GET LAUNCHED

THE COUNTER-CULTURE TO CULTURE: THE CHURCH

STUDY #4
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THE AMBASSADOR FOR JESUS CHRIST

There is not a more important meeting that takes place, than when Jesus Christ followers gather together. It is more important than:

1. The United Nations gathering
2. The U.S. Congress in session
3. A Presidential Conference or Super Bowl, etc.

Why? It is more important because Jesus is the hope of the world and while He is not on earth in bodily form, He does have a body that He works in and through the church!

This means that the Church is actually the leader in the world.

The Church is ahead of its time! It always has been even when it was a minority in Jerusalem.

The Church is the ambassador of God’s peace plan for man—peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with one’s fellow man!

The Church is the conduit of the most important message—that everything is moving toward the return of the Prince of Peace who will establish His Kingdom on the earth.

It is the Church that will inherit the earth, and eternity with God in glory.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? (THE BIBLICAL VERSION)

Jesus said that He would build an assembly of individuals (or community) in which the ultimate breakdown in the form of death would have no power.

The greatest enemy we face is death itself; it is the last enemy. It will either conquer you or you will conquer it in Christ.

Jesus said, “…I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:13-18)

The word Hades is a general reference to death. When coupled with the idea of “gates,” Jesus is saying that “death” has no power to hold down Jesus Christ’s followers. Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” (John 14:19)

“Death is swallowed up in victory…” “O death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) (Romans 10:9)

The word Jesus used for community is the word, “church” (ie. assembly, congregation, community for a specific purpose).

Today our culture is losing “feeling” and is vulnerable to self-mutilation.

What is often now considered “normal” in our society today, is actually harmful. It is reminiscent of a time in the Bible that says, “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes…” (Judges 17:6) and also “Those who call evil, good and good, evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness…” (Isaiah 5:20)
Consider the story of “The Frog in the Kettle” A frog was thrown into a pot of “hot water” and sensing the danger, it immediately jumped out. Then that same frog was placed in a pot of water that was slowly raised in temperature one degree at a time. The frog just sat there comfortably, until the hot water gradually took its life.

Are we a generation that is slowly but surely losing perspective on the dangers we are facing? Are the waters of relativism, hedonism, sensualism, and atheism slowly and surely numbing a generation to danger?

**PURPOSED TO INFLUENCE**

Jesus said to His followers, “You are the salt of the earth...” (Matthew 6:13)

Salt in the first century was an antibacterial!

It preserved meat and vegetables and it was so valued that at times the Roman government paid their soldiers with salt!

The same is true today!

Every follower of Jesus should be a preserving influence in the world. Wherever you are; whatever family you are in; wherever you work; wherever you play; wherever you live; and wherever you go to church, as a follower of Jesus, YOU are SALT!

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden... In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Every Christian is strategically positioned where they are to influence others by doing good works that help people see what God is doing on earth.

What does it look like to be salt and light? Matthew 5 shows us that it means to:

- Have a right view of oneself—in need of God’s help...
- Be hungry for righteousness and justice...
- Be a peacemaker...
- Live without anger or lust...
- Embody the power of love which overcomes the love of power!

The Church was created for good works! (Ephesians 2:10) Every Christian is in the “ministry” of serving others (not just those who work at a church or who are pastors/leaders). How are you to “minister” to others in Jesus name?

To help people physically:

Jesus said, “I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave Me drink. I needed clothes and you clothed Me, sick and you cared for Me, in prison and you visited Me. Whenever you have done this to the least person, you did it to Me.” (Matthew 25:35-36) “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)
To comfort and strengthen people **emotionally**:

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another.” (Romans 12:15-16) “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” When you minister a word of counsel or encouragement or comfort, that is ministry! (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

To contribute to **spiritual needs**:

“God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18) Ultimately, our purpose is to “contribute to the church family” “...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16)

Jesus said that He would build His Church on the **truth** of who He is.

“Upon this rock, I will build my church.” What is the rock? The truth that Jesus is “…the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”

The term “Christ” is the Greek version of the Hebrew title, “Messiah,” which means **Anointed One**.

