



Called to care

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We live in a broken world

- It wasn't meant to be this way (Genesis 1-2)
- It won't always be this way (Revelation 21-22)
- But for now, we hurt and that matters (Genesis 3)



The brokenness happens in many ways

Genesis 3

- Broken relationship with the Lord
- Broken relationship with other people
- Broken relationship with the world in which we work
- Broken bodies that now decay

A community in need of care

- Anxiety
- Cancer
- Depression
- Domestic Abuse
- Financial stress
- Psychiatric disorders
- Infertility
- Bullying at work
- Bereavement
- Dementia
- Addictions
- Marriage stress

A community that often cares well

- Meals for new mums
- Prayer at the end of services
- Pastoral visits
- Marriage and parenting courses
- Informal chats over coffee

A community that struggles to care

- “I’m not trained for this sort of thing – I may make it worse”
- “I’m not gifted – leave it to the professionals”
- “I’m too busy – I can’t cope with the needs”
- “I’m worried this might be a distraction from mission and preaching”

But what is the *biblical* call?

A community that cares is committed to:

Ephesians 4

- Maturing together (common goal)

by ...

- Serving together (common relationships)

through ...

- Speaking God's word together (common foundation)

#1 A community called to mature together

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*** Ephesians 4:11-13

Maturing means real change

- Those who doubt having more certainty
- Those who drink heavily pursuing sobriety
- Those who fear increasingly putting their faith in Christ
- Those who hate themselves seeing themselves as God does
- Those who are angry embracing peace and reconciliation
- Those who are restless developing contentment
- Those who follow idols turning back to the one true God

#2 A community called to serve each other

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

Serving by one-anothering

- serve one another
- forgive one another
- teach one another
- admonish one another
- spur one another on
- offer hospitality to one another
- be devoted to one another
- honour one another
- love one another
- accept one another
- instruct one another
- greet one another
- agree with one another
- encourage one another
- speak to one another with psalms hymns and songs
- submit to one another
- bear with one another

Serving by speaking

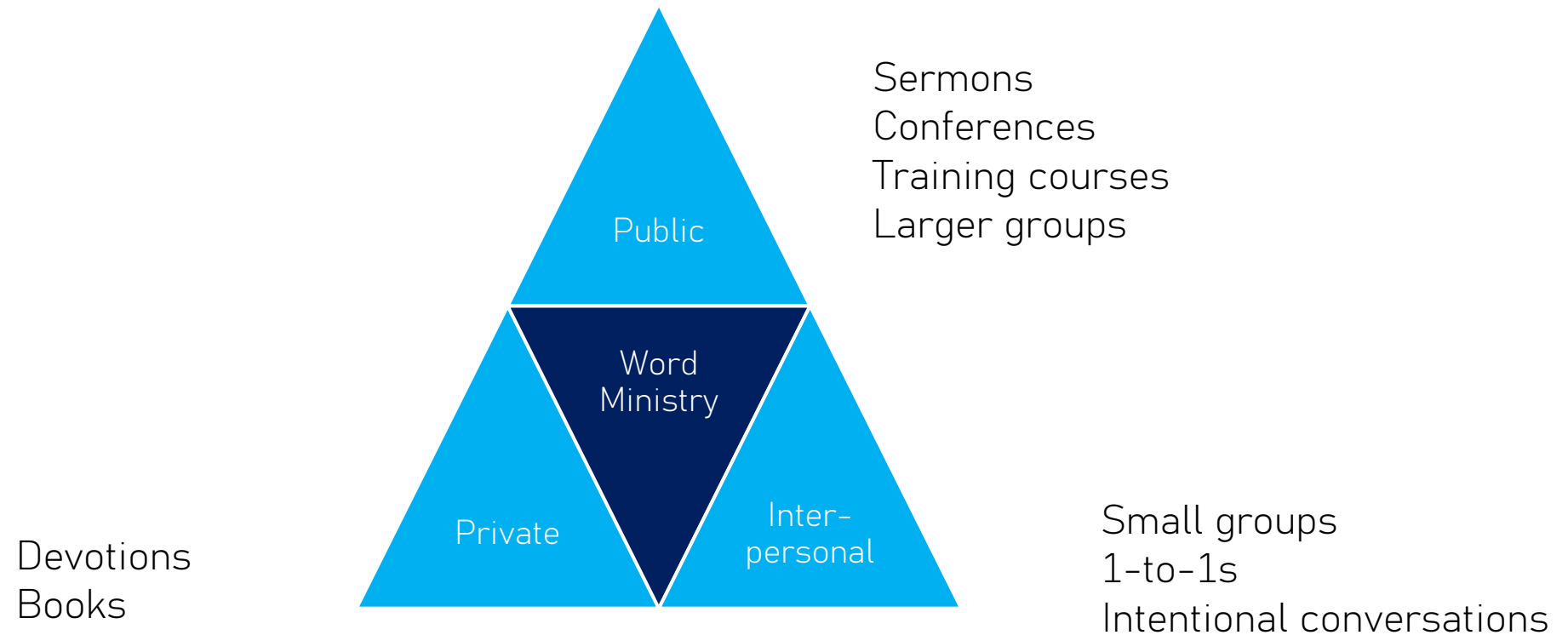
So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

*Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:14-16)*

#3 A community called to be rooted in the word

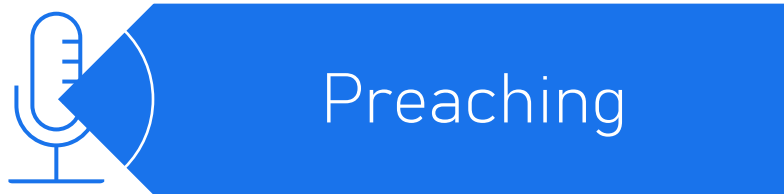
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The word explored in many ways



The word explored in specific diets

Lots of people



One person

"Normal" sins and struggles

"Complex" sins and struggles



The word connected to life

- We need to close the gospel gap
- So often we have a faithful taught theology but a wayward functional theology

Does this distract from preaching?

- Culture of care should flow naturally from biblical preaching
- Culture of care should be enabled by biblical preaching
- Culture of care should lead people to love biblical preaching
- Jesus preached in the villages – and he moved towards tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners to care for them well



Does this distract from evangelism?

- Is evangelism outward looking and pastoral care inward looking? No! Both look up to Jesus
- Both connect the riches of Scripture to the realities of life
- Both help people trust Jesus and live under his loving Kingship
- Though we may want to share the tasks (Acts 6)
- Pastoral care is part of a church's witness



Does this undervalue medicine?

- We are embodied souls
- We need people who understand the body well
- There is no shame in needing medication
- This body aims to help us to be church not to be doctors



Does this conflict with psychology?

- Psychologists can give many wise insights
- But they cannot give Christ
- We don't need to be scared of psychology, but we can have our ultimate confidence in Jesus

Does we risk making mistakes?

- God's word is perfect – his church is not
- We need to acknowledge our limits where they exist
- We need to be training up specialists within the church
- But we can always do something to help someone who is suffering.

Does this risk burnout?

- Only if some people opt in and others opt out
- If everyone plays their part, this is true church
- This is what Paul meant when he wrote:
 - *Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. (1 Thessalonians 2:8)*

How do we become increasingly caring?

- A **culture** of sharing lives
- A **culture** of listening well to the detail of those lives
- A **culture** of praying for people's needs
- A **culture** of Bible-centred conversations (that encourage, challenge, promote perseverance and change)
- A **culture** of sharing testimonies of God's word at work

How do we becoming increasingly caring?

- A **structure** that moves beyond sermons / small groups and 1-to-1s to include seminars / support groups and counselling
- A **structure** that encourages appropriate flow of information within teams (corporate confidentiality)
- A **structure** that involved training and equipping people and using **everyone's** unique gifts so no individual gets burdened

We live in a broken world

- But together we can thrive
 - Worshipping God
 - Hoping in Christ
 - Transforming into the likeness of Jesus
 - Persevering through hard things
 - Until that day he calls us home