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Teamwork in the Spirit *The Priesthood of all Believers*



*Stronger
together...*

Though one may
be overpowered,
two can defend
themselves. A cord
of three strands is
not quickly
broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key design and operational features of the New Testament Church is teamwork in the Spirit. Although there are many analogies about teamwork in business, military, athletics, and almost every area of life, the biblical concept of believers working together is so unique and at the same time so lacking in the modern church that it warrants special attention. However, this teamwork is much more than a concept; it's a living and functional reality we see operating very effectively through the Holy Spirit in the Early Church. If there was ever a time for leaders and believers to encounter the Holy Spirit and duplicate this teamwork in the Spirit, it's now!

Our 5-Fold Global Equipping Teams have made it a priority to exemplify biblical teamwork in the Spirit for a new generation of leaders and believers. Many around the world have observed our teams example and given us very positive feedback. In fact, I recall once in Togo, West Africa, where we heard conference participants declare, "*We've never seen anything like this!*" It begs the question why such teamwork is missing among many leaders and generally in the body of Christ today where the saints are relegated to little more than spectators. We've observed this all over the world from the smallest gatherings in villages to large conferences. Even more concerning is that many established church leaders are now passing on this same pattern of establishing independent ministry to a new generation.

It's time to call a new generation of leaders and believers to the New Testament level of teamwork in the Holy Spirit. This will require a retraining to activate the body of Christ in the unity and teamwork built upon Christ and the Holy Spirit. 5-Fold Global is thrilled to report that a new generation mission force is networking with our partners. A new level of teamwork has emerged in East and West Africa and Asia. More are capturing the value of teamwork in the Spirit. This manual is prepared to help them recognize the priesthood of all believers and to activate the body of Christ in the work of ministry with a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Michael D. Gross
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The Priesthood of all Believers

The New Priesthood

The Book of Hebrews and particularly chapters 7-10 talk of a new priesthood in Christ and a better ministry than what had preceded Him. ***“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.”*** (Heb. 7:12). The Greek *metatithemi* (met-at-ith'-ay-mee) refers to a transfer or exchange of something. God made some remarkable changes in the priesthood. Here are just a few of these changes:

Scripture

Heb. 7:11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

Heb. 7:13-14 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

Heb. 7:15-17 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For He testifies: ***“You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”***

Heb. 7:18-19 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God...by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

Heb. 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Heb. 7:23-25 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Heb. 7:26-27 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

Heb. 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Change

From the Levitical priesthood under the order of Aaron to the order of Melchizedek. (See also Gen. 14:18 and Psa. 110:4). Note: Melchizedek (King of Righteousness) appears to Abraham, the father of faith, before the law was given. Also, the order of Melchizedek is connected with the Messiah.

From the tribe of Levi to Judah with Christ being the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

From fleshly commandments to the power of eternal life in Christ. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. His priesthood has no beginning and no ending. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

From weakness (impotency), helplessness, and unfulfillment to a greater hope in Christ with a new and better covenant.

From separation with God by breaking His laws and commandments to reconciliation with God by Jesus alone who fulfilled the law and died on the cross so we could receive the promise of eternal life. He delivered us from the curse of the law!

From many priests who are temporal, and need replaced to an eternal, unchangeable, and continual priesthood in Christ. The priesthood of all believers under the Lordship of Jesus Christ is activated.

From men who have sin and weakness and make many animal sacrifices for their sins and the sins of the people to Christ who is perfect in every way.

From an earthly ministry to the ministry of a greater covenant in Christ.

Heb. 9:6-14 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*.⁷ But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance;⁸ the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.⁹ It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—¹⁰ *concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb. 10:11-14 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Heb. 10:19-25 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

From the old and symbolic tabernacle made with human hands concerned with religious practices to a living tabernacle not made with human hands where we serve Christ, the Living God.

From routine and continuous religious practices to the focus upon one sacrifice and the only sacrifice needed in Christ to remove our sins permanently. One sacrificial offering to cleanse us from our sins.

From the old and earthly to the new and living way that is heavenly in Christ. From defeat, shame, and guilt to a confidence to draw close to God in Christ.

The New Testament order of the priesthood involves a notable transformation for those in Christ. For one thing, there's a new arrangement; a fixed succession of status and character from unrighteousness to righteousness through Christ. We now have an official dignity and status in Him that could never be attained under the Levitical priesthood. This is a miraculous positional shift in many respects. In Christ and in Him alone we now (present time) sit in heavenly places.

- Eph. 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Two things stand out in the above Scripture. One is the repeated use of the Greek aorist indicative tense. Why is this significant? Noted Australian teacher and revival historian, Dr. Barry Chant, says this regarding Ephesians:

“Ephesians lists blessings God already achieved for us. He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Plainly then, everything God has provided for us is already ours! Consistent use of the Greek aorist tense is significant here, indicating completed action in the past. The emphasis is squarely on what God has done for us, rather than what He has accomplished in us.”¹

Chant goes on to explain how the aorist indicative relates to the imperative commands of God.

“The indicative describes what is; the imperative describes what ought to be. God’s statements about who we are always undergird His commands about what we should do. Until we know who we are, we cannot do what we should.”²

He goes even farther to proclaim that our standing in Christ greatly outweighs any circumstances in life.

“Our standing in Christ is permanent. Based on the work of God for us in Christ, it can never be threatened. Our state may vary according to circumstances: we may rejoice one day and grieve the next. But our standing does not alter.”³

The conclusion is that according to the arrangement of the New Testament priesthood the positional shift or standing to “**heavenly places**” in Christ occurs at salvation and is a fixed one. Seven times the Bible declares that this new arrangement is “**according to the order of Melchizedek**” (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17, 21). This King of Righteousness first appears to Abraham following Lot’s rescue and before the Levitical priesthood. He’s identified as “**king of Salem**”, meaning peace, and “**the priest of God Most High**” (Gen. 14:18-20). He next is mentioned in the Messianic Psalm 110 that is extensively quoted in Hebrews. Closely related to the Melchizedek reference is another verse from this Psalm used by Jesus Himself and also by the Early Church declaring that “**God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ**” (Acts 2:36).

- **Psa. 110:1** The LORD said to my Lord, “*Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*”
- **Matt. 22:44** “The LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘*Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool*’ ”?
- **Mark 12:36** For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: “*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’*”
- **Luke 20:42** Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: “*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand,*
- **Acts 2:34** “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: “*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand,*

Where are you seated today? The Bible says you are seated with Him. It’s a heavenly position with Christ. The new priesthood of the new covenant changes the way we approach things. In Christ, we approach all things including problems and every circumstance of life from above; not beneath. This understanding of our identity in Christ paves the way for us to cooperate with Him and transforms the way we work together. The repeated emphasis in the Ephesians passage on “**together**” has no parallel in the Levitical priesthood.

¹ Barry Chant, *The Revival Study Bible* (2010), Armour Publishing, p. 1634.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

- ***Made us alive together*** Eph. 2:5
- ***Raised us up together*** Eph. 2:6
- ***Made us sit together*** Eph. 2:6

We need to pass on to the new generation this understanding of togetherness in order to function at the level of teamwork displayed by the New Testament priesthood of all believers.

The New Prophetic Expansion

One of the most profound aspects of the New Testament priesthood of all believers is the way God has expanded prophesying to all believers. Just as the Old Testament predicts and anticipates the new priesthood in Christ, it also lays the foundation for the expansion of the prophetic ministry. The Early Church clearly saw Jesus Christ as the one spoken of by Moses.

- **Acts 3:22** For Moses truly said to the fathers, *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”*
- **Acts 7:37** *“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’ (See Deut. 18:15, 18)*

Jesus is not only both Lord and Christ, and the High Priest of the new priesthood; He is the new Prophet spoken of by Moses. This means Jesus is the source for the prophetic expansion under the New Covenant.

Moses was overburdened on a number of occasions, but one in particular applies to this new prophetic expansion. It's when the people of God despised the manna, complained and cried out for meat, and ***“yielded to intense craving”*** (Num. 11:1-10). Moses is in despair even of his life, ***“I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If you treat me like this, please kill me here and now!”*** (Num. 11:11-15). This is how the Lord handled the problem.

- God instructs Moses to gather 70 elders and bring them before Him (11:16).
- God promises to place the same Spirit upon them to bear the burden of the people with him (11:17).
- God instructs Moses to consecrate the people and that He will feed them meat tomorrow (11:18-20).
- Moses questions how this will happen among so many people and the Lord responds, ***“Has the Lord's arm been shortened?”*** (11:21-23).
- Moses obeys the Lord's instructions and God places the same Spirit upon the 70 elders, ***“and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did again.”*** (11:24-25).
- The Spirit also comes upon Eldad and Medad, two elders who remained in the camp, and they also prophesy. (11:26).
- A young man reports this to Moses. Joshua requests Moses to forbid them. (11:27-28).
- Moses responds, ***“Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!”*** (11:29).

The above summary reveals that God never intended those He calls to work alone. However, this account serves as a forerunner to what God would do regarding the expansion of prophetic ministry in the new priesthood. Moses reflected the will of God in his response to Joshua's request to forbid them. What is the church's response today to the same request?

How can I know for certain that this prophetic expansion was intended by God all along? It's because of what God revealed to Peter and the Early Church on the Day of Pentecost. How did they explain what happened on that Day?

Acts 2:16-18 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “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. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

Joel 2:28-29 “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Note the expanded application of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the effect upon believers. Matthew Henry explains this all-inclusive application in his famous commentary.

