



New Day Church

Need a fresh start?

EVERYDAY PEOPLE

*Meghan Henderson
New Day Church
Federal Way, WA
May 13, 2007*

Ok – show of hands. How many of you are road trip people? I *want* to be so badly. I think it sounds so fun and spontaneous and down to earth. Especially after watching *Cars* about a million times with Laina. Have you guys seen that? It's such a good movie. And it really shows how a slower pace of life is so much better. But no matter how many times I watch cars, I hate driving. I guess it's not driving per se, but driving for long periods of time. I get so bored and restless and I just want *to get there!* The whole trip along Route 66 thing? Not going to happen. I think that the love of road-trips was forever ruined for me by being raised by a mom who worked for the airlines. We flew EVERYWHERE. It was cheaper than buying gas. And it is so much faster! Really, I'm spoiled. And now, when I don't work for the airlines and we have to pay for tickets. . . well, we don't really go places that are far away very often. It's not much fun for anyone when I'm just irritated the whole time. For some reason, plane rides aren't the same for me. Still a means to an end, but such a more enjoyable "means" for me. Maybe it's because I can read on the plane without getting sick. . .

Our values are kind of like a plane ride. . .or a road trip. . .or whatever means of transportation *you* enjoy. They're not the gospel. They're not the "why" of New Day's existence. We *exist* To build a worshipping community of all kinds of people, that will be a living testimony to the power of the gospel and the reality of God's kingdom – like our vision statement says. That's where we're going. Our core values are the "how" that we use to get there.

So here it is – value number 4:

Every Christian is a Minister. All believers are called to full-time ministry – whatever their job may be.

Of all of New Day's 7 Core Values, I think this is the most intimidating and easiest one to tune out. Worship is central? I agree. Truth must be well told? Yes – that is important. The church is a mission outpost? Sounds great! But Every Christian is a minister? *I* am a minister? Yeah right. That's Jeff's job, isn't it? Isn't that why we pay pastors and support missionaries? So that the people who are *good* at being ministers can do it full time and so that those of us who aren't. . .well, . . . don't have to?

I mean, we have GOOD reasons for not being ministers, don't we? We don't know enough. Or we're too young. Or too old. Or too busy. Or our past is too sketchy. Or

we don't have the right personality. Or we don't want to. We have excuses. And most of them really good ones! So . . . every Christian is a minister. . . can we just skip that one? Or if not, can I at least kind of tune out for it? Well, as you may have gathered, we're not going to skip it, and I'm going to beg you not to tune out, because this is something that is at the very core of what God desires for our lives both as individuals and as a church.

As we get started, let me make one thing very clear. We are talking a lot about how we live our lives as Christians today. But this is not about working hard enough to earn our salvation, or doing enough to earn God's love. Those things are completely free to us. Jesus earned our salvation through his death on the cross. Bought and paid for. We can do nothing to earn it or deserve it. And God loves us fully and completely. What we're talking about this morning is how we live in response to that fact.

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brothers (and sisters!), in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

Paul spends the first 11 chapters of Romans basically giving a complete, thorough treatise on the Gospel – explaining exactly what it is that God did for us. Then before he starts talking about how our lives as Christians should look, *this* is what he says. It is in view of God's mercy that we are to offer our lives to God. It's not out of obligation or in an effort to earn something. It is out of GRATITUDE.

SO, now that that foundation is out there, let's just take a little closer look at this value itself. "Every Christian is a minister." Every Christian. Not just the "super Christians". . . the people who we think have it so much more together than us. Not just the Christians who have been Christians for a certain length of time or who have memorized some of the Bible or who have a certain kind of personality. This value is about every single one of us who believes in God and believes that he sent his son Jesus to pay for our sin with his death on the cross. . . and believes that he raised up from the dead, and that through him we can have eternal life. If you believe that, then you are the "every Christian" we're talking about today.

And we're saying that every Christian is "a minister". What in the world does that mean? Well, let's be really clear that the word "minister" here isn't synonymous with preacher or pastor as we think of those roles today. In Webster's New World Dictionary, a minister is defined as:

A person acting for another as agent and carrying out given orders or designs.

