

Equipping the Saints for Service

One of the core tenets of Cell Life Church is equipping the saints for service. Today we continue starting off the new year right and focus on this.

Introduction

We like to start each year by teaching the core tenets of a life in Christ and the pillars in which we have built Cell Life Church. Last week we spoke about being the hands and feet of Jesus in our everyday lives. We emphasized that you cannot be one person in church and someone else the rest of the week. We also shared that each one of us has a plan and a purpose that uniquely fits into God's ultimate plan and purpose for all of creation.

Today we are continuing the discussion and talking about church leadership and the purpose of leaders in the Church. One of the core passages of scripture that Cell Life Church is built on is found in Ephesians 4:11-12 which says:

Ephesians 4:11-12

(11) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (12) to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

We are talking about equipping the saints for service by recognizing God's appointed leaders, equipping people for service, and unity of service.

Recognizing God's Appointed Leaders

Ephesians 4:11 begins by highlighting the various roles that God has appointed within the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. There are many other leadership roles and titles in the Church but they all fall into one of these categories. Each one of these roles is very important.

The Apostle Paul is clear in this teaching that Church leaders are a gift from God appointed for particular tasks. These are specialty tasks that cannot be undertaken by just anyone. The anointing of God must be on Church leaders to do what God has asked them to do. This is true for all believers, but especially true for Church leaders.

As believers, we need to recognize and appreciate the leaders God has placed in our midst. These individuals are gifts to the Church, and their purpose is to equip and build up the body of Christ.

Too often, we treat church leaders as employees instead of leaders who teach, mentor, equip, and lead us. We expect the pastors of church groups to be the sole voice in the community for the cause of Christ. This is simply not true. Our leaders are there to equip the members of the church to go out and be the hands and feet of Christ that we spoke about last week. Acts 6:1-4 is an example of this and it says:

Acts 6:1-4

(1) In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily



distribution of food. (2) So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (3) Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them (4) and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

The leaders of the Church must be focused on their intended plan and purpose just like everyone else. Their main focus is equipping the saints for service using their unique God-given gifts and abilities.

Equipping for Service

Ephesians 4:12 emphasizes that Church leaders are given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Every believer is called to serve, and it's through the guidance and teaching of these leaders that we are equipped for our individual roles in God's kingdom and the world today.

We all have a purpose that God has appointed. It is Church leaders who help us identify that purpose and then guide us in that calling. Church leaders equip the members of the Church with spiritual teaching and guidance. This helps people know what God has called them to do and why we are to do it. Church leaders also provide practical teaching and guidance so we can live out the plan and purpose God has given us in a way that is successful and builds up the Church and serves all mankind.

Just as we read in Acts a few moments ago. The Apostles had others appointed to distribute food to the widows so they had the time to devote themselves to the scriptures, prayer, and equipping others for their role and purpose in the body.

Last week we identified many things we all can do to be the hands and feet of Jesus every day. To carry out these tasks and point people to Jesus, you must have the guidance and teaching of anointed leaders who equip you to carry out those tasks spiritually, mentally, and physically.

As we grow in our faith, we become more effective instruments in God's hands. This builds up of His Church.

The other thing to learn from Acts 6 that we read earlier is you cannot expect the leaders of your church group to do all the work. They cannot be the only ones feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, freeing the captive, and clothing the naked. That is not sustainable. Everyone who calls Jesus their Lord is called to do these things. Church leaders cannot do it all while the saints sit in their chairs or pews and watch.

There is another reason God has chosen to give the Church leaders to equip the saints for service. As the saints are equipped and start to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their homes, communities, and workplaces, we see a unity in purpose start to form.

Unity in Purpose

The ultimate goal of this equipping process is to achieve unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Ephesians 4:13 says:



Ephesians 4:13

(13) until 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.

Ephesians 4:13 stresses the importance of reaching maturity as a body, coming together in a unity of purpose and understanding. It is this unity that God intended from the beginning of time when he created Adam and Eve.

We believe in One Church. That is not to say that there are not different groupings of believers, often referred to as denominations, but we should be serving others together in the name of Jesus Christ. That is ultimately our purpose. Whether you ascribe to the doctrines of the Pentecostals, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, or any of the other denominations, we are all called to acts of service to help others and point them to a fulfilled life in Jesus Christ.

God has created each one of us unique. We each have a unique plan and purpose. Like we said last week, we are all small tiles in a large beautiful mosaic. That unity comes from serving together and focusing on Christ despite our differences.

Our diversity in gifts and roles should lead us to a harmonious unity, demonstrating the love of Christ to the world. That is the ultimate goal, to build up the Body of Christ. All of humanity loving and serving God and each other.

Conclusion

God's plan starts with anointed leaders focused on Jesus who then point others to Him and equip them spiritually, mentally, and physically to serve the people in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities. This ultimately builds the Church and brings unity to the Body of Christ.

Be grateful for the leaders God has given you, recognizing their role in equipping you for service. As you fulfill your unique calling, we pray you strive for unity in the faith and knowledge of Christ, building up the body of believers and shining God's light into the world. Remember, you are a vital part of God's plan, equipped for a specific purpose in His kingdom.