“The extent of this blessing, in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed. The Spirit shall be *poured out upon all flesh*, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, Rom. x. 11, 12. Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy; but, in the last days, *all flesh shall see the glory of God* (Isa. xl. 5) and shall come to *worship before him*, Isa. lxvi. 23. The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles (Acts x. 44, 45), which was but a continuation of the same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out *upon all flesh*, that is, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. *Upon all flesh*, that is, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. (1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex. Not *your sons* only, but *your daughters*, shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, Acts xxi. 9. Not the parents only, but the children, shall be filled with the Spirit, which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. (2.) Upon some of each age: “*Your old men*, who are past their vigour and whose spirits begin to decay, *your young men*, who have yet but little acquaintance with and experience of divine things, shall yet *dream dreams* and *see visions*,” God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to the young and old. (3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition, even *upon the servants and the handmaids*. The Jewish doctors say, *Prophecy does not reside on any* but such as are *wise, valiant, and rich*, not upon the soul of a *poor man*, or a man *in sorrow*. But in Christ Jesus there is *neither bond nor free*, Gal. iii. 28. There were many that *were called being servants* (1 Cor. vii. 21), but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost. (4.) The effect of this blessing: *They shall prophesy*; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into nor foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the scriptures were written, and the ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.”⁴

One of the most notable things about the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh and its expanded prophetic effect is its continuation for each new generation.

- **Isaiah 44:3-4** For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring; They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.’

Just how thirsty are the leaders and believers of this generation and those that follow? The expanded prophetic ministry and the display of the gifts of the Spirit in the outpouring will require a much higher level of teamwork in the new generation. It remains to be seen how

⁴ Accordance Bible Software (2019) Oaktree Software, INC: *Commentary on the Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry, Joel 2:28-32 paragraph 26742.

young leaders today will respond to Moses' declaration: ***"Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"*** (Num. 11:29).

The Ministers of the New Covenant

Who are the ministers of the New Covenant? My wife and I were saved in a charismatic mission church in Columbus, Ohio, in late 1973. Each Sunday gathering was filled with spiritual activity involving the whole congregation of believers. One thing we have never forgotten is the statement printed on every Sunday bulletin: ***"The ministers of this congregation are the people!"*** This simple statement reflects a New Testament understanding of the priesthood of all believers. The new generation cannot fully accept the importance of teamwork in the Spirit unless they are thoroughly convinced that it's God's plan. The Bible presents much evidence of the priesthood of all believers beginning with His purpose of choosing a people for Himself.

- Ex. 19:3-9 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." ⁷ So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

The above passage enlightens us on what He expects from His people and His development plan for each believer who is willing to hear and obey His voice. The Fire Bible has this important note on God's plan for a ***"kingdom of priests"***.

"Part of God's purpose for bringing the Israelites out of Egypt was to create a "kingdom of priests" (i.e., a people set apart for God's service) and a "holy nation." In the same way, followers of Jesus under the new covenant are to be a kingdom of priests and a holy people. This requires us to separate ourselves from ungodly behavior. Only then can we follow God's righteous plans and purposes."⁵

Observe the intentional nature of God's plan to create a ***"kingdom of priests"***. The prophet Isaiah also confirms this plan.

- Isaiah 61:6 But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast.

What this means is that God's purpose for Israel displays ***"a prophetic picture of God's purpose for the NT church."***⁶ As we look at this through the lens of the New Testament, we see even more clearly God's ministry intention for every believer.

- 1Peter 2:4-10 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ***"Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone,***

⁵ Fire Bible: Global Study Edition (2009), Life Publishers, Springfield, MO, p. 158, Note 19:6.

⁶ Ibid., Note 19:5

elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” ⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, *He is precious*; but to those who are disobedient, *“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,”* ⁸ and *“A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.”* They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. ⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

This description reflects the many members, but one body principle of the Lord’s church.

- 1Cor. 12:12-14, 20, 27 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being 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 have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many... But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body... Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

In between the above verses is detailed descriptions of the coordination, relationship, and indispensable value of the parts of the body. The effective functioning of the church as the body of Christ is no different. It requires the same operation and teamwork in the Spirit. This is also the order in which God has set things up (1Cor. 12:18; 28, 40).

- 1Cor. 12:18-19 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?
- 1Cor. 12:28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.
- 1Cor. 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

God’s order and current church order are seldom in sync. In fact, sometimes they appear miles apart. Teamwork in the Spirit seems to be totally absent in many local churches. I urge young leaders to pay careful attention to God’s perspective of ministers and ministry. None of us should be surprised with God’s emphasis upon the value and contribution of each member in Christ as a holy, functional priesthood.

- 1Cor. 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

In Christ, restrictions under the law regarding priesthood and ministry, have been lifted. (Note again *“In the OT, the priesthood was restricted to a qualified minority – only descendants of Aaron from the Israelite tribe (i.e., family line) of Levi.”*) This truth must be communicated to every generation. Christ has made all believers priests unto God and ministers of a better covenant. This is also directly confirmed in the book of Revelation:

- Rev. 1:6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- Rev. 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”
- Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

This priesthood of all believers in Christ continues for all eternity. It’s even the final stanza of a new song sung by the heavenly saints from every tribe and tongue:

- Rev. 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

Those who follow Christ are the ministers of the New Testament according to the Word of God and the practice of the Early Church. God told Moses, **“These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel”**(Exodus 19:6). These words included His plan to make them a **“kingdom of priests”**. Today, these words need to be spoken to the church again and especially to the new generation!

Implications of the Priesthood of all Believers

One of the remarkable things about the priesthood of believers is that in and through Jesus Christ all believers have direct access to God.

- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Eph. 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.
- 1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.
- 1Tim. 2:5 For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus.
- Heb. 10:19-23 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

The above freedom of access has been purchased by the blood of Christ. The admission ticket is the same for every person. It's in and through Christ alone. Jesus did not say He is a way, but the way! Jesus Christ is the new and living way for everyone. We all have direct access to God through Christ without a human mediator.

Another implication of being priests unto God is the responsibility of every believer to pursue a holy life. Believers need to live for God. What does this mean? The **“kingdom of priests”** is a **“holy”** and a **“royal”** priesthood (1Pet. 2:5, 9). It's a priesthood set apart by God in purity. The Bible has much to say about this. Take special notice of the priestly responsibilities under the new covenant.

- 1Pet. 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, **“Be holy, for I am holy.”**

Girding up the loins of your mind is a unique concept. It's dealing with our intentions in the context of following or being obedient to Christ. It's not referring to a passive mindset. Rather, it's preparing for positive action in the context of our conduct. It means living for Him! Should believers not become like the One we follow after? Jesus Christ is now the central part of our lives. He cannot be replaced with an unholy lifestyle that ignorantly reflects what He delivered us from. Worldly culture is bearing too much influence upon the church and the new generation. The Bible repeatedly speaks to us about this conformity with the world.

- Rom. 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Holy Spirit led both Peter and Paul to use the same word for *conforming* in these verses. The Greek, *suschematizo* (soos-khay-mat-id'-zo), means to fashion one's self according to or like the same pattern. And this also applies to external sinful conditions so prevalent in the body of Christ. We need to help one another and a new generation of priests to overcome the conforming trend that has laid hold of so many believers in Christ today. Being conformed to the world is the opposite of being transformed by the Spirit. I praise God for His grace and His mercy. However, believers must stop using God's abounding grace to continue sinful practices and excuse our responsibility as a **"*holy priesthood*"** to help one another overcome sinful practices. This hyper-grace teaching is leading many believers astray today. Grace does not justify sin continuing to rule over the life of believers. Look at what Paul says in Romans 6:

- Rom. 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- Rom. 6:12-14 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
- Rom. 6:15-19 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading to death*, or of obedience *leading to righteousness*? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more lawlessness*, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

A holy and royal priesthood does not continually yield to sinful practices and lifestyles. They walk in **"*newness of life*"** united with Christ. They resist sin in their lives.

- 2Tim. 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

The above twofold seal confirms every believer's responsibility as priests and ministers of God to resist sin. The implication is in Christ to engage in spiritual battle aligned with the Word and Holy Spirit. The Greek, *aphistemi* (af-is'-tay-mee), in the above passage literally means to stand against, remove, actively revolt, to withdraw oneself. In the context of God's love and grace, it's time to instigate a revolt against continual sinful practices in the church. I hear the Spirit say to the churches, **"*Set My people free!*"**

A holy priesthood of believers also offers sacrifices with the understanding that Jesus, the High Priest, King of kings, and Lord of lords, is the one and only sacrifice for the sins of

the world. Whereas the OT priests offered physical sacrifices, the NT priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices. Here are a few of the spiritual sacrifices that please the Lord:

- Sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15)
- Doing good and sharing (Heb. 13:16)
- Presenting our bodies in service to Jesus (Rom. 12:1)
- Walking in love (Eph. 5:2)
- Material support of God's anointed (Phil. 4:18)

Believers in Christ are lively stones. They are a holy priesthood. They are not spectators of ministry, but actively engage in the ministry. This implication of the priesthood of all believers is far above what is currently understood and practiced in the body of Christ. This is about to change!

The priesthood of all believers also indicates that we are all to intercede. This involves praying for the needs and concerns for each other and for all people. Epaphras is a great example of this:

- Col. 4:12-13 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Note the spirit this man of God demonstrates. Epaphras is described as a “**bondservant**” or slave of Christ. His passion and intensity in prayers comes from his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and his fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Gaps in our relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit affect us in prayers. The Bible testifies that Epaphras was strong in his relationship with the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we see him on fire with “**great zeal**” for the church and literally fighting, “**laboring fervently**,” in his prayers for the people of God. He’s also contending with the enemy that believers would stand, grow, and be filled up “**in all the will of God**.” What an example! There’s also a governmental level of intercession for believers.

