ways to include all of them. But here's the main thing make sure in every single message, the gospel is the center of it all.

It doesn't matter if you're preaching Old Testament. It doesn't matter if you're preaching the judges, the prophets. Everything points to Jesus. Everything is an opportunity for the gospel. And so I want to encourage you with that.

Here's my final point.
Create a culture of contribution, not just consumption.

What is that again? A culture of contribution, not just consumption.

I'll give you the example. Do you remember in John chapter 4, right after Jesus met the woman at the well and she was the lady that had five

husbands, and the guy that she was living with at that time wasn't her husband. Jesus offered her a brand new life, forgiveness.

Well, she then goes into the town and Jesus ends up having nothing to eat or drink. His disciples walk up, and they say, Rabbi, eat something. Do you remember what he said? He said, my food is to do the will of the one who sent me. Now what he's saying is, I know you're thinking about how can I take care of me?

But what I want you to think about is, how can you take care of the needs of other people? I'll give you another example. In the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 29:7, that this group of followers of God were exiles. They were living in a place they didn't want to live in the culture around them didn't agree with God.

And so what he said is this if you seek the welfare of the city where I sent you, you will find welfare. What he means by that is, if you want things to be different, then you go be it. And so when we talk about creating a culture of contribution, that's what we're talking about, is looking for ways within the body of Christ to to help people see beyond themselves and to see other people.

So how do we do this? Well, there's this book I read recently that said, if you could sum up Jesus's ministry in two things, it would be this breaking bread and washing feet. Breaking bread and washing feet. Now here's what that means. One of those has to do with hospitality and fellowship, which is breaking bread, spending time around the table.

The second one, washing feet, has to do with service. So let's first focus on the first one. Break bread. If you've ever read the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is constantly sitting around the table with people. One guy said this, that Jesus is either at a table, leaving a table, or going to a table in the Gospel of Luke, he's sitting around the table all the time, and the table was a place of fellowship, but it was also a place of outreach.

So I would encourage your members to invite people into their homes and sit around the table to have meals together, that the meal is a very special moment. It's a place that helps people feel loved and to feel connected. The second one is to wash feet, and when I say wash feet, what we're specifically talking about is acts of service for Jesus.

When he, you know, he's if you remember, his disciples were arguing about which one of them was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And when they were arguing about which one of them was going to be the greatest, Jesus did not preach a sermon. Do you know what he did? He got down on his hands² and knees and washed their feet.

Now, today, we don't really necessarily need to wash feet physically, but what he is giving us an example of is that when we have dirty feet and

²Transcript of Andrew Itson lesson on The Preacher & His Work

proud hearts, kind of like those guys that the the greatest way to impact other people is by serving them. And so a way we could wash feet is to look around and see the needs that are in our community.

Now, I'll give you an example. I looked up in our area where we live and looked at the greatest fears and the greatest things people are concerned about in our area is are these two safety like, you know, am I going to feel safe? The other one is addiction recovery. Maybe they're addicted to alcohol or drugs.

And the other one was hunger. There's kids in our school systems and people in our area that don't know where their next meal is coming from. So knowing that those are the main three concerns of people in our area, that kind of gives us a window into maybe different ways that we can serve. So those are the main points and kind of want to go through those real quick.

Just to remind you of what we talked about, that there's a big difference in effective and efficient ministry. Be effective. And then the efficiency will take care of itself.

Here's the first point.

Lead yourself well. You need to lead yourself. You are always going to be your your toughest ministry.

Challenge number two.

Retreat. Be like Jesus. Take time to rest. Take time away. To get yourself where you need to so you can serve other people.

Number three.

Evaluate and cast vision.

Number four.

Create a Made for Monday mentality in your sermons.

Number five.

Create a Culture of prayer.

Number six.

iInvest in professional development.

Number seven.

Implement inclusive gospel teaching.

Keeping the gospel at the center but being inclusive of the different learning styles.

Number eight.

Develop a culture of contribution and not just consumption.

