

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:7-16

6/6/10

There are a growing number of “Christians” today who say that they want Jesus, but not the church.

They believe that they can do just fine with God apart from church.

They say that they discuss spiritual things with their friends on the golf course or at Starbucks and don't need to go to church.

Many who do go to church go as spectators and not participants.

The Bible however teaches that:

God wants us as Christians to join together to worship Him

We each need to actively participate in a local church in order to be all that God wants us to be spiritually.

### 1. Christ has given each of us a special gift. 4:7-10

#### a. You were given a gift. 7a

##### Each one

There is no such thing as a Christian who doesn't have a spiritual gift that was given to him/her by Christ.

##### Your gift is a manifestation of grace.

You didn't win it, earn it, work for it, or deserve it.

It is a gift

##### Your gift is a special God-given ability to minister to others

**Ephesians 4:11** *Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers*

**Romans 12:6-8** *prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy*

**1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28** *wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits,*

*tongues, the interpretation of tongues, apostles,  
teachers, helps, administrations*

**1 Peter 4:10-11** *speaking and serving*

**b. Your gift is from Christ. 7b**

Your gift is according to His measure (choice) not yours.

**1 Corinthians 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

**c. Your gift is a result of Christ's victory here on earth. 8-10**

**8** A picture of the triumphal entry of a conquering king

We were the captives

He rescued us, gifted us, and made us to be gifts to His church

**9** Lower parts of the earth

This could be referring to the fact that Jesus descended into Hades between His death and resurrection. cf 1 Peter 3:18-20

To proclaim defeat to the demons in Tartarus cf 1 Peter 3:18-20; Jude 6-7; 2 Peter 2:4-6

To release the souls of OT saints from Sheol cf Luke 16; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 2:14

More likely “of the earth” is used as an appositional phrase

It means the He descended to the lower parts, which is the earth.

**2. Christ has gifted some to be spiritual leaders. 4:11**

**Apostles**

Ones sent with authority as representatives of another

There were apostles sent out to represent various NT churches (like missionaries) cf Philippians 2:25; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Romans 16:7

Only 12 apostles of Jesus Christ

They were chosen by Christ, had seen the resurrected Savior (Acts 1:22), and were given the ability to perform miracles (2 Cor 12:12).

In Revelation we see only 12 apostles in heaven.

The apostles were a foundational gift to the church. Cf Ephesians 2:20

### **Prophets**

This is another foundational gift

Prophets received direct revelation from God in the time before the NT was completed. 1 Corinthians 14:29-32 of Deuteronomy 18:14ff

### **Evangelists**

Have a special ability to lead people to Christ

Often church planters have this gift

### **Pastors and teachers**

This is one gift with two parts

All elders are to both pastor and teach, but some are specifically gifted by God to pastor and teach. Cf 1 Timothy 5:17

Just like all are to give, help, show mercy, etc., but some are specifically gifted in these areas.

### **Pastor (Shepherd)**

Pastoring (shepherding) includes leading, feeding, and protecting God's people.

**Acts 20:28-30** "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.<sup>29</sup> "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;<sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

### Teacher

This emphasizes the feeding part.

Pastor-teachers are given the ability to prepare and present God's word in an understandable and applicable way.

Paul writes to tell two young pastors to feed, lead, and protect the people in the churches under their care.

**2 Timothy 4:2** preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

**Titus 2:15** These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

There are teachers who aren't pastors, but there are not pastors who aren't teachers

### 3. One purpose of spiritual leaders is to equip you to serve others. 4:12

To train you in the scriptures so that you can grow spiritually and are equipped to minister to others

To equip you:

To share the gospel, teach, exhort, administer, help, show mercy, etc.

To provide biblical counsel and encouragement to others

The result of you exercising your gifts is that the body of Christ (church) is built up.

Individually and corporately

4. **Your ministry brings unity. 4:13a**

God uses the diversity of gifts to bring an interdependent unity

Different gifts, abilities, strengths, and personalities come together to make a healthy church.

5. **Your ministry helps bring maturity. 4:13b**

Maturity to other individual Christians and to the church as a whole

**Immature Children**

Need constant care

Immediate gratification

Lack self-control

Emotionally unstable

Gullible

Selfish

**Mature Adults**

Care for others

Deferred gratification

Under control

Emotionally stable

Discerning

Giving

6. **Your ministry helps bring Christ's church to spiritual stability. 4:14-15**

We mature and gain a biblical perspective in a mixed up world full of false teachers and diverse worldviews

7. **Growth requires the proper working of each individual part. 4:16a**

A church will only grow to maturity if each individual Christian is fulfilling his/her part

You as an individual Christian cannot grow to spiritual maturity without being around other Christians.

You can't be all that God wants you to be as a Christian unless you are in the context of a church family.

8. **Growth requires love. 4:16b**

That we unselfishly reach out to one another.

That we lovingly put up with one another and help one another grow.

**John 13:34** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Cf John 15:12, 17

**John 17:11** "I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*.

Cf John 17:21-22

**Danish proverb-** What you are is God's gift to you; What you do with yourself is your gift to God.