



Ministry in a Post-Christendom World

May 18, 2018—Vol. 12, No. 20

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away... I served as the youth pastor of a local congregation. I still remember the day well and with vivid clarity. I was with one of the young men of the church, he technically wasn't in my youth group, but his older sisters were. We were walking along and he asked this question: "Lance, do you have a job?" I replied to his query, "Yes Steven, I'm the youth pastor at our church." My young friend quickly replied "I know that, I meant a real job like working at McDonald's."

Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



Nothing like the honesty of a 10 year-old boy to take all the wind out of your sails. My job as a youth pastor didn't really count as a real job.

I was taken back to this moment earlier this week as I heard a colleague talking about his own journey and the struggle for some to embrace his work as a military chaplain as "real ministry". In fact, some of his friends actually lamented the fact that he was "leaving the ministry" when he announced that he was leaving his local pastorate and enlisting in the military as a chaplain. Much like my work as a youth pastor didn't register as a "real job" to my young friend, my colleague's work as a military chaplain didn't register as "real ministry" for some who could only think in terms of the local congregation.

That type of thinking was the fruit of a Christendom mindset. The only thing that really counted, the only thing that really mattered was what happened in the life of the local church. In the Christendom world, we counted who showed up at the church. We measured who served at the church. What really mattered most was what you were able to do for the local church. If it didn't happen in, or for the benefit of the local church, it didn't really count as valid ministry. That's how some could disregard my friend's ministry in the military; that had impacted thousands of lives over the course of nearly three decades, because it didn't show up on the local church scorecard.

This is why teaching Sunday school counted as ministry – because it was on the local church scorecard, but teaching for 30 years in the public schools wasn't really considered ministry. This is how the church softball team coach was recognized as having a ministry, but the local soccer league coach was not. This is why the men serving in the men's ministry were recognized for their service in the church's annual "serve day" but the gentleman who quietly went about serving his elderly neighbors never got counted on the church's scorecard.

The reality facing us is this: we need thousands of spiritually charged leaders to be equipped and released to do the vital ministry God is calling them to do and most of that ministry won't show up on the typical church scorecard. It will be the stay at home mom who hosts other stay at home moms for a book club, play date or parenting class. It will be the volunteer coach who invests countless hours in the lives of young people in his or her neighborhood while intentionally finding ways to point people to Jesus while learning to play a particular sport. It will be the accountant who makes a point to seek out young couples struggling to make sense of their money matters, who offers to mentor them so that they can become wiser with money and more generous with all that God has given them.

Real ministry is going to happen less and less in church sanctuaries and buildings and more and more in living rooms, backyard patios, community centers, playgrounds and neighborhoods throughout our communities. This is going to take an enormous shift in the way we think about ministry and in the way we train and equip leaders.

Ministry in the kingdom doesn't require a title or a credential or a particular place for it to count as "real ministry." Ministry in our post-Christendom world is going require both demonstrating and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in real and tangible expressions to our friends, neighbors and coworkers.

Please join me in praying for God to raise up thousands of spiritual charged leaders who are willing to do lots of ministry that wouldn't get counted as "real ministry" on the scorecard of Christendom.

Christ's Peace,

Lance