

Church Is More (Part II)

Message 02 of the series, "More"

I. There is more to the Christian life than getting saved and personal spiritual growth.

a. Jesus gave us a mission.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you."

Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

b. The Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish our mission.

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere..." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

c. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts to accomplish our mission.

"Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this... There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other." 1 Corinthians 12:1,4-6 (NLT)

Life Application: It's not about me!

II. Spiritual gifts are more important to our church than we may realize.

a. God has given all of us spiritual gifts.

"To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said." 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NLT)

"In his grace God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)

Note: We don't decide which gifts we receive. "It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have." 1 Corinthians 12:11 (NLT)

Note: No one has all of the spiritual gifts.

"Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts." 1 Corinthians 12:29-31 (NLT)

b. God gifts some of us with the abilities to equip and train the rest of us in using our spiritual gifts.

"Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

c. God wants all of us to discover and develop our spiritual gifts.

"Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life." Galatians 6:4-5 (MSG)

- We can pray, asking God to show us which gifts He has given us and where to use them.
- We can serve wherever needed and observe how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in our lives.
- We can seek counsel from mature Christians.

III. We are more than a Christian organization, we are the body of Christ.

- a. We are more necessary than we realize to the effectiveness of Christ's body.

"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ... If the foot says, 'I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,' that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, 'I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,' would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it..." 1 Corinthians 12:12-18 (NLT)

- b. God has arranged His body so that we all need to work together.

The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." 1 Corinthians 12:21-27 (NLT)

Life Application: When we work together we experience more abundant life.

"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." Ephesians 4:16 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. When you think of the local body of believers (the Church), do you think strict, focused, or fun? What do you think Church should look like?
2. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What would you say to someone who feels that it is not necessary to attend a worship service or connect group to be a Christian?
3. Read Galatians 6:1-5. What are some ways found in this passage that we can help fellow believers? How do you think most believers respond to someone who 'is overcome by some sin'? Does our response reflect our trust in God?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31 and Romans 12:6-8. What are spiritual gifts? Who decides who gets which spiritual gift? Is this important to know?
5. What is your spiritual gift? You can discover your spiritual gift by: a. praying; b. serving in the church; c. seeking counsel of mature Christians.
6. What spiritual gifts are evident in your group (i.e. encouragement, hospitality, wisdom, serving, teaching, leadership)? What, in your opinion, is the best way to develop spiritual gifts?
7. Read Ephesians 4:16. How does this verse challenge your involvement in our church? What is one thing you would like to do differently or better within the church?

Quotations to Consider:

"At Pentecost (Acts 2) the disciples devoted themselves to constant prayer until the Holy Spirit came upon them with tongues of fire, filled their lives and gave them courage and power to witness to the world. Some people call this release, or baptism in the Holy Spirit the 'kiss of the Spirit.' Its primary purpose is to empower Christians to bring Jesus to the world. Its primary effect is a tangible experience of the love of Jesus." Linda Schubert

"If you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself. Christians are Christ's body.... Every addition to that body enables Him to do more. If you want to help those outside you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ who along can help them. Cutting off a man's fingers would be an odd way of getting him to do more work." C.S. Lewis

"One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team. The first requisite is life, always." A.W. Tozer

"Believers are never told to become one; we already are one and are expected to act like it." Joni Eareckson Tada