- 1Tim. 2:1-4 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³ For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- Rev. 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.

Although there are those who have very strategic assignments of intercession, all believers are called to intercede for one another and people in general. This is “**good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior**.” This means the prayers of believers need to be in spiritual agreement with the Lord and His Word to be accepted by Him. This establishes a teamwork in the Spirit that glows with the glory of Christ. How pleased is God with the prayers of His church today?

One final implication of the priesthood of all believers is that we are all responsible to defend and spread God’s word, including praying for the gospel to reach people. One of the

primary things about being a **“holy priesthood”** is that **“you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1Pet. 2:9). In other words, believers are called to declare and make known to others the greatness of what Jesus has done for them. Although there’s a global initiative to silence this declaration in every place and sphere of life, believers everywhere must declare Jesus before all people (See Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9). The Bible tells believers to be prepared to defend the gospel.

- 1Pet. 3:15-17 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be ready to give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For *it is better*, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

It’s important for the topic of this study to note that **“you”** in the above passage is plural and applicable to all believers. This is another urgent appeal for a higher level of teamwork in the Spirit among young leaders and believers today. I recorded something I heard the Holy Spirit say to me on March 20, 2014, *“Prepare to defend the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit!”* Multiple attacks against the faith surround believers today. It’s alarming just how many Christians struggle to give an answer for the hope that is in them. This generation must boldly prepare to give an answer but not in our own strength.

- Acts 4:31 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.
- 2Th. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, ² and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

Again, the Holy Spirit fell upon all, all were filled, and all **“spoke the word of God with boldness.”** Paul also requested prayer from believers that the word of God would be spread quickly **“just as it is with you.”** He must have observed believers active in their responsibility to declare Jesus in every place. Preaching the gospel was not confined to a few designated clergy types. The voice of every believer was a microphone speaking under the power of divine enablement! A high level of teamwork in the Spirit is indicated.

- Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

I cannot emphasize enough that the implications of the priesthood of all believers point to the spiritual reality that the ministers of God are His people. This was and continues to be God’s plan and purpose. The more quickly this generation acknowledges this truth and aligns itself accordingly, the more effective it will be in spreading the gospel of Christ at much higher levels of teamwork in the Spirit.

EQUIP THE SAINTS

What Does Equip Mean?

“*Equipping*” has been a global priority for decades. It’s been the number one request by international leaders of our 5-Fold Global Teams. This is why we continually produce and freely provide online training manuals to equip both leaders and believers. However, we’ve observed that only a few leaders follow through to effectively equip the body of Christ. I know this because I’ve asked believers in a multitude of settings if they’ve been trained in things like the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, casting out demons, praying for the sick, etc. In one setting of around 400 believers only one said they had received training in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and none have ever indicated they had been taught how to cast out demons. In these situations, I can only look at all the pastors and exclaim, “*What are we doing?*”

What does equip mean? Although it has to do with training, a much richer meaning is revealed in the Bible.

- Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.
- Eph. 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,
- 2Tim. 3:16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

There are two Greek words used in the above passages of Scripture. The first one is *katartismos* (kat-ar-tis-mos’) and its English equivalent *equipping*. This word has the sense of training that completely furnishes or perfects believers for ministry. It’s a full training leading to a complete adjustment in the life of those being trained. As Matthew Henry rightly points out regarding the Ephesians 4:11 gifts:

“All are *for the perfecting of the saints* (v. 12); that is, according to the import of the original, to bring into an orderly spiritual state and frame those who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin, and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein, that so each, in his proper place and function, might contribute to the good of the whole.”⁷

Greek scholar, William D. Mounce, refers to the equipping as a “*perfectly adjusted adaptation and a complete qualification for a specific purpose*.”⁸ In other words, *katartismos*, in all its forms is a rich and complete word with a variety of applications as the following chart indicates:

⁷ Accordance Bible Software (2019) *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry*, Eph. 4:2-16. paragraph 40806, III.2.

⁸ Ibid., *Mounce Greek Dictionary*, paragraph 7974, G2938.

Scriptures

1Cor. 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Heb. 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

Heb. 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

1Pet. 5:10-11 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. ¹¹ To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1Th. 3:9-10 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

2Cor. 13:9-11 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. ¹⁰ Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction. ¹¹ Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Equipping Purpose

Thoroughly adjust, knit together, completely unite and join together with the implication of mending and repairing in order to create and strengthen.

All ages including the one in which we live are framed or joined together by the word of God in this way. This helps us to make sense of the age in which we live.

Fully qualify everyone and complete all in Godly character to become more Christlike.

Able to do the will of God and what is pleasing through Christ. Again, this applies to every believer.

The responsibility of leaders is to pray abundantly to supply what is deficient in the faith of all believers. This requires equipping them for the work of God.

Restore or reinstate any believer who surprisingly fall or slip into error to a forfeited condition involving putting things in order. This responsibility is placed upon all believers who are spiritual.

The prayer is for all believers to become complete through a full training regimen.

This training produces peace and unity among believers.

The Bible makes it clear. All believers are to be fully equipped or trained. This was also the case in the Old Testament. Teamwork in the Spirit is only as effective as the equipping. The victories come through those who are trained.

- Gen. 14:14 Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.
- 1Chr. 12:8 *Some* Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as gazelles on the mountains:

- 1Chr. 12:22-23 For at *that* time they came to David day by day to help him, until *it was* a great army, like the army of God. Now these *were* the numbers of the divisions *that were* equipped for war, *and* came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD:

Note how David's army was "**like the army of God.**" Of course, it was great in the sense of being advanced and mightier than any other. And, it was also well organized. But more than anything else it was well trained. Everyone was fully equipped to fulfill God's word to turn over the kingdom. This is the roots for the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Jesus wants His people to be fully equipped, fully prepared, and ready to turn over the kingdom of this world to Him. The church is ill-trained and contentious with one another today. Believers are not ready to advance together in the power of the Holy Spirit according to the Word of God. This has to change! It will require much more teamwork in the Spirit than is currently taking place.

Who are the Saints?

The term *saint* has been traditionally reserved for the apostles and those in the church who meet certain criteria in their Christian lives. This understanding of sainthood has historically developed out of the Church of Rome. Although the call for anyone to seek holiness and sainthood is noble, the established process raises a number of questions. There's a five-step process instituted by the church of Rome:

1. A local bishop investigates the person's life, writings, and witnesses to see if they are worthy of being a saint.
2. An application is sent to Rome for consideration by the *Congregation for the Causes of Saints* who accept or reject it. If accepted the person is called *Servant of God*.
3. The approved candidate is declared to have lived a *heroically virtuous life* and is now called *Venerable*.
4. The person must be approved by a group of theologians on the basis of having performed one miracle that was *instantaneous, permanent, complete, and scientifically unexplainable* by a team of independent doctors. If approved, the person is declared *blessed*.
5. A second miracle following the same process must be confirmed for the person to be declared a *saint*.

The number one question that emerges from the above understanding of sainthood is, "*Is it biblical?*" Although the Bible instructs us to highly esteem those who lead us, there is no admonition to venerate leaders or God's people in such a way. Instead, there's a notable humility in recognizing their labor in our midst.

- Phil. 2:3 *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
- Phil. 2:25-30 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; ²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. ²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; ³⁰ because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.
- 1Th. 5:12-13 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

It's quite revealing how Paul speaks of Epaphroditus as his **brother**, his **fellow worker**, and **fellow soldier**. No extreme veneration here. Instead, only respect for his labor for Christ as a servant. On the other hand, the veneration of saints and its process is connected with ancient

Roman religion and other world religions. This unbiblical and human adoration of saints has influenced the thinking of many Christians today and continues to have a negative impact upon teamwork in the Spirit.

The word of God has a very different understanding regarding who are the saints? Take a moment with me to examine who most of the letters to the churches are addressed to:

- Rom. 1:7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1Cor. 1:2-3 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.
- 2Cor. 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Eph. 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Phil. 1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Col. 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's clear that the Early Church understood saints to be referring to all believers in Christ in a particular place. In fact, the New Testament term for saint occurs in the singular only once where Paul urges believers to "***Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.***" (Phil. 4:21). On the other hand, the plural occurs over 65 times referring to the whole body of Christ. Here's just a sampling of these passages.

- Acts 9:32 Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda.
- Acts 26:10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*.
- Rom. 8:27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.
- Rom. 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
- Rom. 15:25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.
- Rom. 16:15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.
- 1Cor. 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?
- 1Cor. 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
- 1Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:
- 2Cor. 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- 2Cor. 13:13 All the saints greet you.
- Eph. 1:18-19 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

- Eph. 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—
- Phil. 4:22 All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.
- Col. 1:4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;
- Col. 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- Col. 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.
- Philem. 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,
- Philem. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.
- Jude 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.
- Rev. 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.
- Rev. 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The New Testament consistently demonstrates an understanding of sainthood that is applied to everyone who has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and strives to live a Godly life that glorifies the Lord.

One of the fascinating things I discovered about the saints of God is in relation to the coming of Christ.

- 1Th. 3:13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.
- 2Th. 1:10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.
- Jude 1:14-15 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

The Lord is coming “***with all His saints***.” No true follower of Christ is left behind. Even the Old Testament bears witness prophetically to this truth.

- Dan. 7:21-22 “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.
- Zech. 14:5 Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You.

Note again all saints is referring to all believers. Christ followers in heaven and on earth are His saints. They are in His hand.

