

Executive Summary
Love Well
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Our students live in a world where everyone and everything is competing for their attention. Culture is preaching to them and they are listening. The problem is, most everything the culture says is right goes against what God has said in His Word to be true. In a world of competing voices, students need to hear the voice of God and we can help them hear it by ministering to them. What if we, as student pastors and leaders, could focus our student's attention on what is most important by loving them well. Effective ministry can be a spring board for helping students know Christ and how to live for him by living lives of obedience and holiness.

Charles Spurgeon says, "I wish that our ministry, mine especially, might be tied and tethered to the cross. I have no other subject to set before you but Jesus only."¹ Loving well means we point others to Jesus and help them follow him. Our students do not need another pep talk, they do not need a quick fix, they need Jesus. They need to see the gloriousness and goodness of Jesus that makes them want to flee what the world has to offer them. Give them Jesus by ministering well to them. Care for them in a way that points them to Jesus. Pray for them in a way that points them to Jesus. If you want to love others well, give them Jesus.

In this session, we will focus on how to love well in three distinct areas. How do we love well in prayer? How do we love well in ministry? And how do we love well in gospel conversations? While there are certainly other ways to love well in the church, these three areas will provide a solid framework to help students, parents, and leaders know that they are loved well.

Loving well is often unseen. Prayer is unseen. A lot of ministering you will do will be unseen. That does not mean that it is not important. Loving well ensures that the people you are over are cared for and being helped grow in their walk with Christ.

Prayer is perhaps the easiest thing for us to do, yet often the most overlooked. When you understand that everything you seek to do in ministry depends on the work of the Holy Spirit, it should drive us to pray. We pray for ourselves, we pray for our sermons and lessons, but how often are you praying with and for your students, parents, and leaders? Prayer changes things because we pray to a God who can change things.

Why is praying for students important? Everything we seek to do in ministry is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. If we believe this, then prayer must be a vital part of our everyday work as student pastors and leaders. The thing is, most students will never see you praying for them. They won't know this is something you do regularly. But in order to really love our students, we must pray that the Holy Spirit would work in their life and change them.

Create a prayer strategy for your students that involves the church.

This will be one of the most beneficial things you can do in ministry. Involving your senior adults in praying for your students will help them feel like they are investing in the next generation and it allows all of your students to be prayed for regularly by people other than you

¹ Charles Spurgeon, Sermon from John 4:48 entitled, "The Best Bread." October 28, 1886.

and their parents. The great thing about this prayer strategy is that you can customize it for your group.

Why must we pray for parents? According to the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, parents are to be the primary disciple maker in their child's life. This is a tough job even for parents who are well equipped to disciple their children. Parents spend more time when their children than you ever will and because of this, they need to know we are praying for them and their student. One of the easiest ways to pray for parents is praying for them when you pray for their student. This will help you learn names and put families together in your mind.

Why pray for leaders? Without leaders in place, you cannot do all that God is calling you to do. While you may be the one casting the vision, they are the ones helping carry it out. Loving them well is an important part of ministry and something to strive to improve in. One of the most loving things you can do is reach out to a few leaders every week and ask them how you can pray for them and then follow up with them about their prayer request.

Ministry to parents must be viewed as an addition to student ministry. If you are lucky, you will get 2-3 hours with a student each week at church. Most churches do not have Sunday night services anymore, students have practices and games on Wednesday's now, and if a student is on a travel ball team, there is a good chance that they have games on Sunday. In 2021, 28% of people attended church regularly. Regularly attending church means attending once or twice a month.² If you get a student who comes twice a month to both Sunday and Wednesday night, you will get them for about 4 hours a month, which means you will get a "regular" attender for 48 hours a year.

Now, if you look at how Gen Z uses their time in different areas, you will see the importance of parent ministry and the need to equip them to disciple their children. Gen Z spends, on average, a little over an hour a day watching tv. 42% of Gen Z spend 1-3 hours on social media while 30% spend 3-5 hours on social media.³ If a student watches 1 hour of tv and spends 2 hours on social media, they will spend 1,095 hours a year on those things. The things that students are exposed to on tv and social media are shaping how they view the world and how they live their lives.

The issue is that 48 hours of church is not going to combat 1,095 hours exposed to the culture, and this does not include what they are being exposed to at school. Parents are with their children far more than you can ever be and if you want to help students follow Jesus, you have to minister to parents and equip them to minister to their children. Perhaps, the greatest way you can love your students well is by loving their parents well.

How can you minister to your leaders? I have been fortunate to have very good leaders in the churches I have served at. They were faithful men and women who love Jesus and love investing in students. However, most of my leaders wanted to serve with me on both Sunday and Wednesday's. I was thankful to have them helping and needed them there. But I began to sense

² Lifeway Research, "5 Current Church Attendance Trends You Need to Know," February 2, 2022. <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/02/02/5-current-church-attendance-trends-you-need-to-know/>

³ Insider Intelligence, "How Gen Z consumes media in 5 charts," Sara Lebow, December 21, 2022. <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>

that I needed to do more to minister to them. They were sacrificing their time to serve in student ministry and I needed to minister to them. They sacrificed being in adult life groups so that they could teach students. They lacked that community. Ministering to your leaders is key. Reach out to them regularly telling them you are praying for them. Host social for your leaders where they can build community with one another. Take them to coffee or lunch and ask them how they are doing spiritually. They need to receive ministry from you just like students and parents.

Why should you have gospel conversations with your students? There are many reasons why this is important, but having gospel conversations helps us, as leaders, see how we can best help the students. Gospel conversations help us know if the student is lost or not, it helps us understand where they are in their spiritual life, it helps know what their next step should be.

Loving well is an important part of any ministry. Students need to know they are loved before they will start listening to you. But the goal of loving well is not just to have students listen to you, the goal is to help students live for Christ and begin loving others well. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." This is the goal as student pastors and leaders. We are to minister to others by equipping them to minister. You cannot do this alone. You cannot effectively minister to every student in your group. You cannot effectively minister to every parent in your group. You need to equip them to minister as well. You need to equip them to have gospel conversations with other students.