The "person" here that we're acting on behalf of is God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

So basically, each Christian's role is to act as God's agent, carrying out his orders or designs. Aah! That sounds like a pretty overwhelming role! But I don't believe it's as complicated as it sounds. . .or as we sometimes make it out to be.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus calls us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt affects flavor, and light affects vision. It reminds me of the verse that says– “Taste and See that the Lord is Good.” It is our job to be salt and light – to enable people, when they look at our lives, to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” Or like Jesus says in Matthew 5, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” While being Christ's ambassadors is an amazing responsibility to be entrusted with, it's also simple. Not always easy, but very simple. We're to live our lives as big arrows that point people to Jesus.

There are two main places that God desires for us to be ministers.

The first is that we are to be ministers in the church.

God never intended for Christianity to be done alone. So much so, in fact, that he calls us “the Body of Christ.” Once we're believers, we become a part of a much greater whole. The Bible never really gives us the option of being “Lone Ranger” Christians. First Corinthians says

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church; every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing.

We EACH are an important part of the body of Christ.

No one is left out – no one is forgotten.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Not “some” of you. Not “most” of you. Not just the ones who have been Christians a really long time or just the ones who know the bible really well. EACH OF US!

But, while we are each a part of the body of Christ, we are each *different parts* of that body. Paul explains the metaphor of the “body” of Christ even further in that passage.

Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where

would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

WE'RE NOT ALL SUPPOSED TO BE THE SAME!

The idea is not that we each be a Jeff. Or a Marisa. Or a Derek. But that we be OURSELVES. It's easy to look at the different roles that we see people in at church, and think "well, I can't do THAT" and then conclude that maybe we don't really have a place in ministry. We think the only ministries are teaching a class, playing or singing with the music team, helping out in the nursery, or being a greeter. And if I don't like to teach, or can't sing, or. . .can I say this? . . .*don't like kids*. . .then feel like I don't really have a "slot". But here's the thing: the point isn't to fill up your schedule up with more tasks and duties. Absolutely, the business of ND needs to be taken care of. The rooms and equipment aren't going to set themselves up. The kids need teachers in their classrooms, and the band needs people to play the instruments. But, while that may be a piece of your ministry at ND, that's not the whole picture. Ministry is so much broader than that!

Here is some of the ministry I've seen taking place at New Day:

When Derek was gone for 4 weeks with work when Kate was still an infant and I was still adjusting to having 2 kids, Lisa Johnston came over to my house and watched my girls so I could get out of the house for a few hours

While we're talking about the Johnston family, Scott has started coming to our small group to play with the *eight* little ones so the grown-ups can actually have a discussion. Trust me. . .That is ministering to our whole group – the grown-ups AND the kids.

Or people in our church helping each other out with home-repair projects that are a little too overwhelming to do alone. That's ministry.

Or people who bring food over to families who are dealing with illness or have a new baby.

Or sending a note of appreciation or encouragement

Or telling someone a hard truth that it may be easier to just not talk about.

Or doing whatever it is that *you do*- whatever "your thing" is- as a service to God within his body. Listen to this. In Exodus, when God's people are working on the Temple, it says:

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of

work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers – all of them master craftsmen and designers.

I think so often we divide things into “spiritual” and “not.” “Spiritual” would include things like praying, teaching about the bible, leading a small group, talking about Jesus. You know, *spiritual things*. And “not”? Well, everything else, you know? Cooking dinner. Building things. Doing crafts. Going to work. But God doesn’t see things that way – it’s a false dichotomy. God’s Spirit was a part of giving Bezalel and Oholiab their skills. He saw them as completely valuable, and viable ministry. Why? Because they were giving of themselves to be about God’s work. God wanted a Temple built, so they jumped on board.

Real ministry often looks so different from what we think of in our nice little ministry boxes. Ministry is what happens when we offer all we have, all of our personality and skill and talent and even our weaknesses to GOD, for him to use as he wishes, to benefit the rest of his body or build his kingdom.

Ministry within the church isn’t only about helping out in a program. It’s about being Jesus’ ambassador to the people in this body of believers – letting him use us to love and encourage and confront and meet needs within this group of people. That is being an ambassador. That is ministry within the body of Christ.

The second place that God desires us to be ministers is out in the world.