- Deut. 33:2-3 And he said: “The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand *Came* a fiery law for them. ³ Yes, He loves the people; All His saints are in Your hand; They sit down at Your feet; *everyone* receives Your words.

Here's at least twelve things God does for His saints and twelve things His saints do:

What God does for His saints:

1. He hedges them about to guard and protect them (Hannah's Prayer)
 - **1Sam. 2:9** He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. "For by strength no man shall prevail. (Hannah's Prayer)
 - **Psa. 37:28** For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.
2. He willingly accepts them, favors them, and purposefully values them.
 - **Psa. 16:3** As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."
3. He assembles them together for His purpose.
 - **Psa. 50:5** "Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."
4. He defends them, rescues them, and watches over their souls.
 - **Psa. 97:10** You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.
5. He elevates His power in and upon them.
 - **Psa. 148:14** And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints—Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. Praise the LORD!
6. He gives them possession of the greatness of His kingdom (to hold occupancy).
 - **Dan. 7:18** But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'
 - **Dan. 7:27** Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'
7. He opens up their graves and raises them up.
 - **Matt. 27:52** and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;
8. He intercedes for them.
 - **Rom. 8:27** Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.
9. He gives them heavenly citizenship and an inheritance.
 - **Eph. 1:18-19** the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
 - **Col. 1:12** giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.
10. He reveals to them the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - **Col. 1:26** the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.
11. He honors their prayers and righteous acts.
 - **Rev. 8:3** Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden

altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

- Rev. 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

12. He makes sure they win in the end.

- Rev. 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

What His saints do:

1. They sing both vocal and musical praise to Him being always mindful of and mentioning His holy name.
 - Psa. 30:4 Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.
2. They love and long for the Lord.
 - Psa. 31:23 Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! *For* the LORD preserves the faithful, And fully repays the proud person.
3. They respect and revere the Lord.
 - Psa. 34:9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! *There is* no want to those who fear Him.
 - Psa. 89:7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all *those* around Him.
4. They extend their hands in praise and expectantly wait and look upon His name.
 - Psa. 52:9 I will praise You forever, Because You have done *it*; And in the presence of Your saints. I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.
5. They carefully listen and hear what the Lord speaks (attentive to His voice).
 - Psa. 85:8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak, For He will speak peace To His people and to His saints; But let them not turn back to folly.
6. They cry out and shout with triumphant joy.
 - Psa. 132:9 Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, And let Your saints shout for joy.
 - Psa. 132:16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation, And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
 - Psa. 149:5 Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds.
7. They kneel down to bless Him as an act of adoration.
 - Psa. 145:10 All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, And Your saints shall bless You.
8. They loudly celebrate Him, letting their praises roar with new songs.
 - Psa. 149:1 Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, *And* His praise in the assembly of saints.
9. They honor Him by exercising His written judgment upon the enemy.
 - Psa. 149:9 To execute on them the written judgment—This honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD!
10. They furnish what is needed or lacking in one another (the ministry of the saints).
 - Rom. 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

- Rom. 15:25-26 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.
 - 2Cor. 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,
11. They fervently labor, fight, and strive for the faith to accomplish all that God has called them to be and do.
- Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.
12. They patiently endure by faith as end-time events unfold.
- Rev. 13:10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
 - Rev. 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

The above rehearsal of who the saints are and what they do should awaken us all to the fact that the church today has a faulty understanding of saints. If all believers are saints according to the Bible, then why do so many believers feel and act like they are second class citizens in the body of Christ? Why do so many of God's people sitting in churches feel that they do not measure up? This is devastating for teamwork in the Spirit. Perhaps, the answer lies in the way leaders are presenting themselves and equipping them. Therefore, let's examine the nature of the work of ministry leaders are called to train or equip the body of Christ in.

What is the Work of Ministry?

Saul's conversion depicts the change each believer experiences when they are captured by the Spirit of God and born again. Maybe not the physical falling off a horse or going blind, but certainly the transformation from spiritual blindness to the glorious light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It marks a life change like no other. Although life details vary, the transformation is miraculous every time. This is why I declare that every believer (saint) in Christ is a miracle. The thing I want to reveal about Paul's experience is his initial response when he encountered Jesus. ***"Lord, what do You want me to do?"*** (Acts 9:6). Joshua asked the same question in a little different way when he encountered Jesus, the Messiah, as the Commander of the Lord's Army. He asked Him ***"What does my Lord say to His servant?"*** (Josh. 5:14). I believe this is the question believers are wanting answers to today. They want to know what God wants them to do because they now desire to serve Christ. What I'm going to share here will be different from what has been going on in church today. A new generation must be trained ***"for the work of ministry."*** All saints must be equipped ***"for the work of ministry."*** What work are we talking about? It's wise to consult God's word on this because what's going on in the church today does not reflect what took place in the Early Church.

The work of ministry entails a number of areas we see among believers in the Early Church. Witnessing, praying, ministry to needs, and the operation of spiritual gifts are four

where we see every member responsibility and a growing level of teamwork in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon all believers in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21). The purpose of this outpouring was made clear by Jesus Himself.

- Acts 1:8 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."

It's important to note that the Greek *humas* (you) is plural and when used in this way refers collectively to *you people*. Interestingly, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, instructed the apostles about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and then we see the Holy Spirit fill not just 12 but 120 on the Day of Pentecost. It seems like the Holy Spirit unfolds God's plan to include all saints in His work of ministry. Take a brief tour with me in Early Church development recorded in the book of Acts. Look for the empowerment and progressive development in the work of ministry to eventually include the activation of all believers.

Biblical References

Acts 1:1-4 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me;⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:8 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 1:13-14 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James.¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty),

Acts 1:26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Progressive Development Features

- The apostles received instructions directly from Jesus.
- The instructions were given through the Holy Spirit.
- The primary instruction involved waiting to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
- The apostles were under Christ's authority.
- The Promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit) with His power to be witnesses is for you (plural) referring to more than the apostles.
- Jesus' instructions on the Holy Spirit encompassed all believers.
- The first gathering after Jesus ascension included the 11 apostles, an unknown number of women, and Jesus' family (mother & His brothers).
- Unified prayer & supplication was the agenda.
- The disciples are numbered at about 120.
- Peter directs them to select another man to replace Judas as an apostle.
- Matthias becomes the 12th apostle.

Acts 2:1-3 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5-6, 11 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Acts 2:14-16 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

Acts 2:33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Acts 2:40-42 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Acts 2:44-46 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So

- All were in unity of mind and purpose
 - All were filled with the Holy Spirit
 - All spoke in tongues
-
- People from every nation were represented in Jerusalem on that day.
 - A multitude heard the sound of the Spirit.
 - Everyone heard the believers, all 120 of them, supernaturally speak in his own language.
 - All were astonished in wonder about what it meant.
 - The topic is the mighty works of God.
-
- Peter and the other 11 apostles connect what has happened with Joel's prophecy some 800 years earlier that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.
-
- Peter declares that Jesus is the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit.
-
- Peter declares that Jesus is both Lord and Messiah.
 - Peter calls them all to repentance.
 - Peter declares the promise of the Holy Spirit is for everyone in Christ and has no generational restrictions.
-
- 3000 salvations added in one day by 120 leaders and disciples who all were filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - All 3,120 were fully devoted to being taught, to Christ-centered partnership, to communion with Christ and one another, and to strategically praying together.
-
- The apostles influenced the hearts and minds of people who saw the signs and wonders done through them.
 - People without and within the Early Church respected the unity of believers.

continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:23-24 And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord...

Acts 4:31 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 4:32-35 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Acts 5:11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Acts 5:12-16 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. ¹³ Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. ¹⁴ And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Acts 5:41-42 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 6:2-4 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave

- All who believed kept up with what Matthew Henry refers to as "*the communion of saints*."⁹
- People outside admired the conduct of believers.
- People got saved on a daily basis.
- The apostles went to their own company of believers to report.
- The believers engaged in intense and unified prayer for boldness and for God to move and manifest Christ in healing, and signs and wonders.
- God answered by shaking the place and filling them all again with the Holy Spirit.
- They all spoke the Word of God with divine enablement.
- Again, believers were of the same heart and mind regarding their faith in Christ and love for one another.
- The apostles received mega power in witnessing.
- All the church (saints) heard what was going on in the ministry.
- All the church was struck with respect for God and His judgments and this causes them to cleave more to each other and the work of ministry.
- The acts of the apostles were done publicly.
- The people greatly respect the apostles.
- More and more men and women come to the Lord.
- Believers bring the sick into the public streets for healing.
- The work of ministry also causes multitudes to bring sick and oppressed from outlying cities to be healed.
- The apostles rejoice in persecution and continue to daily preach and teach Christ in the Jewish temple and making a circuit in homes.
- Disciples are now multiplying and the care of them has overwhelmed the apostles.