It is a reference to the One that Israel had been waiting for since David. The One who would:

- Overthrow Israel’s enemies...
- Re-gather God’s earthly people from the four corners of the world...
- Make Jerusalem the center of the world and
- Establish the perfect reign of God on earth!

**THE MESSAGE THAT RESCUES!**

The Church is the message bearer of the greatest **reality** of all, the plan of the Father in Christ!

“This is the church of the **living God**, which is the pillar and **foundation** of the **truth**.” (1 Timothy 3:15)

What is the foundation of our faith? Jesus lives!!

“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from **idols** to serve the **living** and **true** God...” (1Thessalonians 1:9)

Colossians 3:5 tells us to “put to death” the evil desires of the heart, including “greed,” which is idolatry.

What are idols? In short, they are **god-replacements**.

You might ask, “How can one have other “gods?” Isn’t there just one true and living God? Yes! “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.” (Isaiah 45:5)

The “other gods” would be god-replacements of one’s chief allegiance, motivation and identity.
Greek culture worshipped: 1. Beauty (Aphrodite); 2. Power (Ares); 3. Wealth (Artemis); and 4. Accomplishment (Heshaestus).

Just like this world does!

Today there is the god-replacement of “materialism” which says in effect, “a full life is found in the abundance of possessions.” The truth? Materialism is the father of illusions! To follow this “god” is to waste your life at the expense of your own soul, family and legacy. The one who “dies with the most toys,” wins nothing! Jesus said, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)

David Foster Wallace puts it this way:

“Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god...to worship...is that, pretty much, anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. Worship power and you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart and you will end up feeling stupid—a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. And so on. Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they’re evil or sinful; it is that they are unconscious. They are default-settings.”

Jesus rescues us from a delusional field of making false gods from created things. Jesus will never abandon you! Jesus said, “...I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”(John 10:28) The Church embodies this rescue to a world who desperately needs the love rescue of Jesus Christ!

THE NEW TRAJECTORY

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 provides an example of how the “...Gospel of Christ...the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek...” (Romans 1:16-17), transforms lives from a death spiral.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

The “fornicators” “adulterers” “homosexuals” and “sodomites” means those living dangerously outside of original design of sexual relations.

The “covetous” means the materialists (love of money is the root of all evil).

The “revilers” means those who use abusive language: slanderers and gossips.

The “extortioners” means those who “con” others and participate in “ruthless business practices.

The point of the passage is that in following Jesus there was transformation in these areas: money, sex, power (i.e. “such were some of you’).
The warning is that unless there is **fundamental change** in the areas of SEX, MONEY and POWER—there is no confidence that one presently has Jesus as King, and therefore would have no confidence of being in His Kingdom when it materializes on planet earth.

In short ….

Jesus is creating a new man and a new community in Himself.

It is based on the reality that He is the Son of God.

Being a follower of Jesus, and a member of the Church means that one overcomes the controlling influence of the world and death, and ultimately participates in the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth and into eternity!

**A TEAM EFFORT LEADING PEOPLE TO JESUS**

But how do people come to know Jesus? Jesus said that many people are ready to have a right relationship with God, if only they heard the truth. (Matthew 9:27-28) The Bible says, “...faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17) It’s another way of saying that no one can know the Lord unless they hear the Gospel. (Romans 10:14-15) That's where every Christian plays a role. Sound overwhelming? It is not...

God is not so much looking for **ability**, as He is looking for **availability**. Salvation is a miraculous work of the Lord. It is His work! Ninety percent of how you lead someone to Jesus is simply being available for the Lord to work through your life.

Jesus said, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

It is as simple as, “Lord I am willing for You to use my life!”

Below are some practical strategies and perspectives to help **“launch you”** as you head out to the harvest...

Start with **Prayer**!

Pray for your FRIENDS
Pray for your RELATIVES
Pray for your ASSOCIATES
Pray for your NEIGHBORS
Pray for PEOPLE who drive you crazy!