For some of you, this is what fires you up. The idea of telling people out there about Jesus is enough to make you jump up out of bed in the morning, ready to go. For others of us. . .notice I say “US”, . . .this thought is enough to make us break out in a cold sweat. The idea that we may even possibly, potentially be perceived as a narrow-minded Christian, trying to shove our beliefs down someone else’s throat. . .well, it’s enough to completely paralyze us. But this isn’t about standing on a corner with a sign on your back that says “Repent! The kingdom of God is near!!” Nor is it necessarily about being the next Billy Graham. For some people it *is* – that may be your gift and your personality. If it is, USE IT! The world needs a few more Billy Grahams! But if that is not “you,” you can still be a minister in the world. Not only “can” you be, you are still *called* to be.

In his book “Roaring Lambs,” Bob Briner says

Being (Christians) is not about special days, special emphases, special people, and special professions. Rather it is about everyday people doing everyday jobs with a very special goal – that of effectively representing Christ in all areas of society. Our churches should exist for this.

I love that. So much, in fact, that I’m going to read it again.

I don't need a special job to be Jesus' ambassador. I need to change my mindset about the job I'm doing right now, so that I can be about "effectively representing Christ" in the area of society I'm a part of right now.

Let me tell you a little something about my job right now. It feels really small. I am a stay-at-home mom with a three-year-old and an almost one-and-a-half year old. I am with small people all day in my small house doing small things – like making PB&J's, breaking up fights. I know deep down that what I'm doing is important and relevant in the lives of my children. But it doesn't FEEL that way in day-in, day-out life with toddlers. Rather than relevant, what I do feels trivial. But what God has been doing over the past 3 years has been showing me that it's not my job that is small. It's my mindset. I feel like. . .well, like a good friend once said to me, "a trained monkey could do most of what I do throughout the day." But the TRUTH is different from what I feel. The *truth* is that I am in the middle of the biggest opportunity to "go and make disciples" that I will ever have. Raising my children. Who else will I EVER have this much opportunity to "show Jesus to"? I just need a different mindset. I need to see the big picture.

I think this lesson translates to our whole lives. Whether we're working as a teacher, salesman, Weyerhaeuser or Boeing employee, or a truck driver. Whether we're on the PTA, the homeowner's association. . .whatever it is we do with our days. Whether you are head-over-heels in love with your job or have to drag yourself out of bed every morning. Our days are an ongoing list of things to be accomplished. . .most of which has nothing to do with what we usually think of as "ministry." Kind of like PB&J's and changing diapers. But God wants to change our mindset. He wants us to see that he has us exactly where he has us on purpose.

Doing ministry in the world isn't always about changing *what* we do. It's about changing how we see it.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

One way that we can live as Christ's ambassadors is to work at whatever we do with our whole heart. Work as if God himself is the one who asked us to do this job. . .because he *did*. . .and like we want to bring a smile to his face by doing it well. Like I said before – this is not earning his favor. This is living out of gratitude.

That may not sound like ministry. It's completely between you and God. But the thing is, I think this is what everything hinges on.

I may not do one single different activity in my day, but if I see the things I do as not only meeting the demands of my boss or my children, not just fulfilling my own needs, not just biding my time until I can get to what's *really* important, but as a part of fulfilling what God has for me to do on this particular day, it changes things. And I believe the people around us will notice. I think that is part of how we "let our lights shine before

men so that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven,” as Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5.

You know something else I’ve noticed? As we attempt to honor God with the day in, day out activities of our lives. . .as we attempt to see our lives as ministry. . .as we attempt to be the light of Jesus to the people around us, God will make us look more like Jesus. It’s a slow process. But when we do ministry, however it looks, . . .for some reason God uses that to grow *us* just as much as he uses it to change the world. Just ask any of the people who’ve gone on one of the trips to D’Iberville.

You guys, we serve such a good God. It’s not just our initial salvation that God cares about. He wants a relationship with us. He doesn’t just forgive us and then call it good. He wants to walk with us through the daily routine. He wants to see us healed of the sin that frustrates us so much – whether it’s an anger problem, low self-esteem, lack of self-discipline or self-control, tendency to speak badly about other people. . .the things that drive us crazy about ourselves. And the things we don’t even recognize in ourselves yet – he wants to deal with those too. He wants to heal us up. And he uses the details of life to do that. It’s like in James chapter 1 –

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

If we allow Him to, God will use the things we go through in life to mature our faith. God uses our attempts to live our lives as ministry not only to build his kingdom in the world and in the church, but also inside of us.

