

## Ministry in the Mundane

*Steve Malone*

What is the normal Christian life? What are we hoping to see cultivated in people?

We are constantly driving people to make a big splash. Once or twice a year, a group comes along with a plan to "take Auburn by storm". There is always a lot of noise and clamor, a lot of labor and money spent, and for a moment everyone (the Christians at least) look up to see what's going on. As quickly as it appears, it disappears. Some get excited and want to make more noise next year. But for the most part the noise fades and people go back to the business at hand.

And that is where the church ought to meet people, in the "business at hand". The ordinary, mundane duties and experiences that make up the larger portion of our lives. Jesus said the whole sum of Christian living was loving God and loving our neighbor. Did He mean for us to work that out in an arena or in our minute by minute ordinary lives? The more difficult and yet truest and most meaningful spirituality is that which deals with Jesus in everything. The prophet Micah charges the people of God with spiritual falsehood because they are always making noise in the temple, and yet cheat in business. Their spirituality has nothing to do with life.

The church has a ministry of presence: being present in people's lives, helping them see the graces of the gospel in all they are and do, being there when God works. What shape does a ministry of presence take? We're to help people break out of poverty. We're to help a man love his wife (and vice-versa) when she/he is unlovable. We're to help a divorced woman take Christ as her husband and learn to deal with her hurt and loneliness. We're to help her children with their anger and see the cross transform it to love. We're to help a man or woman who feels lost in his/her work deal with the providence of God. We're to help an exhausted mom glory in the thousand tasks God has called her to. We're to help a man trapped in destructive sin find the cross and its healing power. We're to help those who feel the futility of living find significance in the kingdom of God. We're to help frantically busy people learn to pray. We're to help the man or woman we work or live with see the joy and hope of the gospel and deal with their disdain for God and his people. We're to help people share griefs and joys. We're to feed people from the Word of God. We're to teach them to open their lives to others. In other words, we help them "love God and love people" in the regular stuff of life.

The ministry of presence doesn't sell well. It's a little hard to measure. We're not even sure what it looks like ourselves. It requires "dogged obedience and robust prayer". But this is what it means to know God. When we think about evangelism and discipleship, we should think about meeting people where they live- in the "business at hand". There we will find great struggles and messes, and there we will see the transforming graces of Christ. Many Christians will never notice or recognize this as ministry because it makes so little noise. So what. God brings extraordinary things out of the ordinary.