⁹ Accordance Bible Software (2019) *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry*, Acts 2:42-47. paragraph 37142, I.2.

the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good reputation*, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Acts 6:5-6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Acts 6:7-8 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Acts 8:5-8 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶ And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸ And there was great joy in that city.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”

Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

- The apostles instruct believers to select seven men for the apostles to appoint and pray over to oversee the distribution of food or care ministry.
- Those selected were required to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom besides having a good reputation. (Note: Nicolas was from Antioch).
- Disciples continued to multiply in Jerusalem including many priests were following Christ.
- God performs great signs and wonders through Stephen who becomes the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:54-60). (Note: This is the first mention of a believer other than the apostles doing this prominent work of ministry in the Early Church)
- The persecution expands to the entire church at Jerusalem.
- Believers who are dispersed abroad proclaim the good news of Jesus in every place they pass through. (Note: First mention of believers in general “*preaching*” in the Early Church and the expansion of the Gospel outside Jerusalem is through believers).
- Philip goes to Samaria to preach Christ. (Note: This is the first mass crusade mentioned in the Early Church)
- Crowds of people payed close attention to Philip’s message when they heard and saw the miracles of healing and deliverance.
- Apostles hear the report of the Samaritans accepting Christ and dispatch Peter and John to minister the Holy Spirit to the new converts because they had only been baptized with water. (Note: This marks the first time any of the 12 apostles depart Jerusalem for ministry).
- All believers, except for Simon the Sorcerer, receive the Holy Spirit.
- One disciple is used by God to do a work of ministry that spread the Gospel throughout the known world. (any disciple could have been chosen by God)
- Any disciple who says, “*Here I am Lord*” is eligible to be mightily used by God.
- Ananias is not mentioned anywhere except when Paul shares his testimony.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Acts 10:44-48 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 11:19-21 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. ²⁰ But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 12:5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

Acts 12:12 So, when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

- Peter learned about God showing no favoritism and that He accepts whoever fears Him and does what is right is acceptable.
- Now the Holy Spirit is outpoured upon many Gentiles gathered together and they are all filled, speak in tongues, and extol Jesus.
- The Gentile believers were then baptized with water and added to the church.
- Jewish and Gentile believers who were dispersed by persecution preach the Gospel in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.
- The hand of the Lord was on them just as it was on the apostles.
- The church (all saints) engaged in praying that was intentional and targeted.
- A large number convened and were engaged in praying.

The above chronology of the first 15 years of Early Church development reveals a growing understanding of the work of ministry in both the apostles and believers as it applies to the priesthood of all believers and teamwork in the Spirit. The apostles are primarily on the frontlines of the work of ministry and believers are engaged in fervent and united praying and ministering to the needs of one another. The apostles recognized the importance of every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They took intentional and obedient steps to ensure new believers, as saints of Christ, be baptized with the Holy Spirit and follow Christ. However, when their work of ministry during the first few years of the Early Church is compared with that of the growing number of disciples, we observe a progression toward the priesthood of all believers. Stephen and Philip assigned to oversee food distribution are now preaching and moving in signs, wonders, and miracles. In fact, the expansion of the Gospel outside of Jerusalem resulted from believers who had been dispersed because of the persecution after Stephen was martyred (Acts 8:1-8). The same was the case with Caesarea (Acts 10:1-11:18) and Phoenicia, Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). I believe this points to the fact that this development was God’s intention all along. The church today needs to also move in the same direction by the Holy Spirit.

A historical review of the evangelistic and missionary work in the Early Church as pointed out in the outline in Appendix 1 confirms several things:

- The apostles in the beginning may not have fully understood the extent of the Great Commission beyond Jewish believers.
- The apostles understood their apostolic mission to preach and teach Christ, lead fellow Jews to Christ, ensure they were water baptized and also with the Holy Spirit, but there is little indication of them encouraging converts to do the same. Remember, Jesus sent them and the 70 with power and authority to heal the sick and deliver people. And don't forget His words that all who believe in Him would cast out demons, speak in new tongues, and heal the sick. Therefore, what followed must be intended for all the saints of God: ***“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”*** (Mark 16:20).
- The Holy Spirit showed the apostles and the church that the Gospel was for the Samaritans and the Gentiles too. They received them and ensured they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.
- The greatest expansion of the Gospel took place when all believers evangelized and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now we see them preaching the word.
- The church witness to the outside was strong because of the fervent love they saw in believers for Christ and one another. (1Pet. 4:8). The Bible refers to this area of the work of ministry as ***“the ministry of the saints.”*** (1Cor. 16:15). Believers in the Early Church devoted themselves in this work of ministry and drew favor with God and with man.
- The first apostolic instruction urging all believers to move in the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit is in the Corinthian Church around 20 years after the Ascension of Jesus. Although Paul wrote First Corinthians 3-4 years after his ministry there, it's clear he and his team helped the activate all believers in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians, Romans, First Peter, and Hebrews also capture the activation of the work of ministry through all believers.

These developments provide evidence of how the Holy Spirit wants to lead the church today in the work of ministry. I will refer to these areas of ministry throughout this equipping manual.

What is the Edifying of the Body of Christ?

Spiritual leaders as servants of the Lord are tasked with equipping the saints for the work of ministry. All believers as fellow servants of the Lord are tasked with actively engaging together in the work of ministry according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If this is how Jesus, the Head of the Church, has set it up and undoubtedly this is the case according to the Bible, then where does it all lead? What purpose does it all serve? It's all ***“for the edifying of the body of Christ”*** (Eph. 4:12). What does this mean? The Bible uses the words *edify*, *edifying*, and *edification* at least sixteen times in Paul's apostolic letters to the New Testament Church. These words originate from the Greek *oikodome* (oy-kod-om-ay') which literally refers to the act of building or building up a house. The following references enrich our understanding of the importance of edification for the life of every Christian and the church as a whole.

- Rom. 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.
- 1Cor. 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.
- 1Th. 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.
- Eph. 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,
- Eph. 4:16 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.
- Rom. 15:2 Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification.
- 1Cor. 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.
- 1Cor. 14:5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

- 1Cor. 14:12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.
- 1Cor. 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.
- 2Cor. 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—
- 2Cor. 12:19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification.
- 2Cor. 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.
- Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.
- 1Tim. 1:4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

Note that the context of most of the above references is the corporate body of Christ. In fact, the degree by which individual members actively edify one another directly relates to the unity, growth, and overall maturity of the church. I believe its extremely important that young leaders and the church capture the true nature of what it means to edify. I recently read this online answer to the question, “*Why is edification important in the life of a Christian?*”

“According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the word indicates the promotion of “spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labor.” Vine’s definition captures the meaning rather well. Edification is more than just encouragement; it includes any activity that results in more Christlikeness, either in oneself or in another believer. Edification may be individual or corporate. Individually, one can edify oneself by participating in the various spiritual disciplines (Bible intake, private prayer, private worship, etc). Generally, however, the concept of edification in the New Testament is applied to the corporate body (mutual edification). Mutual edification involves helping one another along the road to Christlikeness, and it requires the participation of all members of the church. Teaching and preaching improve our understanding of God; encouragement promotes conduct that develops Christlike character. When we exhort one another and hold one another accountable, we are prompted to engage in activities that promote godliness. Accountability means we lovingly check each other’s spiritual progress. Christlike service ensures that the needs of the church are met, and true fellowship is the interaction we have with each other on a deeper spiritual level. The corporate nature of edification cannot be overemphasized. Without mutual edification, the church becomes a collection of spiritual weaklings, a perpetual nursery for spiritual infants, rather than a body (1 Corinthians 12:27) or a building (Ephesians 2:20-22).”¹⁰

Notice how edification is every member participation. When is the last time Ephesians 4:11 leaders have instructed the saints on what it means to edify one another? Is the church today effectively working together in this area? Paul saw edification as the reason for the apostolic authority God had given him to instruct and to speak correction to the church when necessary. According to Ephesians 4:11-16, the church cannot be built up the way God has planned without the mutual edification supplied by each member. Could it be that the disunity and division apparent in the church today are largely due to this lack of mutual edification?

The Christlike character of the new generation is at stake! Teamwork in the Spirit is urgently needed in the area of edification to reverse the current trend in many churches to close their ears to instruction that is corrective in nature. The Bible presents correction as a

¹⁰ Got Questions (2002-2019), *Why is edification important in the life of a Christian?*
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-edification.html>. July 26, 2019.

positive demonstration of God's love (Heb. 12:3-12; Rev. 3:19). This generation needs to be challenged in godliness. How is this done? It's by excelling in the edification of the church with each other, with neighbors, in the way we talk, and in the operation of spiritual gifts. Edification is the reason God gives spiritual gifts to believers. I urge young leaders and fellow members of the body of Christ to ask the Holy Spirit to help you abound in the edification of the church. The day of "*spiritual weaklings*" in the church and "*a perpetual nursery for spiritual infants*" must end.

Leadership Issues

Authority

A popular understanding has made its way into the church that everyone is a leader. Although the Bible is clear that everyone is a servant of the Lord, its equally clear following Jesus' ascension that He gave to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). Therefore, not everyone is called or appointed to oversee the overall development of the church. There are elders and deacons appointed and selected to provide oversight according to the New Testament record. But how did the Early Church view their leaders and how did the people view them? Even the most casual observer from within and without the church today must admit there are leadership issues. The issues I will discuss here directly affect the healthy functioning of all saints in the work of ministry. The interdependent teamwork in the Spirit among leaders and believers in the church is diminished if certain leadership issues are not addressed. The issues that have the strongest impact upon teamwork in the Spirit are authority, structure, ambition, and competition. How leaders and believers understand and function in these areas determines their level of teamwork in the Spirit.

Everything rises and falls upon leadership. This is another understanding that is generally accepted in the church today. Although I understand the important role of leadership in the Bible, I wonder if there's a danger of placing more attention to the leaders God is using than the One who gives them to the church. In addition, the concept that everything is determined by leadership sets up a pressure upon leaders to find ways to be successful. The church growth movement of the 1980's and 1990's with its emphasis upon one set man (leader) was a good example of this. The leader would gather others who shared his vision and then follow an established pattern of public relation practices used successfully by modern businesses and corporate executives. The bottom line is that it worked in many situations. However, the fruit is churches that look more like Walmart headed by pastors who functioned like chief executive officers (CEO's). What's the issue? The issue is with authority. It's the number one issue in the church that is preventing teamwork in the Spirit. I urge young leaders to get this issue settled before entering the ministry. The spiritual authority Christ delegates to leaders has limits. A leader must understand those limits or boundaries. Leaders can and do misuse authority in the church. I deal extensively on the topic of spiritual authority in another equipping manual.¹¹ However, here I will present two biblical examples that, if violated, negatively affect teamwork in the Spirit.

