

THE CHURCH AS THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

SESSION 5 –SPIRIT-EMPOWERED SERVICE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

I. Introduction

While God gives gifted people to the church, to train and equip, he provides these so that the membership may be used in the lives of one another to help each grow to become more and more what Christ has redeemed us to be. Simple truth: we need one another. Each of us has something to give to others, and something to receive from others. The church has no givers who have no need to receive, or receivers who have nothing to give. How should this affect how we think of what happens when we meet together? How should this affect our association of churches? How can we cultivate a culture of giving and receiving in ways that promotes growth in Christ-likeness?

II. Spiritual Gifts Exercised Through Every-member ministry and Gifted Leaders

A. Spiritual Gifts and the Contributions of All the Members of the Community of Faith – 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:7, 14-26; Eph 4:11-16; Heb 10:23-25

1 Peter 4:10–11 – ¹⁰ As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Romans 12:3–8 – ³ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor 12:7, 12-26 – ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . ¹² For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is

not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹ If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵ so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Eph 4:11-16 – ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Heb 10:23-25 – ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

B. Strategic and Central Role of Preaching and Teaching, primarily from Elders and Leaders – Eph 4:11-13; 1 Tim 5:17; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Titus 1:9; Heb 13:17

Eph 4:11-13 – ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

1 Tim 5:17 – The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

2 Tim 4:1-5 – ¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Titus 1:9-11 – ⁹ [An overseer must hold] fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

Heb 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

III. The Depth and Breadth of the “One Another” Ministry of the Body of Christ

A. Love Toward One Another

Love one another (John 13:34, 34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom 12:10)

Serve one another in love (Gal 5:13)

Make your love increase and overflow for each other (1 Thess 3:12)

Love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Pet 3:8)

Love each other deeply (1 Pet 4:8)

B. Attitudes Regarding One Another

Be at peace with each other (Mark 9:50)

Honor one another above yourselves (Rom 12:10)

Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32)

Forgiving each other (Eph 4:32)

Have equal concern for each other (1 Cor 12:25)

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (Gal 5:26)

In humility consider others better than yourselves (Phil 2:3)

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Pet 5:5)

C. Actions to Carry out Toward One Another

You also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:14)
Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)
Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you (Rom 15:7)
Instruct one another (Rom 15:14)
Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12)
When you come together to eat, wait for each other (1 Cor 11:33)
Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)
Bear with each other (Col 3:13)
Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another (Col 3:13)
Teach . . . one another (Col 3:16)
Admonish one another (Col 3:16)
Encourage each other (1 Thess 4:18; 5:11)
Build each other up (1 Thess 5:11)
Encourage one another daily (Heb 3:13)
Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)
Encourage one another (Heb 10:25)
Confess your sins to each other (James 5:16)
Pray for each other (James 5:16)
Live in harmony with one another (1 Pet 3:8)
Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Pet 4:9)
Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others (1 Pet 4:10)
Greet one another with a kiss of love (1 Pet 5:14)

D. Actions to Refrain from Doing Toward One Another

Stop passing judgment on one another (Rom 14:13)
If you bite and devour each other...you will be destroyed by each other (Gal 5:15)
Do not lie to each other (Col 3:9)
Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
Do not grumble against each other (James 5:9)

IV. Conclusion and Application

- A. Consider what threatens true love and care for one another and work to abolish it.
E.g., pride, jealousy, competitiveness, pettiness, judgmental spirit, desire for revenge
- B. Consider what promotes true love and care for one another and work to advance it.
E.g., humility, "gracious diminishing," desire for other's flourishing
- C. Consider the "one another's" and select one or two to put into practice, even now.
How may I better serve others? How may I grow in building them up to be more like Christ?