That's all the things that I have prepared. I appreciate your time so much. But I love you all. And I want to say this. I appreciate so, so

much all that you do. You are such a blessing and such an encouragement. And it's encouragement to me just to spend this time with you.

And we all bring different, valuable things to the table. And I want you to know you are so valuable. And what you do is valuable. Love and appreciate you all.

Fantastic, as I knew it would be Andrew.

Thank you for the initial time spent in talking about working on 'self'. That's something that you spent the first 15 or 20 minutes on that. Frankly, I have not spent enough time on in encouraging our brethren, in Africa. And this is both the preachers and those who do not preach. And also all of our ladies, you ladies serve in amazing ways in your churches. I know what you do. I see what you do. And so do the church members. And, Andrew, while it is different things that those ladies do in a lot of the churches in Africa, then what our ladies do at the Madison church or here in the US, they're still serving the Kingdom. They're doing the necessary things that have to happen, in it might be some things in our congregation.

In a lot of churches in Africa, it would be arriving early under the large tree so that they can carry chairs for everybody to sit in. But I go back to Andrew's original point in the lesson, if you as an individual Christian are not focusing on what you need to do for yourselves, you will run out of energy from everybody calling on you.

But my point is, I just thank you so much for making such an effort to make that so clear. I don't think it was an insignificant part of your lesson. I think it was probably the most significant and most basic part of your lesson, because you can't do the rest of those things if you don't do those things for yourself first.

Well, let me add to it with this point that if I may and again, right now, I'm speaking directly to my brothers that preach on the African continent. And if you happen to be the wife of one of those or even the church member, but you're not the person that preaches regularly, then you carry this message to your preacher, okay, please listen to me closely.

The growth of your churches in Africa, for most of you if not all, the growth of your congregation is number one dependent on God, not on you. You know it is not your amazing ability to speak or your dynamic delivery of your message. Those are not the things that will make your church grow. What will make your church grow is the proper and humble appeal to God. To give you wisdom and to bless your efforts.

One more.

That is the main point. Okay. So those things are not going to happen if your preaching is about you. I'll give an illustration that many of you in Africa will understand immediately. In a lot of your communities, there are denominational preachers whose preaching is about themselves.

It's about their flowing robes. It's about the fact that they claim to be able to heal people. It's about the fact that they claim to be prophets. It's about the fact that they claim to be able to bring God's physical blessings into your life, if you will give them some of your money. And many of you guys as preachers, deal with these things all the time.

I know... you talk to me about it and what I'm trying to emphasize to you is that in the same way that the Madison church will be blessed with growth, your church will be blessed with growth when you are not the focus of that growth. Right, Andrew?

Andrew:

That's right. So, brothers, please... and I mentioned this earlier, but there's a preacher over here that I really love and respect.

And, and I asked him as I was getting into ministry in getting to preach full time, I said, well, what is one piece of advice, that he said, never think that it's you that's going to change somebody or your perfect presentation or anything like that. And he said, in fact, that's why before he said, I do, I do three prayers every week.

The Monday before I preach. I pray God help lead me to the right things that I need to hear, but also my people need to hear.

Number two, the morning it is that I'm supposed to preach. I get to the building before everybody else, and I pray for the people and for me, and that they will see God.

And he said, then I pray right before I'm about to walk up, and here's my prayer, my prayers that nobody will see me but see God. And so I'm in when I'm standing on the very front row before I walk up to preach, I literally pray, Dear God, help nobody to see Andrew but to see God. And then I get up and I'm telling you all that that has made the biggest difference.

I know this lesson has been a blessing to all of you today. I know that it has, because I know your hearts. I know what you communicate with me about all the time. The challenges you tell me about the problems. So I'm going to go back to two points.

Here's the first. Andrew made this so well having a to do list so that you don't forget things that you want to accomplish is not bad. There's nothing wrong with that. Right?

Andrew, I know you made this point, and that way we do try to do what it is we want to do. All of you, or almost all of you have heard me say, I don't make promises to you that I don't intend to fulfill. And almost all of you African brothers and sisters have heard me say that, or seen me send that message in WhatsApp.

