

TE6.02 Helping People Make Progress

(4 hours)

Apprentice:	Trainer:	Completed: / /
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Christian ministry is about the progress of the gospel and the progress of God's people (Phil. 1:12, 25). We proclaim Christ, by teaching the Word of God, with the long-term aim of the maturity of all. (Col. 1:28). However, Christian ministry often becomes problem-centred rather than progress-centred in two ways. Firstly, we only minister to someone when they have a problem. Secondly, we conduct ministry as a problem solving exercise, rather than aiming for Christian growth and maturity.

Pro-active Ministry

Christians face problems all the time, just as anyone else, and the gospel addresses our deepest needs. As ministers of Christ we are to love and welcome others with their individual needs and situations. We are warned about dismissing the needs of others with cheap words (James 2:14-17). However we don't want to create a ministry environment such that the only way people can relate to us is by discussing their problems. If our ministry is based on reacting to problems people raise with us, many will receive no attention because they are reserved in sharing their problems. Our goal is to move people forward in the knowledge of God and holy living, whether they are facing particular problems or not.

A problem approach to ministry means that the minister's program is dominated by those with the most critical needs. This is wearing and exhausting, and reduces the effectiveness of other ministries.

We need to be pro-active, moving each person forward in faith and godliness. This involves knowing them well, assessing their stage of Christian growth and implementing deliberate plans for their progress.

Re-active Ministry

We need to develop a progress approach to problems. In our sinful world the range, complexity and depth of people's problems are overwhelming. When people are facing problems, the goal of ministry is not to solve the problem but to promote growth in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, assuring of His mercy and calling for obedience to His Word. Our greatest concern is their salvation and perseverance in waiting for heaven. Along the way many of their immediate needs and difficulties will be addressed as they learn to think about their lives and this world in God's terms. But many problems will remain long-term, requiring a perspective of faith, thankfulness and obedience.

It is crucial, as ministers of the gospel that we do not think of ourselves as counsellors. There is value in working with trained professionals to help with many serious problems faced by people. However our goal and methods are distinctive. We want the person to understand how the Word of God addresses them and their problem, and how they need to think and act differently according to this Word. That will mean progress in godliness through facing the problem.

Exercise

To minister to individuals so that they make progress as Christians.

Aims

1. To think through possible areas of growth for individual Christians.
2. To learn to discern areas of growth for particular people at different stages of their Christian life.
3. To learn to turn problems into opportunities for Christian growth.
4. To learn to talk through with people their plans for Christian growth and help them implement these plans.

Apprentices

1. Study Paul's prayers in his letters to think through the goals we have in ministry to people. (Eph 1:15-32; 3:14-21; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-14; 2 Thess 1:11-12)
2. Identify particular problems individuals are facing and help them grow in their knowledge of God and faithful living by applying the Word of God to their lives. Use the following questions to define the problem and how to think and act in a godly way.
 - How does the person express the problem?
 - What is the problem and what are the effects?
 - Who or what is the cause?
 - To what extent are the causes external to the person?
 - To what extent is the problem internal to the person?
 - What does the Bible say about the problem and the cause?
 - Is sin involved?
 - How does Jesus' death for us help us deal with the problem?
 - What change of attitude does God require?
 - What change of behaviour does God require?
 - What self-understanding has the person gained?
3. Think through the broad stages of ministry to individuals.
See A Strategy for Personal Ministry (next page)
4. Make plans for each individual in their ministry area to help them make progress as Christians.
The attached Assessment Sheet, "Making Progress", is designed to facilitate this.
5. Talk through and implement these plans for individuals.

Trainers

Assess these competencies:

- Ability to discern the stage of ministry for each individual
- Ability to help people make concrete progress

Resources

DP6.02 Ministry to Individuals, MTS Discussion Paper

A Strategy for Personal Ministry

(TE6.02)

In pro-active ministry it is helpful to identify the broad stages of ministry to others. This helps us to plan the right input at the right time. The stages are somewhat artificial and not strictly discrete. For example, we all need help all the time to grow in Christ, even more so when we are being trained to minister to others.

Needing Help (NH)

These people need establishing in the faith. They may still be unconverted, a new Christian or converted but with no assurance of salvation. They may have been a Christian for some time, but are struggling with problems in faith or life. In any case they need help in their own Christian life rather than being encouraged to take on ministry responsibilities with others.

Ministry Trainee (MT)

These people are demonstrating their maturity in Christ and willingness to serve others. We need to help them use their gifts to provide practical service as well as teaching others the Word of God. They need to move from 'spectator' in church life to 'participant'.

Self-starter (SS)

These people have the maturity and gifts, which enable them to initiate and lead ministries. They need encouragement, freedom and training to gather others around them for teaching and training. They are the kind of people who can lead Sunday Schools, Youth Groups, Bible Study groups, mission teams etc. If they leave our ministry and move to another ministry they will be available and equipped to provide leadership.

Potential Minister (PM)

These people need to be identified and cultivated as future ministers of the gospel. Their grasp of the gospel and God's purposes and gifts of teaching and leadership mean that they should consider training for full-time gospel ministry. (Club 5 has been established to identify and encourage PM's)

Making Progress Assessment Sheet

(TE6.02)

Name of person in your ministry: _____

Needing Help (NH)	Action (e.g. prayer, conversation, read book, listen to MP3, Bible study, training course)
Can they articulate the gospel?	
What questions do they have about the gospel?	
Are they assured of salvation by faith in Christ?	
Are they telling others that they are a Christian?	
Are they facing opposition as a Christian?	
What sins are they struggling with – past and present?	
What relationships are they finding difficult?	
Are they prayerful?	
Are they reading their Bible?	
Are they established in Church life?	
Are they established in a Bible Study group?	

Ministry Trainee (MT)	Action (e.g. prayer, conversation, read book, listen to MP3, Bible study, training course)
Are they serving others without being asked?	
What are their ministry gifts?	
What behind-the-scenes responsibilities do they have?	
Can they give their testimony to others?	
Can they present the gospel to others?	
Can they follow up contacts?	
Can they follow up new Christians?	
Can they lead a Bible Study group?	

Self-starter (SS)	Action (e.g. prayer, conversation, read book, listen to MP3, Bible study, training course)
What would hinder them from taking more ministry responsibilities?	
Can they give leadership in public ministry? e.g. reading the Bible, leading in prayer	
Can they gather others around them to work on a team?	
Can they lead a ministry area? e.g. youth group, Sunday School, mission team.	

Potential Minister (PM)	Action (e.g. prayer, conversation, read book, listen to MP3, Bible study, training course)
Are they effective in evangelism?	
Are they effective in teaching others?	
Do they think theologically?	
Are they committed to further theological training?	
Can they train others in ministry?	