

Daily Readings

This week we look at the equipping ministry of the church. These passages are recommended for your daily reading. Each of these passages deal with the need for preparation in using our gifts.

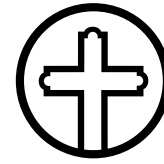
Monday, September 29 – Matthew 6:13-16. **“You are the salt of the earth... the light of the world.”** As followers of Christ we share a sacred responsibility on this earth as his salt and light. In what ways did you serve Christ as a light or seasoning at your work or in your family today?

Tuesday, September 30 – Luke 10:1-20. Luke tells us the story of Jesus appointing and sending out seventy workers. As they return from their journey they rejoice in the power of Jesus name. As you begin your day, pray that Christ will be revealed to you. Ask the Lord of the harvest to show you an abundance of opportunity to serve in obedience.

Wednesday, October 1 – Acts 1:6-14. In this passage Jesus is lifted into heaven. In his final words he promises the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples prepared themselves for the coming of the Holy Spirit in prayer. **“All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.”** (verse 14). When you pray today, pray with the expectation that the Holy Spirit will give you power. Are you willing to use that power in service to others and Christ church?

Thursday, October 2 – Revelation 3:14-22. The spirit of Christ speaks to the church of Laodicea. They are lukewarm in their faith and action. Why does the passage say they are lukewarm? Do you think this may be a temptation for us in the 21st century? How can we guard against this temptation? What is your spiritual temperature?

Friday, October 3 – Read through the hymn “Here I Am Lord” (Hymn #593). Can you make this your prayer as you prepare for the weekend? Can you make this your prayer as you prepare for worship and study? Can you make this your prayer each day?



TRIETSCH

September 28, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings

Use Me “Tuning It Up” Week 2 of 3

Ephesians 4:11-13

He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

The Word from the Bible version the Message

Ephesians 4:12

Chapter 4 of Ephesians is one of three passages in Paul's letters dealing directly with spiritual gifts (Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12 are the others). Here in his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul is very clear about the intended use of the gifts. First, they are to bring unity to the body of Christ. Everyone is gifted with at least one of the gifts. These gifts are to be used in a unified effort of Christ's work in the world through the church. Second, the gifts are given to train or equip the church for the works of ministry. The gifts are to work in harmony just as our physical body works and depends on all the individual parts.

Paul, in the midst of this glorious vision for the church, does not let us forget that these gifts are to be developed. In *The Message Version* cited above, it uses the word “to train” to describe the work within the church. *The King James Version* uses the word “perfecting.” *The Revised Standard Version* uses the word “equipment” or “equipping.” *The New International Version* uses the word “prepare.”

Just like a novice symphony orchestra must learn to play together in harmony, the body of Christ must learn to work together in unity, using the gifts of the spirit to accomplish works of ministry for Christ. We (the church) are about the work of training, perfecting, equipping, and harmonizing.

Scripture

In II Timothy 3:16-17, Paul says this about scripture, **“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteous-**

ness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

As we prepare for our work in the church, the study of scripture is critical for direction, inspiration, and growth. We have a need for scripture as we strive “to be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

Prayer

How can we do anything in the church without the conduit to the power of God we call prayer? Paul Romans 12:11-12 adds this passage to the section on spiritual gifts emphasizing the importance of “faithful prayer:” **“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”**

Culture

What was true in the 1st century is true today: All the Spirit’s gifts are to equip us for ministry and to build up the church. The ministry is a replication of Christ as we become like Him as servants. The word “minister” comes to us directly from the Latin. It translates the Greek word **diakonos** meaning “servant”. The church is built up not by cultivating the interior life and fellowship of the church alone, but by calling and training members to be servants, and thus to do their part in Christ’s mission to the world.

Bill Hybels

(Pastor of Willow Creek Church and author of The Volunteer Revolution)

“If we are going to be biblically functioning communities and maximize the potential of our churches, we need to lift the vision of volunteerism. Let me say it again. When those who are called to equip really do equip, and when volunteers show up to be equipped, trained, empowered, and entrusted with ministry, everybody wins – the equippers, those being equipped, the church, and the community. And God gets the glory because it was his incredible idea.” (*The Volunteer Revolution*, page 63)

Hybels uses the language of volunteers in this book. We are trying to use the more biblical word servant in our understanding of the work of ministry. But, while Hybels uses the term volunteer, there is no real distinction from the more biblical use of the term servant. We find that understanding clearly defined in the following quote:

“It must break God’s heart when people come to church with a consumer mindset, content to eat and run. ‘Serve me’ they say. ‘Teach me. Pray for me. Fix my kids. Counsel my spouse. And if you don’t do all this up to my standards, I’ll go down the street and see if another church will pay better attention to me.’ I’ve learned you can’t possibly build a God-honoring church with a congregation full of consumers. Neither can you build a God-honoring church without teachers, leaders, nor pastors committed to equipping.” (Bill Hybels in *The Volunteer Revolution*, page 63).

Leonard Sweet

(Author of The Gospel According to Starbucks)

“You can read a book about prayer or worship. The words might inspire you, even challenge you. The ideas might intrigue you to the extent that you invest time in thinking about a particular spiritual discipline. But if you don’t go ahead and pray or worship, the words written about these subjects are nothing more than dry ink.”

Jennifer Rader

(Director of Connections Ministries at Trietsch Memorial United Methodist Church)

“The more our members know about themselves – their gifts and passions – the more they will be willing to share what they know with the church and look for ways to be part of the body of Christ. Completing a spiritual gifts inventory, taking a Bible study, joining a Sunday school class or participating in a small group is just a beginning. All this leads to a fuller experience in the Spirit leading us to the right place at the right time for the right reason. It’s a two-way street. We all need to put ourselves out there, and the church needs to always have its eyes and ears open.”

Discussion Questions

These questions are intended to be used in any way that is helpful for you. You may use them as a means of personal reflection. Or you may want to use them with a family to further discuss the issues answering God’s call to ministry.

- When you hear the words “answering God’s call to ministry” — what comes to mind?
- In what ways can we expand our understanding of ministry to include every job in the church?
- Have you heard the phrase, “the priesthood of all believers?” What does this mean to you?
- How are you part of the priesthood of all believers? Is God’s symphony orchestra playing without you? Do you prefer a place in the front or the back of the orchestra we call church?
- Have there been times when you have accomplished a task for God that you did not think you could? How did it feel to be God’s instrument?
- Share with someone the times in your life when you have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?