In John chapter 17, Jesus prayed for people who would eventually come to faith in Him, “I do not pray for these (disciples) alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word...” (John 17:20)

The majority of people come to faith through the influence of their friends and family!

You are in the **“seed”** planting business.

Think of the Gospel as a “seed.”

“The seed is the word of God.” (Luke 8:11)
“...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...” (1 Peter 1:23)

Christians are privileged with planting the most important truth—the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus!

Reaching people for Jesus will often take a team effort!

Take note of the team effort in the following verse as the Lord makes the seed grow: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

You may ask, “How do I plant the seeds of the Gospel?”

1. Take an interest in others and embody love and good works! Keep in mind, what can seem so natural from your perspective, can be a divine blessing to the recipient. Walk in love! (Acts 3:1-10)

2. In your hands are the “seeds” (i.e. truths) of the most powerful transforming realities of salvation and right relationship with God. Give them away! Tell others! Never underestimate the power of God’s Word. Below are three incredible “seeds” to give away!

   “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

   Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

   “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

3. Keep the main thing, the main thing—the Lord Jesus Christ! Mentioning the name of Jesus can be a “hot button” that triggers a host of issues: political, social, philosophical, etc. Be careful not to get lost in arguments that contain the “ABC’s” (Anything-But-Christ!). There is one reason and one reason only why a person has eternal life in a right relationship with God; it is by making the right decision to follow Jesus! (John 14:6; Romans 10:13; Acts 4:12; John 3:16)

4. Invite people to church where they can witness Jesus Christ Followers loving the Lord, each other, and the truth of God’s Word.

5. Tell your own story of how Jesus changed your life—your testimony! God will use it to help others come to Jesus! Just like the man in the Bible who said, “...One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see!” (John 9:25)

There are times to plant seeds, and there are times to “close the deal” and ask someone, “Would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” If your friend answers, Yes! Lead them in a word of prayer, asking Jesus to be their Savior and Lord!

THE CHURCH LOCAL AND UNIVERSAL

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:1-3)

The term church, means “assembly.”
“At Corinth” is in reference to a local assembly in the City of Corinth (The word “church” is used about 100-104 times in the Bible, and in 98 of those times, the word “church” refers to the local assembly of believers).

“...with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus,” says the church is world-wide. Today, the “church family” has millions of brothers and sisters on the earth, and even more who are already with the Lord in paradise. “For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...” (Ephesians 3:14-15)

“Sanctified,” means “set apart,” “made holy” for which there are two-sided, like a two sided coin.

One side represents what has already been accomplished by God. “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10) This means that we have been set apart, forgiven and are positionally in Christ forever. It could be said that we have all of Christ at conversion—His love, forgiveness, redemption, and hope beyond the grave. “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus...” (Hebrews 10:19)

The other side of sanctification addresses the question as to whether Jesus has all of us (or all of our heart), which is an on-going process! This is the side of sanctification where we live out our faith. Paul wrote, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

This is a very important transition …

An essential part of our sanctification and growth as a Christian involves being an active member of a local community of Jesus Christ followers!

You might ask, “Does the Bible say we need to join a local assembly of Jesus Christ followers?” No. Because it assumes that every Christian is an active member in a local assembly of Christians.

**Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian, but Christians are active in a local church.**

It’s been calculated that there are over thirty commands in the Bible that are impossible to realize without being a part of a church family.

Pastor and Author Kent Hughes writing to men penned, “Men, on the most elementary level, you do not have to go to church to be a Christian. You do not have to go home to be married either. But in both cases if you do not, you will have a very poor relationship.”

Peter used the imagery of the church family as being “living stones” that God is using to build a “spiritual temple.” “…You are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests.” (I Peter 2:5)

It tells us that Jesus is building lives individually, but those individual lives are a part of a construction of a community—the Church.

Every Christian stands before God on an individual basis (i.e. individual stones).

Every Christian is a part of the world-wide assembly (i.e. individual stones a part of universal assembly/ building).

Every Christian is to be a stone in the local assembly of the church (i.e. individual stones making up a local assembly/ building).
Below are five big perspectives on the importance of having a home church.