One more thing that happens when we are intentionally doing what we’re doing for *God* is that we will be more aware of opportunities that come up to speak truth.

Just so you know, that thought scares me like crazy. I have such a hard time sharing what I believe with people who might not agree. But I do know that if we are looking at our lives as ministry, we will see opportunities to talk about our faith that we wouldn’t have otherwise. And I know this too: God can give us courage to do things that make us uncomfortable. He’s done it for me before. One time a co-worker of mine was going through some major family crisis. She had talked about it a number of times. Finally, one morning as she was talking about it, it was as if God said “pray with her, Meghan.” And, you know what? I did. And guess what. It was hard. I was nervous and my voice was probably shaky. But I did. And it wasn’t as hard as I anticipated. And she was really appreciative. Now if you’re comfortable talking about your faith, that probably sounds like nothing. But for me, it was huge.

As you can see, I have a lot of growing to do in this area. I don’t have any stories about sharing the gospel with someone and them giving their lives to Jesus right there on the spot. But that’s where I’m at for now, and as I see my life more and more as ministry, I believe that God will give me more courage in that area. As I become more concerned

with effectively representing Christ I am confident that I will become less concerned with what other people think of me. Does that mean God's going to turn me into the next Billy Graham? Maybe. Probably not. But it does mean that I'll be more like the Meghan Henderson he created me to be. God can work with us where we're at. He's not surprised by our weaknesses or our anxiety. If we're open to allowing him to work through us, he will.

Another thing about speaking the truth. . . In a society where tolerance is "king", I think most of us get the feeling that "Christian" is one of the few things it's *not* ok to be. Christians are Judgmental and narrow-minded, right? But I think that stereotype of Christianity is so *off*. Not that it's never true. Unfortunately, it is. . . more often than I'd like to admit. But it's so unlike Jesus. Really.

Look at Jesus' life. Who did he hang around? The Pharisees pointed out time and again that Jesus was hanging out with tax collectors and *sinners*. Of course, we're all sinners. The Pharisees knew that. That wasn't the point. Jesus was hanging out with the bottom rung of society. The tax collectors – they totally took advantage of people, and everyone knew it. Nobody liked them! Again and again, we find Jesus in the company of the religious outsiders. Prostitutes. Adulterers. Lepers. Outcasts. What I find remarkable is not so much that Jesus was comfortable around them, but that *they* were comfortable around *Jesus*. The most pure, holy, perfect man to ever walk the face of the earth. God in the flesh. I mean, if anyone had the right to judge, he did.

But he wasn't speaking judgment to them – he was speaking the words of eternal life. It's not that Jesus never spoke harsh words. He did. Quite a few of them. But guess who he reserved them for. The religious people. Those who claimed to already know God, but weren't living like they did. The sinners. . . he embraced. The fact that Christianity is perceived as narrow-minded and judgmental tells me we must have something wrong. We're not doing Christianity like Jesus did.

Being open to speaking truth when God gives us the opportunity isn't about gearing up to speak judgment on people. It's being open to speaking words that give life for the dying, and hope for the hopeless, and rest for the weary. Once again, I believe it's about changing our mindsets. We're not the voice of judgment, speaking out against everyone's sin. We are the voice of Jesus, who ate with tax collectors and sinners and gave them a place to belong, and let them know that, while the religious system might call them outcasts, the God of the Universe wanted to call them his sons and daughters.

You guys, if we can get over the intimidation factor of being a minister, if we can start really seeing ourselves as Christ's ambassadors to a world in desperate need of him, I think everything is going to change for the better. I think we're going to find out what an amazing privilege that is. Let's live our lives in such a way that the world can Taste and see that the Lord is Good.

Something my mom said to me just this week strikes me as being the very heart of ministry in the world. She was talking about interactions with one of her coworkers, and she said

“You know, I just keep thinking. . . I may be the only Jesus she knows.”

The band is going to come and start playing, and as they do, I’m going to invite you guys to spend some one-on-one time with the Lord, praying about your ministry. I’ll put a couple of questions up on the power point for you to consider as you pray.

- *Besides directly sharing the gospel, what other reasons might God have me in my current spot?*
- *If my life is ministry, what needs to change to make that ministry more effective?*
- *What is God teaching me through the “ministry” spot I’m in right now?*