

How the Church Works Part 2

Discovering and Implementing Your Gifting

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-15

I wanted to start out this morning by telling you the story of a man named Bill. Bill was one of those individuals who absolutely lived for Christmas. He loved to decorate, have parties and mostly, to buy gifts for his children. He wasn't like some fathers who, when their children open their gifts, they look over at their wives and say, oh, that's what we got them this year. No, it was Bill's great love to spend a good portion of each year, thinking about each child and what would be the perfect gift for them.

When Christmas Eve would arrive and the house was perfectly decorated, Bill would get out each child's gift and wrap it with the perfect gift wrap and set it under the tree. By this time Bill would begin to get giddy with anticipation. He just knew that everything was perfect. The house looked and smelled like Christmas and he knew that each gift was exactly the right gift.

When morning came, Bill got up early, made hot cocoa and set out cookies for his kids. His face was beaming with expectation of what the morning would bring.

Then, on this particular Christmas morning the kids came down the stairs, grabbed the gifts that were marked with their names, picked them up, shook them and then set them back under the tree. Nice package dad they would say. You wrapped them up real nice this year. And then his children went back upstairs, back to bed, leaving their gifts unopened under the tree. Bill set stunned in his chair. All the work, thought and love that went into selecting just the right gift for his children was for not.

I believe this is similar to where we find most of the church today. In our passage we read that to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. And again, when Christ ascended to heaven, to the right hand of His Father, He gave gifts, specially selected gifts to each of the children He loved. Unfortunately like the children in our story, a lot of God's children have left their gift unopened, unused, under the cross.

Now I don't believe it is the fault of most people in the church, that they don't know what their gift is and how it is to operate. As we are going to see in our passage today, helping people to recognize and operate in their gift is the responsibility of selected leaders within the church.

Now I want to re-emphasize the truth that each and everyone of you, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as you Lord and Savior, you have received a special gifting from God.

Ephesians 4:7-8, "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 His men (and women).'

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

Through the great work of Jesus, His life on earth, His death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit was poured out on earth and into the hearts of each person who accepts and believes in Christ. And in the major gift of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers is given a special gift, a particular gift that is to be used to minister to believers and to show God's power on earth. This gift is your personally selected gift that God has chosen for you.

- 2. We can know what they are and for what purpose.**

Look with me at this next passage. **1 Corinthians 2:9, 12b, “...things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of people, all that God has prepared for those who love Him...Now we have received...the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.”**

Now, as we begin identifying the different giftings know that there are a number of teachings you can find out there. Some of them are good, others you might want to be prayerfully careful with. As I said a couple of weeks ago I don't have all the answers but I think with God's help I can point us in the right direction.

This morning we are going to do a brief survey of a few of the giftings and in weeks to come we will spend a little more time with all of them, looking at them and how they are used to help the body of Christ grow strong.

Your gift may fall in one of the two major divisions of the body. There are certain gifts which I have called **general support ministries**, from which the whole body receives benefit. Then there are a number of giftings that I would term **working gifts**.

3. There are two categories of giftings: General Support Ministries & Working Gifts

This morning we want to stay true to our study in Ephesians and begin with the general support ministries mention in chapter 4:11. Read with me our passage in...

Ephesians 4:11-15, And He (Christ) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers...”

When a church begins to understand and operate in these first five supportive giftings mentioned here then it starts to become an effective, powerful, relevant, life changing organism that penetrates, permeates and changes the society in which it is found.

The power of God, resurrection power is released and the world takes notice. This is where we want to be as a church in these days isn't it?

The first gifting mention in this passage is the apostolic ministry. Some are apostles Paul says. He was one himself. Paul said this in

1 Corinthians 3:10, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation..."

1) Apostle: one who lays foundations

Builds the basic structure on which the rest of the church is built; gives oversight to multiple churches

This is what the original eleven apostles of Christ and Paul did. They were given special instruction from God and wrote most of the New Testament. They went from place to place, preaching the good news of Jesus and when a core of believers were formed, they taught them about Jesus, the Kingdom of God and how the body of Christ was to function. Then they give oversight to that church as well as the other church bodies they started.

I believe the apostolic ministry is still to function today although it is not as strongly as it did in those early days. Michal and I have a friend who I would call an apostle. He is humble enough that he wouldn't call himself that but that is what he is.

He not only has a church he is pastoring but he also ministers to a number of churches in the Wichita area. He works with the pastors and leaders of these churches, teaching and leading them in biblical instruction and application. This is what an apostles is and does.

Then there are prophets. There are a couple of definitions of what a prophet can be but scripture is not completely clear. First and foremost

2) Prophet: someone who hears from and speaks for God

The Old Testament is filled with the writings and actions of prophets. Starting with Isaiah through the end of the Old Testament we can read about them and their interactions with God and people. Moses could be called a prophet as he made the mysteries of God known to the Israelites.