The first is how leaders present themselves to God's people. Generally speaking, senior leadership examples have not been the best. So, a new generation of leaders waits their turn. Even now they are beginning to be on stage. I'm gracefully observing how they are presenting themselves. Young leaders are too anxious to establish their authority in the

¹¹ Michael Gross. *Spiritual Authority: Equipping New Generation Leaders with a Fresh Vision and Understanding of God's Authority in Christ* (2018). <https://www.5foldglobal.org/files/resources-leaders-authority.pdf>.

church. This typically leads to some unforced errors and relying on title and position to establish their authority in the eyes of the people. Remember what Jesus said about this when speaking of worldly authority and who is the greatest in His kingdom. He said, ***“It shall not be so among you”*** (Matt. 20:26; Luke 22:26) regarding worldly authority. And, look what Jesus says about greatness in His kingdom:

- Luke 9:46-48 Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. ⁴⁷ And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, ⁴⁸ and said to them, “Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.”
- Luke 22:24-27 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ ²⁶ But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. ²⁷ For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

Talk about turning the table upside down. Jesus did just that! If Jesus settled this dispute over greatness and exercising authority, then why is it not a settled practice in leaders today to present themselves as servants of the Lord and nothing more. Where’s the compulsion coming from to make certain God’s people and Sunday visitors know, *“I am the senior pastor!”* or *“I am the apostle!”* I’m not talking about sharing one’s calling by God to a respective function of leadership and ministry in the church. Paul frequently talks about the apostolic calling on his life and its operation as it applies to the flock of God. He defends his calling from God but does not flaunt it before the people. His boast is in the Lord. In fact, he presents himself and other leaders as nothing before God’s people and urges them to think of them as servants of God.

- 1Cor. 3:6-9 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.
- 1Cor. 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Peter also demonstrated the same attitude in his instruction to leaders not to serve as overseers ***“by compulsion”*** or ***“being lords over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock.”*** (1Pet. 5:2-3). Note that Peter says to serve as examples *to* God’s people and not *over* them. This difference is easily overlooked by church leaders. New generation leaders need to lead by example and present themselves as servants of the Lord. If young leaders continue to follow past examples of establishing leadership authority through title and position, then teamwork in the Spirit will virtually disappear. This is leading by position rather than leading by calling and the team structure instituted by Jesus after His ascension. The former establishes a group who like and follow a set leader and the latter creates a functional team who together partners with the Holy Spirit to activate the body of Christ. I like what Dr. Gerald Ole-Nguyaine of the International Christian Center (ICC) in Dodoma, Tanzania, recently posted: *“If the Son of God came as a servant, then being a*

servant is the highest of all callings."¹² I pray young leaders capture this biblical truth and reflect it in how they present themselves to God's people.

The second aspect of the leadership issue of authority that greatly affects the level of activation and teamwork in the Spirit is the operation of spiritual gifts in the church. My wife and I were saved toward the end of 1973 in a Lutheran mission church in Worthington, Ohio, a suburb of the capital city of Columbus where we were attending college. This was during the time of what was known as the charismatic renewal movement. Although this renewal movement had an enormous impact on the way Christians worship today, it was mostly known for its emphasis on the manifestation gifts of the Spirit (1Cor. 12:7-11). Thousands upon thousands of church members in mainline denominations suddenly were born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to operate in the gifts of the Spirit. My spiritual father spearheaded annual conferences on the Holy Spirit where multitudes would line up in the Rhodes Coliseum to experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues. I know because I was one of the young men assigned to pray for those seeking to receive the Holy Spirit in same way as believers in the Early Church. Teachers would also instruct on the Holy Spirit and His gifts. There was tremendous encouragement for believers to publicly release these gifts, especially the vocal gifts of prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Microphones were open for this purpose. One by one men and women would come forward under the unction of the Holy Spirit to prophesy. Tongues followed by interpretation would consistently break out during worship. This was the church environment during the charismatic movement; a movement that church historians acknowledge today as beginning in the 1960's and ending in the 1980's. The conviction that the spiritual gifts in the New Testament is meant for the church today was at the heart of the charismatic movement.

What was God doing? Although misuse in the operation of spiritual gifts occurred, God was doing something. A young leader recently referred to the charismatic renewal movement as "*charismatic fluff*" and there was certainly a considerable amount of that going on. However, the most important and necessary thing to capture in any movement is to discover what God is saying and doing. Looking back on the charismatic movement, two things stand out in what I believe God was speaking to the church. "*I am transforming the way you worship*" and "*I am activating the body of Christ in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*" The latter is related to the release of spiritual gifts through believers in the context of corporate gatherings, including Sunday morning services. What does this have to do with the issue of authority? Allow me to relate some past and recent experiences to demonstrate why authority is an issue and how the Holy Spirit is always the best teacher about what goes on in His church. There was a woman named Wanda in that mission church where I was born again. I can still see her white hair and glowing appearance. Almost every Sunday evening during a point in worship you could count to three and she would release a message in tongues followed by the interpretation. Although I believed in the gifts, I and others began to question among us whether Wanda's continual use of the gift was really from God. One Sunday my wife and I had a meal with our newly acquired friends, Bob and Pam, where we discussed the matter

¹² Dr. Gerald Ole-Nguaine. International Christian Center, Dodoma, Tanzania, posted FaceBook July 27, 2019.

and concluded Wanda could not be led by the Spirit in such a repetitious way or at least in every single instance. We sat together at church on that evening and sure enough Wanda released the public gift of tongues and then there was silence. My young friend, Bob, suddenly sat down and his face appeared as if he had just been struck by a bolt of lightning. Then he stood up and released the interpretation. Me, I repented of questioning God's authority to use whomever He chooses as often as He chooses, and the way He chooses in His church. I had to learn to pay attention to what the Spirit was saying to the church and what He was doing in the church.

A second experience was in the mountainous region of the Idaho panhandle in the western United States. I was appointed pastor at the young age of 28 of a very small mission congregation in an isolated logging community. I was finishing a preaching series on the Holy Spirit and His gifts. The topic on this particular Sunday was the vocal gifts. Being young and knowing the majority of the members either opposed or had never been taught on spiritual gifts, I was intent on a short closing prayer and amen. But God took my tongue so I could not speak. Then a message in tongues with interpretation came forth from a believer. Again, I could not speak, and another believer released a second message in tongues with interpretation. Surely, I felt I could now finish, but I still could not speak until, yet another believer released a third message in tongues and interpretation. Then and only then could I speak and close in prayer. What was the Holy Spirit doing? He was teaching us. He was confirming His word; the word that I had just taught regarding the operational guidelines for the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and interpretation.

- 1Cor. 14:26-33 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.* ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Are the spiritual gifts operating in the church today? For the most part, I don't see them being manifested through believers in the corporate church setting. Has any pastor or church leader bothered to ask, "*Why not?*" Has God changed the way He wants His church to spiritually function and be edified? Certainly not! The way leaders are presenting and operating the gifts of the Spirit today has unintentionally created a breach with God's authority in Christ and a growing disconnect with God's people. Let me explain. Pentecostal and charismatic leaders today have instituted a common practice in the operation of the vocal gifts of the Spirit in church gatherings. If the unction of the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer during worship to prophesy or release the gift of tongues with interpretation, he or she must first go to the pastor and share what they have received. The pastor then will evaluate whether to allow the gift and message to be released to the corporate body or not. The spontaneous release of prophecy or other vocal gifts in the corporate gathering is not permitted and is viewed as out of order using Paul's concluding verse on spiritual gifts as confirming the procedure, "***Let all things be done decently and in order.***" (1Cor. 14:40). I extend apostolic grace upon pastors who have instituted this procedure and claim it fully

aligns with God's order and New Testament Church practice. Could it be, however, an overreaction to past misuse and divisions in the church over the operation of the gifts? Where in Scripture is the understanding that prophecy is released to leaders first before being released and then undergoing evaluation? I cannot find a case. Instead, I see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon a singer in the choir named Jahaziel. I see him spontaneously prophesying ***"the battle is not yours, but God's."***

- 2Chr. 20:14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. ¹⁵ And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle *is* not yours, but God's.' ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not *need* to fight in this *battle*. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD *is* with you." ¹⁸ And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.

Notice the first response in this corporate gathering of God's people was to bow before God and worship Him. They also ***'stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with voices loud and high.'*** (2Chr. 20:19). This was the environment of the Spirit when the prophecy occurred. The weighing of the prophecy took place after its release.

- 2Chr. 20:20-22 So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." ²¹ And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy *endures* forever." ²² Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

The New Testament operation of the gifts of the Spirit is unique and yet similar in many ways. There's the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit, the obedience of the person the Spirit is using, and there's the spontaneous release of the gift, and the weighing of the message in consultation with others. The Bible instructs us, not just leaders, to ***"test all things", "let others judge",*** and "that ***"the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."*** (1Thes. 5:21; 1Cor. 14:29, 32). What does this mean? I like what the Spirit Filled Life Bible says about this:

"In order to preserve balance and prevent confusion in the worship service, Paul regulates prophecy. Others present, especially those who function in the gift of prophecy, are to judge the authenticity of the prophetic utterances. The judging includes its content, alignment with God's Word, and relevancy to the meeting."¹³

The Bible also clearly instructs us all not to quench the Spirit, not to despise prophecies, and not to forbid speaking in tongues.