**THE BIG FIVE**

1. Every Christian needs a home church:

   “And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25)

   The church is a family. Accountability, belonging, care, and spiritual growth happen best with relationally-connected believers.

   The Church is like a group of **coals** in a hot barbecue pit. If a coal is isolated, it grows cold, but when together with other coals, it burns hotter! (Acts 2:42-26; Hebrews 10:25; John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Philippians 2:4)

   There is nothing wrong with visiting churches. After all, true believers meet at various places and the “Church” is made up of different denominations and associations. However, it’s critical that every Christian commits themselves to other Christians. Every Christian needs, and should have, a home church. When this takes place, the church as a whole is strengthened and God is glorified.

   “Today’s culture of independent individualism has created many spiritual orphans—“bunny believers” who hop around from one church to another without any identity, accountability, or commitment. Many believe it is possible to be a “good Christian” without joining (or even attending) a local church, but God would strongly disagree.” (Kent Hughes)

2. Every Christian needs a church where they are known:

   “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.” (Hebrews 10:24)

   “Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” (Hebrews 13:17)

3. Every Christian needs a church where they worship:

   “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)

   A church family identifies you as a genuine believer, and gives you a spiritual home.

4. Every Christian needs a church family where they grow in love with the Lord and they grow to **learn** to love the most diverse family on earth becoming more like Jesus.

   The church is the most diverse family on planet earth. There will be differences among Christians. However, we will not tear each other apart!

   We commit to “unity in our diversity.”

   We will be responsible “local Christians” and “global Christians.”

   It has been summarized that, “In the essentials—unity; In the non-essentials—liberty; In all things—love!” (John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Romans 16:17; 1 John 4:7-8; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12)
5. Every Christian needs a church where they can make a contribution to the strength of the church family as a whole.

Every Christian is valuable!

Ephesians 4:16 puts it this way, “Every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

And 1 Corinthians 12:7 tells us, “A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.”

“You are the **body** of Christ and members **individually**!” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

**THE GIFTS GOD GIVES TO HIS CHURCH**

You are a totally unique creation of God. You were given abilities from God that equip you to be a part of making a difference in the church family and in the world for Christ. They are called spiritual gifts.

Below are brief descriptions of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives the church to benefit and strengthen the church as a whole.

**Communication Gifts**

**Prophecy** (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10)
There is a form of prophecy that addresses what will take place in the future; there is also, however, the gift of prophecy that “foretells” the Word of God. Corinthians 14:3 teaches that prophecy builds up, fires up, and holds up. In other words, it is for edification, exhortation, and comfort.

**Evangelist** (Ephesians 4:11, 2 Timothy 4:5)
There is also the communication gift of an evangelist. Certainly Billy Graham had this gift, but you may have it also. Are you especially sensitive to and aware of how unbelievers feel and think? Do you have a love for the lost? We all should. Some of us may not be evangelists, but we are all called to do the work of evangelism which is to be a part of introducing others to the Lord Jesus.

**Missions** (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)
The gift of missions is the ability to adapt to a different culture in order to reach unbelievers and help believers from that culture. Do you have a special heart for a certain group of people? Perhaps God has called you to the mission field. The apostle Paul certainly had this gift. He wrote, “I become all things to all people, that I may in some way save some. When I’m with the Jew, I become like the Jew in order to reach the Jew. When I’m with those outside the Law, I become like those outside the law in order to reach them. I become all things to all men so that I may in some way save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

**Apostle** (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11)
The word apostle means “one who is sent.” The apostles of the first century were sent with a unique calling and ability of God to be a part of laying the foundation of the church. I do not believe there are apostles like this today in the church. However, I do believe there are those who have apostolic-type ministries. This is the calling and ability to start new churches and oversee their development. There are leaders today who are particularly gifted with church planting in areas that have yet to have a church—it’s the calling and enabling to go out and start a church.