Modern day prophets are those individuals who are given the most intimate relationship with God. They hear from God in different ways. They may have a dreams, visions or strong spiritual promptings and warnings about the church, different circumstances in the world or even in another person's life.

Then there are the evangelist. When I grew up when there were traveling evangelist who would come to our church or put up a tent somewhere and people would come and listen for days. Who is the best known evangelist of our day? Billy Graham.

Billy Graham and other evangelist have been given the great gift of

Evangelist: Communicates the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ in a compelling way that draws people into a relationship with Christ.

Then there are the pastors and teachers. Many people have put these two in the same category labeling them as a pastor/teacher. That is my calling.

Pastor/Teacher: Shepherds the flock by teaching and leading the flock.

To pastor means to shepherd. To feed the flock by teaching and leading the flock. Also as a pastor, the person is given a large, compassionate heart for people.

Now before we move on to the other working gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and elsewhere this where we need to take a turn in our look at spiritual gifts.

There is something that happened many years ago in the church of Jesus Christ that was never meant by God to happen. We have developed specialists in our church, people we call clergy. We have defined clergy as someone who has specialized training and spend their lives in fulltime paid positions within the church. There are those who are called to be in full-time vocational ministry but ministry within the church is not limited to those individuals.

I have no doubt that there are people right here in this church body today that have giftings in the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, teaching and pastoring but they are not called into fulltime, vocational ministry. They are still employed in their secular work but they are called to exercise their gifting within the local church body they are a part of. When I was in Haiti, I saw that most churches, even smaller churches than this, contained several pastors. They had one lead pastor but 2-3 other pastors who were calling on people, teaching and could step into the pulpit at any given time.

By no means was ministry in the church designed to be done by one professional. I can tell you from personal experience and from watching other pastors and churches, that if a pastor tries to do all the work of ministry themselves, they will soon crack and fall under that burden. They were never meant to be the one and only person operating, teaching, caring for, leading the flock. The church of Jesus Christ was designed for many gifted people called to carry the responsibilities of ministry.

Look with me back at verses 11-12. **Ephesians 4:11-12**, “**And He (Christ) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.**”

- 4. The primary function of what is called the five-fold ministry, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, is to equip and build up the saints for the work of service.**

To help the saints identify their particular God given gifting so they live and serve in such a way that builds up the rest of the body of Christ and that reaches out into the world.

Look at what else happens when the saints are properly functioning in their giftings.

Re-read this passage but you can look at it again in your notes.

Ephesians 4:13-15, “**until we all attain to the 1. unity of the faith, and of 2. the knowledge of the Son of God, to a 3. mature man (full spiritual manhood, womanhood as God intended human life to be), to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children (immature in our understanding and faith), tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming, but 4. speaking the truth in love, we are to 5. grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.**”

- 5. Things that happen when the people in the church are properly functioning in their gifting:**

- a. There is a unity in the faith**

Unity is a big deal to God and is probably the most important thing that must happen if the local church body is to be healthy and growing. But this isn't just general unity but...

b. Unity in the knowledge of the Son of God

Having a full understanding of what Christ did upon the cross for us and what He has made available for us. Not just salvation when this life is over but a strong, powerful life and witness for Him in this life.

c. The church becomes full of mature Christians, no longer children in their understanding

Immature children, people who have no understanding or knowledge of God and His ways can be tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.

There are people out there who are not grounded in their faith and understanding of God and they, because they are smart and can speak well, they can easily deceive people and take them off into the wrong direction. This does not happen to a church that is grounded and full of mature Christians.

d. The church is able to share the truth in love with each other

This is something that does not happen as much as it could in the church of today. We live in a world that is easily offended but as the church learns about Christ and His ways, as we learn about and function properly in our giftings, there is unity, there is truth being shared, there is Christ and His love working in and through each person at a higher and higher levels.

e. The saints grow up in all aspects of Christ

This is absolutely what we want isn't it? For ourselves individually, for those we love and for this church. Growing up in all aspects of Christ.

All five of these things are promised if and only if, the church is functioning, at least at some levels in its God given giftings.

Let's take a few weeks and think and pray about the importance of this teaching. We can do this as we are going to take a few week pause on our teaching of giftings. We are going to celebrate some of the giftings which are operating in the church already. The choir next week and the children's ministry the following week.

Marian does an outstanding job of working within her gifting in the musical realm. The cantata the choir is singing next week has been written by her and sung by many who have felt the desire to minister to through song.

The following week, the gifting of the leaders of the children's ministry will be up front, sharing and ministering to us. Last Wednesday we saw 48 kids at Kingdom Kids. There is evangelizing, teaching, pastoring and many other things occurring through this ministry.

We have a lot to celebrate here at WCC. Let's celebrate the giving of our Lord and Savior the next couple weeks and we will get back to our teaching on spiritual gifts.

Let's pray.