- 1Th. 5:19-20 Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies.

¹³ Jack Hayford. General Editor, The Spirit Filled Life Bible (1991), Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville. Study Note on 14:29, p. 1742.

- 1Cor. 14:39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

I urge young leaders to take heed to the full counsel of God's word regarding the operation of spiritual gifts in the church today. Avoid instituting procedures that end up extinguishing the gifts from manifesting in church services because this will cause a breach with God's authority. Do not challenge God in this way! And remember, the things of the Spirit are intended in God's plan for every believer and not just an elite few.

Structure

Leadership structure is another issue that affects the overall functioning of the body of Christ. This is not an issue of leaders or believers doing ministry, but one of doing the ministry together ***“by what every joint supplies.”*** (Eph. 4:16). The part leaders and believers provide is determined by the calling, appointment, and gift or gifts given to each of us by the Lord, who is the Head of the church. Even a casual observer of church leadership structure can see that the current structure has created an environment of separation between leaders and believers. Congregations are filled with spectators who watch a pastor or pastoral team do the ministry. The divide between clergy and laity continues to impede the effective activation of the body of Christ. This is why Jesus hates the doctrine and the deeds of the Nicolaitans and He expects His church to do the same.

- Rev. 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- Rev. 2:14-16 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

What is this doctrine? There are two primary views about the Nicolaitans. The Greek *nikao* means “to conquer” and *laos* means “people,” so some deduce from this that they were a 1st century sect favoring the priesthood of Rome by dividing God's people into clergy and laity. This aspect of the doctrine supports a hierarchical structure of leadership that seriously diminishes the New Testament principle of teamwork in the Spirit and the priesthood of all believers. The Reformation was a time in church history where God sought to do something about this doctrine that threatened the effective operation of the church. God used Martin Luther in a dynamic way to break down the wall between clergy and laity when he returned to Wittenburg early in 1522. He spoke for eight successive days to a large crowd. Dr. Norman Nagel, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, Missouri, makes this comment regarding one of the results from Luther's preaching:

“As Luther continued to preach the Word, the barriers between priests and laymen were gradually being broken down. He promoted the right of every Christian to stand before God.”¹⁴

Just how strongly did Luther preach on this? The following excerpts from his writings and preaching demonstrate a resolve and powerful anointing to boldly demolish a leadership

¹⁴ Norman Nagel, *Luther and the Priesthood of all Believers*, Concordia Theological Quarterly Oct. 1997), Volume 61: Number 4, p. 23

structure that was leading the church in a direction that was both immoral and contrary to God's plan.

- "How then if they are forced to admit that we are all equally priests, as many of us as are baptized, and by this way we truly are; while to them is committed only the Ministry and consented to by us? If they recognize this they would know that they have no right to exercise power over us, in what has not been committed to them, except insofar as we may have granted it to them, for thus it says in 1 Peter 2, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom." In this way we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. There are indeed priests whom we call ministers. They are chosen from among us, and who do everything in our name. That is a priesthood which is nothing else than the Ministry. Thus 1 Corinthians 4:1: "No one should regard us as anything else than ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God."¹⁵
- "There is no "two-level" Church, with clergy above and laity below, or laity above (who hires and fires) and clergy below, or two churches, one visible and the other invisible. There are no levels-only where our Lord has put himself there for us to give out his saving, enlivening grace as he has ordained the Means of Grace to do..."¹⁶
- "All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of the office as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we all have one Baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for the Baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people... There is one head and he has one body."¹⁷
- "In all my writings I never wished to say more, indeed only so much, that all Christians are priests, although not all of them are ordained by bishops, and so not all preach, celebrate Mass or exercise the priestly Office unless they were ordained to it and called. That is all I intended to say, and so let that be that."¹⁸
- "Now Christ is the high priest, none higher than he, anointed by God himself. What is more he sacrificed his own body for us; there is no higher priest's office than that. Along with that he on the cross prayed for us. Thirdly he has proclaimed the Gospel and taught all men to know God and himself. These three offices he has also given to us all. So then since he is a priest and we are his brothers, so then all Christians have the power and command, which they must do, to preach, to draw near to God, pray for one another and offer themselves as sacrifice to God. Nevertheless, no one may undertake to preach the Word of God or speak the promise unless he is a priest."¹⁹

Dr. Nobel summarizes Luther's bold stance when referencing Luther's appeal to the laity:

"In *To the Christian Nobility*, Dr. Luther links Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 2 and says that there are not higher and lower Christians but only differences of office and work. He is appealing to the laity; the priests have not been doing what is really theirs to do. For this purpose he writes in German. He appeals to the Christian Nobility as to those baptized. As baptized they all are gifted of the Holy Spirit, as is every member of Christ's body, the Church. "Spiritual" may not then be said only of the clergy."²⁰

This was one of the main premises of the Reformation along with the sole authority of Scripture and the justification by grace and faith alone, but the priesthood of all believers remains the most neglected of all. Where are the preachers today who are willing to risk everything to take on the church establishment under the strong anointing of the Holy Spirit?

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans can also be interpreted as "*conquering or destruction of people*." This lends itself to the view that the Nicolaitans were a group within the church who apparently taught that Christians could freely practice immoral behavior because the law was no longer binding. They are often associated with Nicolas who was one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5). The earliest support of this connection is from Irenaeus (130-202 AD), a

¹⁵ Norman Nagel., p. 283-284. *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*, WA 6564.6-14; L W 36:112-113

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 292. *Tractatus de libertate Clstiana*, WA 6:407. 13-19; LW 44:127.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁹ Nagel, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (Oct. 1997) p. 296-297.

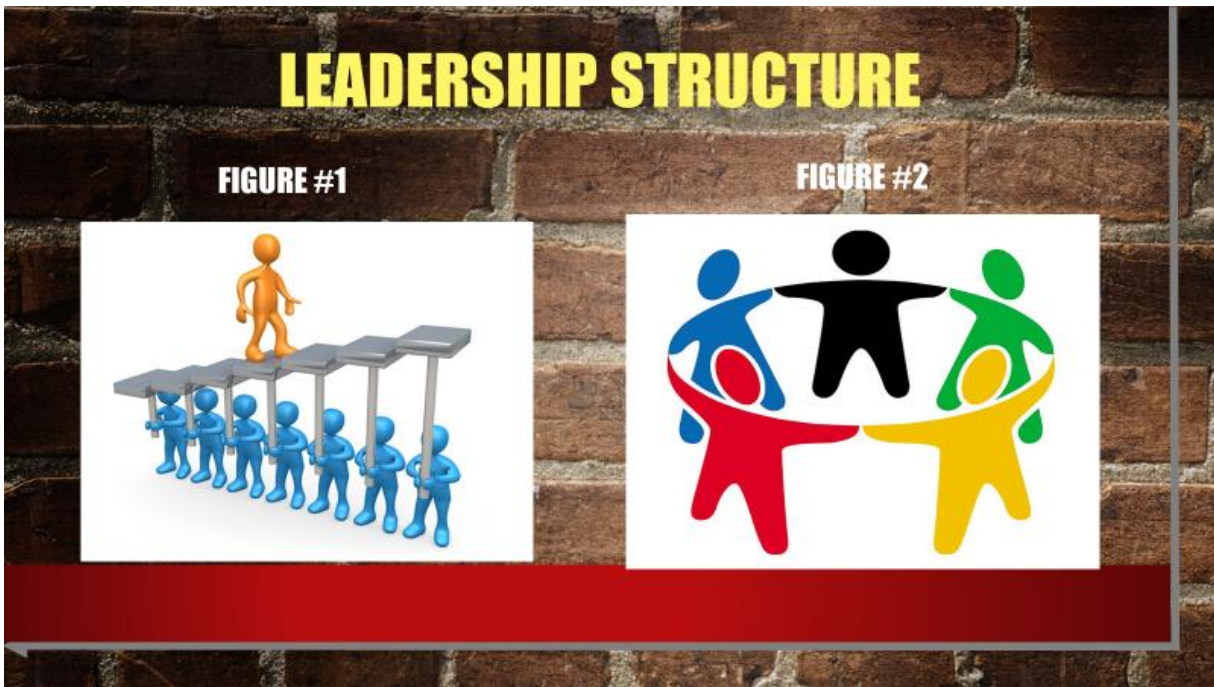
²⁰ Ibid., p. 291.

disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John, the Apostle himself. It makes sense to see the Nicolaitans as those who claimed some kind of superior status while permitting idolatry and immorality. This doctrine, therefore, is a form of what is called, *antinomianism*; a belief that the deeds of the flesh have no effect upon one's soul and no relation to salvation. Since righteousness is freely given by faith in Christ, Nicolaitans taught that an intellectual belief alone in this truth had a saving power. Although this teaching correctly affirms God's love, grace, and mercy as the ground of salvation, it falsely adheres to a freedom of the flesh and sin in clear violation of what the Bible teaches (Rom. 6:1-2, 11-13). The following chart summarizes in simple terms the nature and intent of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans:

Unrestrained Sinning	Hierarchy System of Leaders
<p>Nicolaitans around today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nicolaitans were an example of unrestrained indulgence. • Ignore the clear will of God in the Bible. • If it feels good, do it. • Anything goes. • Nothing is immoral. • <u>If any of this sounds like today – then the Nicolaitans are still around.</u> 	<p>NICOLAITANES SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Nicolaitane</i>, comes from two Greek words: <i>Nikao</i> which means "<i>to conquer</i>", and <i>Lao</i> which means "<i>the laity</i>". ◦ <i>Nicolaitane</i> means, "<i>to conquer the laity</i>". ◦ The <i>Nicolaitane</i> doctrine was "the corruption of the clergy as they sought political power amongst themselves." ◦ <i>Nicolaitanism</i> is organization, humanizing the leadership of the church, and thereby deposing the Spirit. Man over man.