Well, I can't do that without keeping a list of what those things are that I promise. Right? So yes, a to do list is valuable. And I know that

Andrew uses to do list maybe differently than you did several years ago. Right, brother? But the second thing being and I just, I think it was so valuable this point that he made, just like they did to encourage us at the Madison church to do he and Brandon several months ago, is do one thing today that you wish you could do for everyone.

Okay, so let me encourage all of you. I know most of your living circumstances. I know the day to day challenges that you have sometimes just finding food to eat for your children. And then you wake up the next day and you have to do the same thing again.

So I'm aware of those challenges. I'm aware of the fact that many of you show up to preach or to attend worship on a Sunday morning, only to find out that there's a family that is starving, or that a child has died, or tragically, as I've been told over the last six weeks, a mother in a refugee camp has taken her life because she can't feed the kids and she knows that somebody or she hopes that somebody will take her children and feed them if she is gone. If she's not here.

Those are serious, heavy burdens to bear. But how can you approach that successfully as a minister? I go back to Andrew's point...try to do one thing for one person each day, even though you may wish you could do that one thing for everybody.

Don't let that keep you from doing the one thing.

Andrew, again, thank you for the wonderful lesson. I'll give you an opportunity to say one last thing or finish up, if you will.

After Andrew has a final comment, would you please lead us in a closing prayer? Oh, and that'd be great. And I'll let you know when to start that. And then, because so many of you enjoyed it so much when we did this last month, after Andrew has his final comment, and when Brother Edwin leads us in a closing prayer, you are all welcome to unmute after the prayer.

After the prayer, after the prayer, you're welcome to unmute. Now, no one will be able to say anything that anybody can understand, but it will be complete and utter chaos. And that's okay. But I want you to know that you're speaking to your brothers and sisters from around the world. Please do not unmute until after the prayer. So we'll let Andrew have his final comment.

Then brother Edwin will lead our prayer, and then we will unmute and have chaos for 30 seconds. Before I end the meeting, let me say this to you, Brother Edwin. It is such a pleasure and a joy to see you, brother. It's been years since I was blessed to get to come to Cebu. And God willing, I'll get to do it again.

Thank you so much for, letting me join this, program. Thank you so much. It's a great opportunity for me to learn more about the word of God. Excellent. All right, Brother Andrew, give us your parting words, and then Edwin will lead us in prayer. Thank you guys so much for all that you do.

Every man and woman that is on here, I want you to know how much we love you, but more importantly, how much God loves you and appreciate you so, so much. And thank you, Barry two, for the time to get to be together with you guys. I would love to get to see you all in person and just to meet you, but again, thank you for what you do and you will definitely be in my prayers.

Thank you Andrew. Brother Edwin, please lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we thank you for your word that has been, shared with us today. We ask that, you would help us not only hear your message, but to understand it and apply it to our lives. Grant us the grace to live out what we have learned, and to be a reflection of your love and truth in the in the word that we have heard this, today, this evening. Thank you so much for Brother Andrew. Thank you so much for the nice a wonderful message. We learn a lot for the Christian living, especially to those who are leading the church. Thank you so much, father God, I hope this, program will continue and will gather more people. And, thank you so much for the opportunity also that you have been given to us. And forgive us. Forgive us our sins as we continue serving you. Help us, Lord. Give us strength and all these things. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Brother Edwin, I have one other request from you. What is the name of your native language?

Our national language is Tagalog. Would you do something for me? Do you have your Bible in front of you?

And now Edwin is going to read, John 3:16 to us in Tagalog from the Philippines.

"Sapagkat gayon na lamang ang pag-ibig ng Diyos sa sangkatauhan, kaya't ibinigay niya ang kanyang kaisa-isang Anak, upang ang sinumang sumampalataya sa kanya ay hindi mapahamak, kundi magkaroon ng buhay na walang hanggan

Brethren, it doesn't matter whether it is Kpele from Liberia or Efe from Ghana or Nuer from South Sudan or Afrikaans from South Africa or English or Arabic or French or Kiswahili. It makes no difference. The message from God is the same to all of us through Scripture, and that's why it's so important that we spend our time there.