

Seven Connections Ministry Model

I want to welcome you to the church and ministry class. Hi. My name is Henry Reyenga, the president of Christian Leaders Institute. I've also been a pastor for twenty something years now starting back in 1987. And I'm excited about this class. Some people wonder. What's the difference between church and ministry and pastoral care and marriage? And let me just first of all, start with that. Church and ministry basically is core to pastor-ness. It's those things that we do as pastors. Like we do weddings. We do funerals.

It's the general spiritual counsel directly as what we would call pastoring that would be sort of a normal life and the normal functions of being a pastor and a leader in a local church. It has to do with some of the government issues of the local church like issues of board meetings and elders and stuff like that. It has to do with specific needs that pastors have to address such as grief needs. There will even be a sections class on ministry to survivors of suicide. In this class, we will also deal with ministering to the disabled. We'll encourage you to write a meditation for a marriage ceremony and even a funeral meditation to someone or to a family who is bereaving.

So this is the sort of class that much of what you do as a pastor would be somehow addressed in this class. Not all of it, and there will be the pastoral care and marriage class that will function. These classes will overlap a little bit. But overall, this class is a class that deals with pasturing, pastoring the traditional, biblical model. And as we think about that, at Christian Leaders Institute, if you're around here very much, you've heard of the seven connections. And what those seven connections are basically are we relate to God in a talking, listening repeated relationship. And we believe talking is prayer to God. Listening is that Bible piece. Repeatedly is these habits of doing that. And we also talk in the discipleship mode about that you think about those habits of talking, listening repeatedly, interacting with seven connections.

Seven areas of connections. The first connection is personally. The next connection is in marriage. The next connection is in family. The next connection is in a small groups or friends. The next connection

is at the church level, the worship service. The next connection is the kingdom level, where what's talking and listening repeatedly at the kingdom level.

Well, in some ways, that's what CLI is about. It's about talking about a relationship with God. So that as a pastor know how to relate to God and how to minister to others who are relating to God. And then, in connection six, what do other professors, what do other people say, what do books, what does the church of Christ say for two thousand years? That's connection six. And there's connection seven. And that's the connection for evangelism reaching people.

Now, when you're a pastor, you'll find that all of your activity goes in one of those connection. That's right. And you're going to be dealing with a lot of situations. Now, as I read through this, try to in your mind, ask yourself, "What connection do these situations fit in?" Depression. You're right, connection one. Drug addiction. That's in one connection. Sexual struggles. Well, that's a connection two issue. It could be a marriage. It could even be a friendship or it associates in one other person level, that would be the connection two. You and one other person or a parishioner and another person.

Sin. Well, if you look at sin, you go, there's affairs, homosexuality, cold marriages, changing marriages. Those are all in that connection two. That's sexual sin, struggles. Sloth issues, that's a connection one. Parent-child breakdown. Pastors have stuff like that. Well, that's connection three. Grief counseling, that could be connection one, two or three. You could be ministering to people personally. There could be a family grieving. There could even a church grieving. That could be a connection five.

Connection four, smaller than connection five. Suicide threats or suicide. Connection one. Conflict, that could be all over the map. Bitterness, often we think of that as connection one issue. There are going to be tough questions, that a pastor, you'll be asked about. Ethical, political. Ooh, political. That almost feels like the big kingdom connection six issues. There will be personal, God's will decisions. There'll be medical issues. Permission issues where people will want to do something and they're not going to do it until they talk to the pastor. There's career counseling. There's a man plan for young men who's wondering what to do. A woman plan for a young women. There are spiritual direction.

As you look at these various things, you'll see your ministry effectiveness comes in a whole range of things. So, I'm just going to pick a few more up. Like the parent-children relationship. You're going to find out so often as pastor. You're going to find grief issues. You're going to find courtship issues. Now, macro and micro issues. Such as, people come to church. Believers are connecting together. And they're looking for partners and mates. As a pastor, you're going to be connecting people. But you're going to connect people in that understanding of balance that everything works together.

People come to your church with having previous church issues. They got frustrated. They often come back and now you're going to be ministering through some of these things. There is going to be bitterness that you don't even know what people bring to the table when they come to your church. I often joke at pastor's conferences and various. Wouldn't it be neat if someone comes to your church and get a question there? And they fill out all their bitterness that they've had in their past, whether it's from their family, whether it's from previous churches or whether they have gone, or whether it's previous work relationships or previous relationships just to know where the landmines is as you're ministering the people.

So the church and ministry class, we're going to be dealing with a lot of issues relating to the whole tapestry of human existence. As people, believers, come in and many times seekers who are not believers yet, one of the sections in this class is just simply about giving a gospel presentation, how to minister, how to bring someone into a walk with God. A home discipleship community model basically keeps addressing those seven connections, those seven connections where each connections has a God piece.

If you're married, for instance, a Christian marriage has a praying and a Bible and a directing from the Lord side to it as well. If you have a family, there is those habits and patterns that's a Godly family, a covenantal family, if you will. If you have friends, you associate with believers like they did in the Book of Acts. In your worship service, what is the worship service? A worship service is just a more complicated form of talking and listening. All the worship songs, many of them are very much vertical. They're prayers. Some of them God is speaking. So there's like a scripture passage that's to song and that we are encouraged. A sermon is really speaking from God's word. You see the dialogue.

