

Being In Step
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What is Christ's PURPOSE for the church? (Discussion)

Some might say THE GREAT COMMISSION

Some might say TO STUDY AND LIVE GOD'S WORD

Some might say TO PERFORM ACTS OF MERCY for those in need.

Those remind us of the goal of Sunday School: To REACH PEOPLE; TEACH PEOPLE; and MINISTER TO PEOPLE.

Paul stated the purpose of the church a little differently. He touches on all those points, but he uses the IMAGERY of the parts of the body. We'll see what he says about it at the end of the lesson.

Ephesians 4:1-16

- How many watched some of the coverage of the 33 miners being rescued in Chile?
- What are some of your thoughts about what you saw?
- Any particular moments or parts of the story that really resonated with you?
- One thing that jumped out at me what how that whole rescue was such a story of
- TEAMWORK!
- First there was the "cast of characters" who emerged as leaders among the miners themselves.

USA Today told the story...

The cast of characters

The miners included some memorable personalities. "Super Mario" Sepulveda was the second miner to emerge. His shouts were heard even before the capsule rose above the surface, and he bounded out of the lift and thrust a fist upward like a boxer. He hugged his wife and handed out souvenir rocks from the mine to laughing rescuers.

Yonni Barrios, dubbed "Dr. House," had paramedic training that allowed him to help care for his fellow miners. He's also known for his complicated personal life; his wife and his mistress had met while waiting at the mine site.

Omar Reygadas, an electrician who helped organize life underground, became a great-grandfather for the fourth time a month after the mine collapse.

Mario Gomez, at 63 the oldest of the men and a miner since age 12, dropped to his knees after he emerged from the Phoenix capsule, bowed his head in prayer and clutched the Chilean flag.

The Wall Street Journal said...

Early contact revealed the miners retained self-discipline and a sense of humanity amid deep frustrations. They were well enough organized to have made one effort to escape—a bid that might have succeeded had mine owners kept the proper safety equipment on hand.

Their attitudes were revealed in one of their first questions after rescuers established contact. One miner, who identified himself as "shift boss Luis Urzua," asked what had happened to some co-workers who had been separated from the 33 men at the time of the cave-in.

When told they had escaped to the surface without fatalities, Mr. Urzua and the miners listening to the conversation let out a cheer.

A Chilean psychiatrist, Rose Marie Fritsch, told Chile's 24 Horas television newscast that what was most striking was the miners' "capacity to organize themselves, to conserve certain structures and stand tall," she said. "It's evident that they didn't lose their organization or their survival system."

Those miners got out by the grace of God and through a lot of TEAMWORK both IN the mine and outside the mine as a whole collection of groups including NASA worked to bring them safely to the surface.

Here's the point...

Believers in Christ are not called to be "lone rangers." We're called to WORK TOGETHER to build up the church.

The first thing we have to do is: Live Up To Our Calling

Ephesians 4:1-6

1As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

New International Version (NIV)

- In verse 1 Paul set's the expectation to "live a life worthy of our calling"
- In some of your translations this verse starts with THEREFORE.
- That's because, for the previous THREE CHAPTERS, Paul has been giving us a great background in THEOLOGY and DOCTRINE about God's PLAN for us.
- Now in the rest of this letter, he tells us how to PUT THE THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE.
- Verse 1 a couple of key words:
 - Urge (Beseech) – Translates EXHORT; APPEAL; or ENTREAT.

