

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

I. JESUS LOVES THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR HER

- A. How is a church supposed to function? What does a healthy church community look like? What is the church that God is building?
 - 1. More than any other NT letter, Ephesians unveils God’s glorious purpose for the Church. That’s the church really about, and how it goes about doing what it’s called to do to shape the culture of this world. “Who are we and why are we here?”
- B. Jesus loves the church. He gave Himself for her. Considering that one can ascertain the value of something by what someone is willing to pay for it, it is astounding how much Jesus loves and values the church.

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25-27)

- C. Jesus is preparing the church. His goal is to present the Bride to Himself. She also must herself get ready and cooperate with Him (c.f. Rev. 19:7).

II. JESUS GIVES GIFTS TO EDIFY THE BODY

- A. Jesus gives gifts to the church. He has given Himself, now He gives gifts, in the form of people, who will equip the saints to build up the church.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)

- B. Equipping takes place through the teaching of Scripture, the ministry of the Word. (c.f. 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 20:27; 1 Thes. 2:13)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- C. Those who minister the word of God do so as those given by Jesus to the church. This is a serious calling.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (NASB: accurately handling) the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

1. Whenever we encounter the word of God (teaching, radio, internet, book), we should be ready to “hear” God’s voice. This does not matter whatever the style of delivery, etc.. Don’t just go for things that tickle our ears (2 Tim. 4:3), but receive it as God’s word.
- D. The church at Ephesus had some high profile leaders: Apostle Paul, Priscilla & Aquila, Apollos, Apostle John. Yet, even in a church like this, Paul reminds the saints that they are all called to do the work of ministry.
- E. How should we view servant-leaders in the body of Christ?
 1. Leaders should be recognized and esteemed (respected and appreciated) for their work is serving of the Word of God.

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
 2. We must submit to leadership as they teach God’s Word. Servant-leaders are given as gifts to the church by Jesus Christ to serve the church.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. (Heb. 13:17)

[NIV: *Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*]

 - a. They should be honored financially. (1 Tim. 5:17-18)

3. This is why qualifications for those who serve and lead the church are given to us in great detail in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1, etc..)

III. THE WORK OF MINISTRY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL THE SAINTS

- A. Ministry is not something that the leaders or paid-staff of a church are called to.
 1. There are some (a few) in the body of Christ who minister before 1000's, 10's or 100's thousands or more. But less than 1% of Christians will have the 1 million person meeting, the crowds. We are not all called to do that, but we are all called to minister.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)
 2. Whatever the size of their meetings, it is easy to look to leaders and wait for them to do the ministry.
 - a. We must esteem, recognize, and honor them, but don't neglect your own ministry.
 - b. More people get saved, healed, and delivered because of the influence of a friend or a local church, not the mass-meetings.

- B. How does a church grow? 1) Speaking the truth in love, 2) Every part does its share. Then the body of Christ edifies itself, builds itself up and grows.

¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

1. Whose role is it to build up the body of Christ? It is everyone's role. The body build itself up.
 - a. Every joint and member is significant.
 - b. This is effective. E.g. the heart doesn't do all the work, the liver, eyes, toes all have their work and each does its share.
- C. Stunted growth comes when one does not allow his or her gifts to function. That would be out of God's design for the body of Christ.
- D. "Ministry" (Gk: diakonia) means service. What are your gifts and talents and how are you serving in the church and in the world?
 1. Where God wants us to be in the next season, we cannot get there without everyone doing their part. It cannot be just the leaders ministering, the pastor preaching, encouraging, and comforting, etc...

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

- a. Serving can range from: being a greeter or an usher, to teaching children, cleaning the church, rocking a baby in the nursery, talking to new guests, taking someone out to coffee, listening patiently (be patient with everyone), etc..
2. A great place to do this is in Small groups. Smaller group of people, honor each other, submit to one another, minister/serve each other. Relationships can be built up where we can live out 1 Thes. 5:14 and the other passages that speak of “one another.” We learn by doing.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

- E. The release of ministry causes the house of God to be built up. We are all living stones and each one is significant.

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

1. “Equipping”: NIV: preparing. KJV: perfecting. In classical Greek, it is used of refitting a ship or setting a bone.
- F. We must follow God’s pattern if we want *His* house to be built up (not another organization or “our” house. What is the house that *God* is building? How is it to function? The Lord has given us His blueprint: and it involves you.

Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it (Psalm 127:1)

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

- A. Be released to minister to one another. This is what being a church is about.
 1. Learn to listen to people patiently.
 2. Learn to listen to the Holy Spirit expectantly.
 3. Learn to speak in love.
 4. Learn by doing!
- B. Join a small group/home group.
- C. Find out what opportunities there are to serve.