



## FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

### LESSON ONE - INTRODUCTION

Welcome to “Foundations for Holistic Ministry,” a six-week study that we hope will provide a holistic- biblical, theological, spiritual, and physical- foundation for your ministry. This study examines Biblical passages and theological principles and their applications to our lives today. These passages provide us with a more integrated, holistic approach to living out the Christian faith.

Many Christians often feel as if we are caught in a chasm between the Evangelical denominations and congregations that have de-emphasized the scripture passages and the theological perspectives that call for social action/ministry and the many traditionally progressive/mainline denomination and congregations that have de-emphasized the need for individual transformation. Neither approach is holistic. Joe Phelps, pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, KY in a weekly newsletter to the church states:

Traditional and progressive are not teams for competition. They are faith partners in the journey- like a left and right foot- taking turns, keeping balance, complimenting each other. One partner without the other gets quickly stuck; moving in a vicious circle or is seriously impeded in its journey. Churches today suffer from this imbalance. What’s most missing is the “progressive” voice to our faith- the part that speaks of a big God, a big Bible, a love-laced Jesus-mission, an evangelism beyond religious catch-phrases that sound orthodox, but mean almost nothing to the speaker or to the hearer.

A helpful place to start in adjusting this imbalance is to know from where you are beginning, to know what ideas have influenced you over your lifetime and how these ideas shape your faith today. A useful tool for this assessment is the Theological Foundations Survey. This survey assesses your Biblical and theological understandings of people, sin, salvation, the Christian life, the Church, and society and social change. This assessment provides a starting point for our study over the next few weeks.

(Take the Theological Foundations Survey. Discuss with your class mates.)

It is hoped that this series of studies in Biblical passages, theological principles, and their application to our lives today may provide us with a more integrated, holistic approach to living out the Christian faith. Perhaps we can find a way to not have such strong distinctions between left and right, traditional and progressive.

One needs only to look to Jesus the “author and finisher of our faith,” (Hebrews 12:2) to see the model of how to fully integrate what has traditionally been defined as evangelism and ministry that meets the needs of the whole person. After all, Jesus preached and he healed. As Christians, literally followers of Christ, we look to Jesus’ life and ministry as our model for our own lives and ministry. Jesus really begins and defines his public ministry and his role as God’s messenger with his statements in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. These are recorded in Luke 4:16-19: When

he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus was reading from the writings of the prophet Isaiah and thus put his ministry squarely in the line of prophetic visions of redemption found in what we know as the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said that he had not come to do away with the law but to fulfill it. We will look at the Old Testament Scriptures and images of God that show the necessity of caring for the total welfare of the whole person. We’ll also explore some of the encounters in the gospels where Jesus really illustrates these ideas and serves as our model. Throughout the studies we’ll also consider contemporary practices that correspond to these ideas. Throughout the studies there will also be many times for you to stop and respond to some reflection questions designed to elicit group discussions. These are perhaps some difficult topics to wrestle with, so feel free to discuss these scripture passages and theological ideals with each other. Finally, we’ll look at the accounts of the early Christian church and the ramifications of all lessons for our churches and our lives as individual Christians today.

This series consists of five additional lessons, titled:

- “Creation: Who are we?”
- “Moses/Exodus: What are we to do? ”
- “Covenant Law: How are we to live?”
- “Prophets: How are we to worship?”
- “The Early Church: How do we respond?”

As you participate in this study, our prayer is that you’ll be open to considering and reconsidering the assumptions that have shaped your foundations for ministry. May God be with us all as we build our foundations for holistic ministry.

Prayer

God may we see in your Oneness our need for unity,  
God may we see in your Threeness our need for community  
God may we see in your creativity our need for diversity,  
God may we see in you our need to love each other

Amen

- Christine Sine, Mustard Seed Associates (<http://godspace.wordpress.com>)



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Where do you experience these theological tensions within your own belief system?

How is your experience of Christian living influenced by traditions you have been taught or passages of scripture that have been emphasized in your prior experience?