- One of Paul's favorites!
 - Romans 12:1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual[a] act of worship.
 - The word is the root word for URGENCY...he's BEGGING THEM
 - Worthy – The idea here is “balancing of scales.”
 - On one side: DOCTRINE and equally on the other DUTY
 - Some study DOCTRINE but don't LIVE IT
 - Some think it's all about GOOD WORKS but IGNORE the DOCTRINE
 - To be WORTHY of our CALLING the Christian life has to have a balance of both
- Verse 2 gives us FOUR ATTITUDES that are ESSENTIAL for a Christian
- What are they?
 - Humility
 - Not a virtue to the Greeks! Jesus taught LOWLINESS as a virtue.
 - Phil 2:7-8
 - Gentleness (Meekness)
 - NOT cowardice or weakness but POWER UNDER CONTROL
 - Restraint NOT REVENGE when provoked
 - “I could take you down, but I choose NOT TO.”
 - Patience
 - LONGSUFFERING; Waiting without seeing IMMEDIATE CHANGE
 - Being PATIENT with irritating people just as God is patient with all of us
 - Romans 2:4: *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*
 - Love
 - Agape – Seeking what's BEST for someone else.
- Question: If the members of a group lived by these attitudes what would the group be like? UNITY and HARMONY
- What does verse 3 say about that?
- Keyword: DILIGENTLY KEEPING or (KJV) ENDEAVORING
- Unity OF THE SPIRIT. Question: What do you think unity OF THE SPIRIT means? Holy Spirit is the source of UNITY...we are to PRESERVE it.
- The BOND OF PEACE

Colossians 3:15

15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

- To be a TEAM in the body of Christ, we have to have certain attitudes.

Bear Bryant said...

I'm just a plowhand from Arkansas, but I have learned how to hold a team together. How to lift some men up, how to calm down others, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, a team. There's just three things I'd ever say: If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you.

- Question: Look at verses 4-6. What WORD is used over and over? ONE
- Paul repeats the word ONE, SEVEN TIMES to make a point.
 1. One body – The church
 2. One Spirit – The Holy Spirit
 3. One hope – Future resurrection of believers
 4. One Lord – Christ our RISEN LORD is the REASON for our HOPE
 5. One faith – The ONLY WAY to become a part of THE BODY of Christ
 6. One baptism – The MODE has been debated, but the REQUIREMENT is clear
 7. One God and Father – ABOVE ALL and THROUGH ALL and IN ALL!

The point is this: For the BODY OF CHRIST (The Church) to function correctly, believers have to live WORTHY of our calling by putting DOCTRINE into PRACTICE and having ATTITUDES that PRESERVE our UNITY in the BOND OF PEACE.

Henry Ford said...

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

But we're all DIFFERENT and that's where Spiritual Gifts come in

Ephesians 4:7-12

7But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8This is why it[a] says:

"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train

and gave gifts to men." [b] 9(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? 10He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

New International Version (NIV)

- Verse 7: Christ gave to EACH OF US our portion of GRACE
- Not only SALVATION but SPIRITUAL GIFTS for us to use

- Remember in the beginning of Ephesians we said that BEFORE THE WORLD was created, God had a SPECIFIC PLAN and PURPOSE for each of us
- He gives us SPIRITUAL GIFTS to carry it out
- Verse 8: Quotes Psalm 68:18 – A picture of God as the CONQUERING KING giving “spoils” to his subjects. Just as Jesus in his VICTORY OVER DEATH gives GIFTS to US.
- Verses 9 and 10 speak to Christ DESCENDING to earth as God in human form and then ASCENDING to Heaven and giving us these GIFTS
- In verse 11, Paul talks about some of the key LEADERSHIP GIFTS
- Remember: Each believer has AT LEAST ONE SPIRITUAL GIFT, maybe more
- This list is focused on LEADERS in the church...not the WHOLE list
- Apostles – “sent ones”
 - The 12 closest to Jesus...no more of these today!
 - Today: People with the GIFT OF APOSTLESHIP, Today’s missionaries.
- Prophets – Communicate divine revelation
 - The Prophets in scripture...no more of these today!
 - Preachers and teachers HOPEFULLY proclaim the revelation of THOSE prophets in scripture.
- Evangelists – Make the Gospel clear and relevant to unbelievers
 - All believers are called to share the Gospel
 - Some are SPECIALLY GIFTED
- Pastors and Teachers –
 - Every pastor must be a teacher of God’s Word
 - Not every teacher is called to be a pastor
- Verse 12 sums it up. What does verse 12 say these LEADERS are to do?
 - Prepare God’s people for works of service
- WHY?
 - So that the body of Christ may be built up.
- It’s great timing that God ordained this lesson to fall the week before LOVE LOUD. A perfect example of God’s people using their gifts.

