

How a Church Works – Discovering and Implementing Your Gifting Ephesians 4:7-16

This morning we want to move on with Paul's thought, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul is sharing with the Christians in Ephesus and he is expressing an expectation that each Christian is moving in humility in two ways that we have examined

First, Paul has the expectation that each Christian is moving in humility before the Lord. Second, he has the great expectation that each Christian in moving in humility in their interaction with each other.

Once we have come they have come to this place of humility Paul begins to preach into the church and how the church is to function.

I think we are on tract here at the Community Church. Not that we have it all figured out but I believe we are moving in the right direction. We are blessed with a good board of nine people plus me who are all on the same tract and are looking for direction from the Lord.

We are prayerfully examining the scriptures to see just what is our mission as a church. What is our mission and how God would have us implement it.

I would ask that you keep your board and your pastor in prayer as we work together with you to see and accomplish the goals God has for us as a church.

Paul begins his teaching on the church in verses **Ephesians 4:4-6. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all in all."**

In declaring the nature of the church, Paul calls attention first to the basic structure, the unity of the Spirit, the oneness that already exists in the body of Christ as created by the Spirit. Unity is not something that we need to produce but I think we all understand that unity is something that needs to be understood and maintained.

In the next section of scripture Paul begins to share with how a church works effectively in the world not only in his day but in our day as well. He shares something that I think is missed and sorely needed to be understood and that is the impartation of spiritual gifts to each member of the body of Christ.

Read verses 7-10 with me. **Ephesians 4:7-10, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says,, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives and He gave gifts to men (and women). Now this expression, He ascended, what does it mean except that He also had descended to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.”**

I have to admit that I almost passed on this passage and was ready to preach a sermon from some of the passages following it. It has not always been clear in my heart why Paul inserted this thought here but as I began to read and re-read it, pray over it and study on it, I came to understand that within this section of scripture there is an important question that is raised up.

1. How is a church expected to demonstrate the power of God and influence society for His kingdom?

Is it by amassing a group of people together on Sunday mornings? Is it by engaging in all kinds of civic and social causes as good as that is?

What is it that defines a church? Well, Paul suggests that **The power of the church lies in each Christian discovering and intelligently exercising the spiritual gift that was given to them when they became a member of the body of Christ.**

I believe that if we are to exercise the power of God in this church and in this community then it will be through the power of every person identifying and exercising the spiritual gift they were given by Christ.

In a couple of places Paul compares the body of Christ to how a church, made up of many parts and people, is like the human body.

Romans 12:4-5, “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

And later here in chapter 4 of Ephesians. **Ephesians 4:15-16, “...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body is being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”**

The body, the body of Christ, this local body called Wiggins Community Church, is fitted and being held together by what ever joint, every working part, every person, man, women and child, supplies. And when this is occurring it causes the growth of the body, not just numerically but in spiritual health as well.

Isn't it amazing to think about our bodies, how they are created and how they are working together to provide life to us. It seems the older I get the more education in this area I get.

As I go through things, as those around me go through physical things I come to understand more and more how unique, complicated and fantastic our bodies are and how all things work together to give us life.

I ran across this video a couple of years ago and I know it might be a little fuzzy but look at all the little people who are working in this mechanical demonstration of how our physical bodies work.

Video... machine inside the human body

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HtiZRcKSRI>

Our physical bodies are truly an amazing creation aren't they? Each individual cell, organ, bone and all the other body parts, working together to wake us up in the morning, get us up out of bed, get us moving, working, playing, eating and all the other activities we engage in each and every day. And this doesn't go on for a few week or months. Our body parts are working together like this for years. Sometimes 80 or 90 years.

It is able to do this when each individual part does it part. It is the same within the body of Christ. As each person learns and functions in the gift they have been given then the church is able to operate in power, bringing the kingdom of God into their lives and into their community at a high, high level.

That's where we want to be as a church isn't it?

Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift and He gave gifts to men (and women).

Let me emphasize this again. If you are a Christian, if you have received Jesus Christ, if you are born again, if you have new life by the Spirit of God by faith in Jesus Christ you have been given a spiritual gift.

Do you know what your gift is? Have you ever asked yourself this questions:

2. Ask yourself these questions:

- a. What is the gift God has given to me since I am a Christian?**
- b. What does He want me to do as a general area of ministry?"**
- c. Do I know how to recognize a gift?**
- d. Do I know how to develop it once I know what it is?"**

The impact of this church in this area is directly related to how you answer these questions. Your own joy and fulfillment as a Christian depends on how you answer these questions.

I am not an expert by any means on spiritual gifts but in our next message in a couple of weeks we want to look at these gifts in detail. We are going to do a Thanksgiving message next week and this will give me time to know how God would have me deliver this so important message on spiritual gifts.