**Teaching** (Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 14:26, 1 Timothy 2:7)
The gift of teaching is the ability to educate God’s people by clearly explaining and applying the Bible. It is the gift that equips Christians to grow and to make a difference in their world for Christ. It is the gift to equip and train other believers for ministry. I believe many Christians have this gift but it needs to be developed.
**Exhortation** (Romans 12:8)
God also gives a special gift that helps bring out the best in others and challenge them with God’s Word to develop their full potential. This is the gift of exhortation. It is a gift that inspires and motivates others. Those who are gifted with exhortation make for great biblical counselors.

**Wisdom** (1 Corinthians 12:8)
God gives the gift of wisdom, which is the ability to understand God’s perspective on life’s situations and communicate such insights in a simple, understandable way. It is the ability to explain from Scripture what to do and how to do it amidst life’s challenges.

**Discernment** (1 Corinthians 12:10)
The ability to discern whether the source of an experience or teaching is of Satan, self, or God’s Spirit is necessary for the health of the church. The gift of discernment equips the church in this area. It is the ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to give an immediate evaluation based on God’s Word. It is a critical gift because it identifies subversive and seductive teaching that finds its way into the church. It is a gift that protects the church from swinging from one extreme of experience and teaching to another. It is essential that Christians learn to be content with how God grows His church.

**Knowledge** (1 Corinthians 12:8, 14:6)
There is the gift of knowledge. Daniel 1:17 says, “To these four young men, God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.” Peter experienced this gift when he said of the Lord Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father which is in Heaven.” The gift of knowledge is just that, a gift from God that empowers a person with understanding and knowledge that otherwise would be impossible to know outside of God revealing it.

**Character Gifts**

**Service** (Romans 12:7)
I believe we all have the gift of service. It is critical that we exercise it in discovering other gifts God has given us. However, there are some who are fantastic servers who take initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully, and without a need for recognition.

**Mercy** (Romans 12:8)
The gift of mercy is the ability to detect hurt and empathize with those who are suffering in the church family. It is the ability to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis, or pain. These people have a great ability to empathize. People with this gift engage others. Recently, a group of women in our church organized a ministry to reach out to those who have lost loved ones. They are driven by compassion, willing to make a phone call, write an encouraging note, or just be there to listen and care for others.

**Hospitality** (1 Peter 4:9-10)
The gift of hospitality is the ability to make others—especially strangers—feel warmly welcomed, accepted, and comfortable in the church family. This is a critical gift in the church.

**Pastor/Shepherding** (Ephesians 4:11)
The gift of pastoring or “shepherding” in the Greek literally means “to lead and to feed.” It means to care for. As recorded in Acts 20, pastors are instructed to protect the church family, to protect the church from false unbiblical teaching, and to equip the flock with God’s Word. I believe there are many with this gift who are not on a staff at a church.

**Giving** (Romans 12:8)
R.G. Laturno is a good example of a person with the gift of giving. He developed the great earth movers and tractors. And when he started out in his business, he was giving 10 percent of his income and living on 90 percent. As God blessed him, he gave 20 percent and lived on 80 percent. Nobody told him to do
this. He just had the gift of giving. At the end of his life, he was giving 90 percent of what he made and living on 10 percent, and was still a multimillionaire. He just said, “You can’t out-give God.” He had the gift of giving, gradually giving more and more.

Celebration Gifts

**Healing** (1 Corinthians 12:28)
The gift of healing is the ability to pray in faith for people who need physical, emotional, or spiritual healing and see God answer.

**Faith** (1 Corinthians 12:9)
The gift of faith is the ability to pray specifically for God’s supernatural intervention into an impossible situation and see God heal them through prayer.

**Tongues** (1 Corinthians 14:13-15)
The gift of tongues is the ability to pray and worship God with your spirit in a language that is not understood by the human mind. It is a gift that is self-edifying when exercised in private. However, if the gift is demonstrated in a public meeting, it needs to be accompanied with the gift of interpretation that allows others to benefit.

**Music** (1 Chronicles 15:16)
The gift of music played a vital role in temple worship. It is a gift that celebrates God’s presence. Some of you have this gift. Are you using your gift of music in its highest expression to God in worship?