Even in the kingdom connection six. You see the discussions about talking and listening as fundamental in how we think of theology and think of the world. In connection seven, evangelism. The whole wide world is out there, we are to be a missional church, a reaching church for people who do not know God. In this home discipleship, so to speak, model, essentially, what it's all about is we walk with God and help others walk with God. We as a pastor lead a community and build a culture who walk with God, who are the body of Christ and we are called to be leaders to be leaders in that body.

So a home discipleship model looks at our steps to see ourselves honestly in the light of the scripture in all of the connections. It's about biblical love. It says in 1 Corinthians 13, "If I have tons and I have knowledge, and I have everything, but I have not loved, I am nothing." In this model, the church as a community is a place of accountability and encouragement that is a balanced community. It's a community that basically relates to each other.

I'll give you some practical example of why this is very important. A lot of people are sort of going down the direction of saying, okay if I have a relationship with God in connection one personally, why do I need church? Or I have my wife and I, my husband and I relate to God, why do I need to relate to anybody else? Or maybe we have our family and we do our family devotions and I really don't have to engage with the other believers. That is not biblical.

The Bible is about the body of Christ is the church. And the church is for every man, woman and child who names the name of Jesus. And as we relate to God, we relate in all of these connections. And it's important that we keep these connections in good balance. Recently, in the American and the international church scene, you'll see a lot of these balances. I'll give you an example of unbalances of something that's not balanced. You'll see like the church is about the worshiping community but the church service happens on a Sunday. So everything is about that. But then the home life is not supported.

Now what happens is the home becomes out of balanced. Or the church becomes out of balanced. They become out of balanced in different ways. And if that happens, you'll find people will look at churches sort of entertaining and be spectators. But they will not be players in personal life, their marriage or to their family. So as a pastor, we're looking for that balance. I love those balance passages

in the Bible. And there are many. Later on, in another class that you might be taking here about to pledge to church and maybe not. But I'll give a little insight from that class. You talk about how an elder deacon must be sincere, balanced, not too much wine. The idea there is balance. In Ecclesiastes 7, "Do not be over righteous, neither be over-wise. Why destroy yourselves? Do not be over-wicked. Do not be a fool. Why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God avoids all extremes."

And in the church of God too, these seven connections in balanced as a pastor are kind of a good way to sort of see the operating system of your church ministry. I'm going to conclude by just throwing out some various terms here. Again, this is just for you to sort of be introduced to the seven connections, those relational connections and think about how we have words that already sort of talk this. And I'm talking about this. I'm going to make up a few words just for fun.

Well, we've had personhood, that's connection one. We could also have singlehood, that's somebody who's not married and as a pastor, you're going to minister to people who are single. Or marriagehood, that's not a word, but if you're married, you're in that state and you need ministry not only as a person but also in marriage. How about husbandhood and wifehood? That's right. As a pastor, you in many times speak a word to a husband on how to be a better husband before the face of God or a more supportive and better wife before the face of God.

There's friendship. Friendshiphood, I could probably add that word. How to be a friend, like a friend is talked about the Book of Proverbs. There's fatherhood, that is a word, and motherhood. And that's a connection three word. Notice these words are in those connections. There's childhood. How do we encourage people within our congregation in that role of childhood? I'm going to make another word here. Grandfatherhood and grandmotherhood. And again, that's that connection three. How to be a loving and supportive grandparent to even children of your children. There's friendhood. That's right. If you hang around with a group of friends, how do you create peer culture that honors God?

Here's some other ones. How about church membership? That's right. If someone attends your church, where are those expectations? Where are those things that go into a church encouraging and supportive in someone's life? Now, in a church, you need leaders. So, leadership or followerhood.

What makes a good church member? Someone who is just there who's following the program, not divisive, not going against the leader. What about the leader? How do servant leaders serve in the church? What are the roles? How does it function? Kingdomhood, that's right.

In a sense, a lot of times, a sermon is a combination of connection five sort of, like you're preaching to a church. But it's also, you're preaching from knowledge of theology and maybe you read a book. If you're bringing in the kingdom of God. God's kingdom. The talking about talking and listening and repeatedly so to speak. And you're bringing it to the church level. You're bringing it to friends. You're sharing that one on one. Kingdomhood. And then last, witnesshood or evangelism or the worldhood. What about missions?

All of these things are connections that function in a church. So when we talk about the church and ministry class, we are going to function within the grid of these seven connections. And you will find everything you do has everything to do with that balance. If all of a sudden, you pick one area. Let's say the worship service and make it everything. And you forget the roles that people play within the church. That could be very dangerous and you could put things out of balance. So as we are looking at this next church and ministry class, we're going to have this is our operating system.

It's the same operating system that you've learned about if you've taken the evangelism and discipleship class. You see, operating systems, that's very, very historic. These words and these concepts and these roles are all over the Bible. They're everywhere in the Bible. And you can place most stories and most encouragements in one of these seven connections. And these connections always were in this beautiful balance. This balance that serves God and that serves one another. So welcome to the church and ministry class. I trust that you are going to have a great year.