Here’s the point:

It’s not a question of whether God wants you to do something to help BUILD UP THE CHURCH. The questions are HOW HAS HE GIFTED YOU to do that and WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT IT? (Let that hang there a minute).

Put another way, ARE YOU USING YOUR GIFTS or just SITTING ON THEM?

We need to be USING OUR GIFTS to BUILD UP THE CHURCH because that’s what God has called us to do. But there are some BENEFITS.

Question: Almost all of us have participated in LOVE LOUD; or the HopeQuest events; or helping a fellow class member in need. At the end of a long day of hard work HELPING in those situations what kind of feelings do you have? What EXPRESSION is on the faces of those who helped? WHY?

I find that when I sincerely USE MY GIFTS to help BUILD UP THE CHURCH God always rewards me with a BLESSING!

That famous writer, Author Unknown (he get's quoted A LOT!) said...

A snowflake is one of God's most fragile creations, but look what they can do when they stick together!

What Is The OUTCOME When We Work Together To Build Up The Church?

Ephesians 4:13-16

Verse 12 said: 12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Now...

13until 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.

14Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

New International Version (NIV)

- What do these verses say will RESULT if we WORK TOGETHER to BUILD UP THE CHURCH?
- If you summed it up into one word what would it be? (Hints: "no longer infants" "grow up") MATURITY
- The great goal of SPIRITUAL MATURITY is accomplished only when believers work together over time to achieve it.
- They body of Christ using our gifts as in SPIRITUAL TEAMWORK

In his book Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel shares a story...

There's a wonderful story about Jimmy Durante, one of the great entertainers of a generation ago. He was asked to be a part of a show for World War II veterans. He told them his schedule was very busy and he could afford only a few minutes, but if they wouldn't mind his doing one short monologue and immediately leaving for his next appointment, he would come. Of course, the show's director agreed happily. But when Jimmy got on stage, something interesting happened. He went through the short monologue and then stayed. The applause grew louder and louder and he kept staying. Pretty soon, he had been on fifteen, twenty, then thirty minutes. Finally he took a last bow and left the stage. Backstage someone stopped him and said, "I thought you had to go after a few minutes. What happened?"

Jimmy answered, "I did have to go, but I can show you the reason I stayed. You can see for yourself if you'll look down on the front row." In the front row were two men, each of whom had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm and the other had lost his left. Together, they were able to clap, and that's exactly what they were doing, loudly and cheerfully.

Tim Hansel, Holy Sweat, 1987, Word Books Publisher, p. 104-105.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Remember at the beginning of the lesson I posed the question:
 - What is Christ's PURPOSE for the church?
- According to Paul in these last verses of this passage, the church's ultimate purpose is **GROWING INTO A MATURE MAN (WOMAN) WITH A STATURE MEASURED BY CHRIST'S FULLNESS.**
- We said:
 - Some might say **THE GREAT COMMISSION**
 - Some might say **TO STUDY AND LIVE GOD'S WORD**
 - Some might say **TO PERFORM ACTS OF MERCY** for those in need.
- As believers become like Christ, they will naturally want to do all these things: **EVANGELIZE; STUDY AND LIVE GOD'S WORD; and PERFORM ACTS OF MERCY** for those in need. Not to mention **WORSHIP GOD.**
- The way those jobs get done are when the **BODY OF CHRIST** comes together using **OUR INDIVIDUAL GIFTS** in **HARMONY** and **UNITY** and **LOVE.**
- Every one of us is expected to **USE OUR GIFTS** to **BUILD UP THE CHURCH**
- The question I leave you with is this: Now you've heard...**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?**