**Art** (Exodus 31:3-11)
Some are gifted to work with their hands. It is the ability to express honor to the Lord through a variety of art forms. Exodus 31:3-11 describes it like this, “...to make artistic designs to work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work with wood and engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. He gifted two men to teach these skills to others.” Are you using the artistic gifts God has given you to build, maintain, or beautify your place of worship?

Catalyst Gifts

**Leadership** (Romans 12:8)
The gift of leadership clarifies and communicates direction to the church. The leader influences others by living a godly lifestyle while empowered by the Holy Spirit. Leaders are goal oriented, focused, and sacrificial. They inspire others and are followed by others.

**Administration** (Romans 12:28)
The Greek word for administration is literally the word for “to steer a ship.” It’s to guide or to pilot. Administration is the gift of management, while leadership is the gift of influencing. The gift of administration is the ability to organize and bring structure. It is the ability to manage people, resources, and time for effective ministry. It is the ability to coordinate many details and execute the plans of leadership. An administrator sees the details and the big picture at the same time.

**Faith** (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)
The gift of faith is the ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and to act on God’s promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate. It is the willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a God-given vision, expecting God to handle the obstacles. It is the gift that enables you to take a risk. You are not threatened to go out on a limb. It is the ability to stand strong and alone in God’s direction when others struggle or falter.
IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE

There are areas where you will be particularly gifted. It could be called your “primary” contribution or ministry within the church family. “A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.” (1 Corinthians 12:7)

What’s important is that you are willing to be available. In fact, one of the best ways to learn what your gifts are is to make yourself available to help and serve within the church family.

Let’s quickly summarize with five important perspectives …

1. You are a part of something much bigger than yourself.
   As a Christian, you are a part of the physical representation of Jesus Christ on planet earth, known as the church, or body of Christ. (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 15-27; John 17:20-23)

2. There is no one like you.
   You are uniquely made and divinely enabled and gifted by God to inspire and strengthen others within the church family, and to make a difference for Christ in the world. (Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 139:14; 1 Corinthians 1:3-7; 1 Corinthians 12:6-7 NLT) A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

3. You have been entrusted by God to be responsible with the abilities that He has given you.
   (1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Corinthians 12:18 & 27; John 21:15-17; Acts 1:8)

4. What pleases the Lord is that you activate the gifts that God has given you—being motivated by your love for the Lord, and a demonstration of your worship of Him! (John 14:15; John 21:15-17)

5. God wants you to live your life with an attitude of thankfulness and openness to new adventures of faith and to be committed to finish well by honoring the Lord Jesus throughout the seasons of your life. (Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Paul, John)

A CLOSING WORD OF PERSPECTIVE / ENCOURAGEMENT!

Do you feel that God is losing...righteousness is losing...darkness is overcoming the light...and that Christianity is losing?

Christianity rescued the first century from a death spiral and the good news is that “Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

We are living amidst a global community and the opportunity to impact for Jesus is all around us. The Lord wants to use you to be salt and light to this generation.

The Lord has always had a faithful core in each generation.
Early in civilization, during the dark times, there were Enoch and Noah.
When the Jews were in slavery, there was Moses.
When the Jews were on the brink of destruction, there was Esther.
When God was ready to become a man, he found a young committed girl who lived in a obscure town of Nazareth. Her name was Mary!
During the wicked time of Ahab and Jezebell, there was Elijah!
Today there is YOU and with God’s help, a lot can be done with a little.
The Lord wants to use you to be salt and light to this generation!

Historically, great change for the good has taken place during the dark times. Be encouraged that you are not alone and God is going to use you in your family, work, church and generation.

Like the first century church, this is a generation that will reveal genuine Christians because it will draw out what a person really believes, and what the source of their strength really is. In short, it will draw out the issue of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. So keep praying! And keep relying on the Lord to lead you, to empower you and to gift you by His Spirit.

**PRAYER:**

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...” (Acts 1:14)

“And they continued steadfastly...in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)

**THE HOLY SPIRIT**

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:4)

“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18)

Learn to be “needy” for the Holy Spirit, as He alone is our spiritual sufficiency!

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.” (2 Corinthians 3:5)