But for this morning I want us to make the connection between the thought that every Christian receives a spiritual gift and Paul launching into a quote from Psalm 68:16 in verse 8.

Ephesians 4:8, "Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men (and women)."

Why does Paul lay an emphasis on Christ's triumphal march, His leading of captives in His train?

I think what is being said is:

- 3. A gift is one thing; the power to operate it is quite another.**

Gifts are specialized functions, the ability to do certain specific things, such as teaching, preaching service, administration and the like. But these gifts are like the many electrical devices that each of us live with today.

We live in an electronic world don't we? Every appliance, phone, computer, light bulb, air conditioner and heater, they all have one thing in common don't they? They all require a power source.

What kind of power source do you think a spiritual gift from God might require? A strong personality? The power of positive thinking? Intelligence? A well developed mind? Knowledge, lots of education?

Some of you have these advantages and they may help. But the power source is none of these. We need a power different and superior to what can be generated by our own will.

Is there such a power? Look with me again at **Ephesians 3:20**, “**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us...**”

Do you believe this church has a power within it that is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think?

Let me tell you something about the power of God. I see it working already in this church.

Last week we had a dinner, raising funds for our mission to Peru. There is three of us who are going at a cost of \$2100 apiece or \$6300 total. On Thursday, the 15th, we had a scheduled payment due of \$750 apiece for a total of \$2,250. I was expecting to raise a portion of this at the dinner and we did but a few days later another gift came in and the total of the giving was \$2,293 and change. Not only did God meet the amount due, \$2,250 but He also gave some extra.

That is our God. That is Him doing the far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.

Think of what He can do in and through you as you learn about and exercise the gift He has given you with the power that works within.

You have heard about this power before from me. Remember the word about power in Ephesians 1? It is the same power Paul cries about and the great desire of his heart in **Philippians 3:10**, “**O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection!**” There it is again.

The resurrection power God used to raise His Son from the dead is the same power that works within us. This is why I believe Paul links together the gifts He gives to us to the decent, death, resurrection and ascension back to heaven.

Look at **verses 9-10**, “**Now this expression, He ascended, what does it mean except that He also had descended to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.**”

So that He might fill all things...So that He might fill you, fill this church, fill this community with His resurrection power and the giftings it empowers.

You have a spiritual gift from Christ, He paid for it with His life and He gave it to you when you accepted Him. It may be lying neglected and unused in some backroom of your personality but it is the most precious thing Christ has given you.

It took His decent down from glory, down to earth and all the pain, anguish and sorrow of His life; it took the cross, the tomb and the resurrection into heaven to receive from God the Father these gifts that he might give them to you.

Church, this is no common thing. This is not something to take lightly. This is not a natural talent but

4. You have a supernatural gift that is divinely given requiring the resurrection power of Christ to operate it.

Paul claimed His gift in **Ephesians 3:7**, “**Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me according the working of His power.**”

His power was to share the gospel, to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. He was called to be a minister and the only limit Paul ever found was the limit of his faith to take his gift and couple it with the resurrection power that was placed inside of him. As his faith grew, his effectiveness grew. That is resurrection power.

Here in this church I have no doubt there is yet many undiscovered gifts. There are many unused ones. There are those who have not yet begun to operate in their gifting, never stepped out and been used in resurrection power.

How much have you learned to put on Christ, to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might? This is how the church works. This is how the church of Jesus Christ changes society. Your gift is greatly needed in the body of Christ. Each and every one.

I don’t think there is anything more important or needed in the body of Christ than each person learning what the gift is they have received and how to tap into Christ’s resurrection power to ignite it.

Now, before we begin to examining these giftings in a few weeks let me send you on a prayer mission.

The first place to start is with Christ. It is always with Christ and the cross isn’t it? It is the place of power.

To begin your journey of discovery...

- a. Ask God if you are ready and surrendered to Christ, in a place to have your gifting powered up.**
- b. Read and prayerfully study the passages that speak of the giftings; 1 Corinthians 12. Romans 12, 1 Peter 4:11**
- c. Ask God what your gifting is**
- d. Ask how Him to empower and how best to use your gifting**

These questions are just a starting place. I wanted to encourage you and introduce to the fact that you have been given a gift and the power to use it for God's kingdom. As I mentioned we will do a more thorough examination of giftings in the weeks to come.

In closing read with me one last passage from **1 Peter 4:10**, “**As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**”

This is the path to how a church works. This is the path to fulfillment in this life.

Discovering and implementing with Christ the gift you have been given.

Church, what a glorious place we find ourselves today and what a powerful place we will find ourselves in tomorrow.

Amen?

Let's pray.