I believe the spirit of this doctrine is prevalent today inside the church. If the new generation church allows it to remain, then the church will not grow in accordance with God's plan. The Holy Spirit will not have His way. Teamwork in the Spirit and the full spiritual activation of believers will remain at a minimal level without a transformation in this area and in the leadership structure of the church.

There is a big difference between a hierarchical structure and a team structure. Look at the following images. Which leadership structure is most prevalent today? Figure #1 or Figure #2? Which best represents the leadership structure of the New Testament? It's time for the new generation to choose! God is ready to anoint some young leaders who will boldly proclaim God's truth in this area.



Ambition

God's people need to display a much higher level of spiritual discernment when it comes to the issue of selfish ambition. In this section, I will attempt to explain to the new generation what it is and its negative effect upon teamwork in the Spirit. Bear in mind that I'm not talking about leaders or even believers who are highly motivated for the things of God and the overall accomplishment of His will in the church. There is good ambition and bad ambition when it comes to the body of Christ just like there is good and bad cholesterol in the human body. I know this because there's a history of high cholesterol on my earthly father's side. HDL stands for high density lipoproteins. It is called the "*good*" cholesterol because it carries cholesterol from other parts of your body back to your liver. On the other hand, LDL stands for low-density lipoproteins. It is called the "*bad*" cholesterol because a high LDL level leads to a buildup of cholesterol in your arteries. A substance called "*plaque*" forms in the arteries that literally changes the makeup of your arterial lining. The plaque narrows arteries so less blood can pass through it leading to serious complications. This is the leading cause of heart attacks among humans today. I believe this is an excellent example of what we currently observe in the spiritual functioning of many churches. Good ambition opens up the life-giving arteries for the Holy Spirit to flow at the highest levels among believers. Bad ambition narrows and even hardens these passageways and the flow of the Holy Spirit is lowered and, in many cases, stopped altogether. This is a serious condition in the church! Therefore, it is very important that we examine the area of ambition in God's word so we can discern the difference between what is good and bad for teamwork in the Spirit among believers.

Good ambition has to do with the degree of desire within leaders and believers for God and to fulfill His plans. How would you describe David's desire in these verses?

- Psa. 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

David's desire is extreme to say the least. The high degree of his desire for the Lord is rising from the context of severe and distressful circumstances. Matthew Henry describes this level of desire as "*holy love to God.*"

"Holy love to God as the chief good and our felicity is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase: now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is, I. Holy love thirsting, love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord and towards the remembrance of his name (v. 1, 2): "*My soul panteth, thirsteth, for God, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him.*"²¹

This kind of ambition arises from a heart that loves God; a heart that pants, thirsts, and soars with holy desires to serve the Living God. Young leaders must capture this desire first and foremost before moving forward on the center stage of ministry. Hunger, thirst, humility, and contriteness always get positive responses from God.

Good ambition also involves the level of passion and fire within leaders and believers to function in accordance with their respective callings and giftings from God. After urging all the believers in Rome to serve God with spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8), he exhorts them in their behavior as Christians.

- Rom. 12:9-21 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*" ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Note believers are not to be slow, tardy, delayed, or lazy when it comes to **diligence**. The new generation needs to speed up in its zeal, its exertion, and its pursuit of God's plans for His church in the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. They are not to be slow or tardy! The operation of the church is too slow today, lagging behind what is taking place in the world and slow to present Jesus Christ as the solution. Young leaders and believers must be more diligent in the things of God, especially when it comes to the word of God and His work of ministry.

- 2Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The fire and passion of believers is much too low in many churches. This condition is affecting and will continue to affect young leaders and teamwork in the Spirit. They need to

²¹ Accordance Bible Software (2019) *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry*, Psalms 42:1-5. paragraph 14714, I.2.

“fervent in spirit.” What does this mean? Fervent (*zeontes*) means to boil with heat, hot, seethe with burning zeal. It means to be zealous and glow like a burning fire. It refers to one who is most enthusiastic; one who ardently desires to join, promote, actively support, possess, defend, strive for, earnestly exert oneself. Spiritual fervency is something you got to have and keep! I like the way the NIV translation renders this verse, **“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”** (Rom 12:11 NIV). This level of spiritual ambition is good for everyone within and without the church. I believe our level of spiritual fervency needs to rise. I believe the Holy Spirit is about to accelerate this generation with great power. What are some of the areas where we are urged to be fervent in spirit or at the highest levels of desire, passion, and ambition?

1. Zealous for God - Paul told his Jewish accusers that he was ZEALOUS FOR GOD. He also told Gentile Believers that the Jews had this testimony: They were "ZEALOUS FOR GOD" but without knowledge. We are to be on fire for God with the knowledge of the truth.
2. Zealous to repent – How often are you on fire to receive God’s discipline and correction through repentance?

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev 3:19 NKJ)

3. Zealous for the House of God – When Jesus cleansed the temple His disciples remembered,

Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (Joh 2:17 NKJ)

4. Zealous for one another

...and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more. (2Co 7:7 NKJ)

5. Zealous for spiritual gifts – in order to excel in building up the body of Christ.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. (1Co 14:1 NIV)

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. (1Co 14:12 NKJ)

6. Zealous to work good - doing good for the glory of Christ is to occupy you.

...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Tit 2:14 NIV)

Lacking this spiritual fervor or fire is to go backwards. New generation leaders and believers need to spring the church forward with this kind of Godly ambition. They need to do this hastily in full cooperation with the Holy Spirit. This is the good cholesterol of the Spirit and it’s good and necessary for the church. However, there’s also an ambition that works against the

church and hinders God's plan for teamwork in the Spirit and the active functioning of leaders and believers in the operation of the Holy Spirit .

The leadership issue of selfish ambition is nothing new. The condition existed in the Early Church and it still exists today. Here are just a few direct warnings from the Bible regarding selfish ambition:

- 2Cor. 12:20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and *that* I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest *there be* contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults...
- Gal. 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies...
- Phil. 1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains...
- Phil. 2:3 *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

It's apparent from the above verses that selfish ambition in a leader or in any believer has to do with the focus of their desire to actively engage in the work of ministry. Webster's Dictionary defines selfish as "*caring supremely or unduly for one's self; regarding one's own comfort, advantage, etc...*" The nature of selfish ambition is that it is typically connected with an egotistical nature within a person. If the focus for doing ministry is to establish oneself as a prominent leader or favored church member, to gain attention or a large following, to be materially successful or prosperous, to feel good about oneself, etc., then this sends mixed signals to others, including those outside the church. I've observed some leaders who unintentionally cross the line into self-seeking in ministry. How can you tell? Although I primarily desire to increase spiritual understanding and direction from the message being presented, there are some things you can look for. Young leaders need to pay careful attention here! How does the leader or person respond to public applause? Is there any indication that they are preaching or ministering to gain such applause or the praise of men? Do you hear flattering talk for the self-centered purpose to draw attention to themselves? Is anything said for mere show? Is there any noticeable sharing of stories or testimonials that present the leader or person as supremely more spiritual than others? Selfish ambition is a kind of "**conceit**" (Phil. 2:3) that communicates to others that a leader is somehow higher or more important. This causes believers to feel like they don't measure up and will never be able to do so. Not the best environment for teamwork in the Spirit and the activation of all believers in the work of ministry. Although I place apostolic grace upon leaders and believers who stray into this arena, I have seen these things already begin to manifest in some young leaders. I must warn you in accordance with the Word of God that the primary result of this self-seeking, no matter how subtle or unintentional, is strife and strife is one of the most difficult things to get out of the church.

Selfish ambition in leaders does not represent the wisdom of God. This is why leaders need to ask God for His wisdom to avoid slipping into a desire for the praise of men more than the praise of God. Don't be like the rulers who would not publicly declare Christ because they sought the praise of men more than the praise of God.

- John 12:42-43 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

More and more leaders have become timid to declare the full counsel of God's word because they are fearful of losing their ministry positions or losing favor with God's people. Therefore, they strive to keep the peace and grow the church through motivational messages that the believers enjoy and applaud. Gradually, words like repentance and sin are seldom mentioned from pulpits because they are considered negative and lacking grace. Paul warned the Ephesian elders about this after declaring he had preached the whole counsel of God to both Jew and Gentile.

- Acts 20 18-21 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰ how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Acts 20:30-31 NLT Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. ³¹ Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

Removing repentance from the church vocabulary is very bad cholesterol for the church. It's a distortion of the Gospel! Paul is saying such things are a *diastrepho* (dee-as-tref'-o); a twist or turn in the wrong direction often leading to moral corruption in the body of Christ. This is not the wisdom of God. In fact, the Bible declares selfish ambition or self-seeking as earthly and demonic wisdom.

- James 3:13-18 Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

It's important to point out that self-seeking and selfish ambition are the same word in the Greek (*eritheia*). The New Spirit Filled Life Bible presents a good history of this word.

"A word that regressed from denoting honorable work to suggesting dishonorable intrigue. Originally, it meant a field-worker or reaper, and then anyone working for pay, a hireling. *Eritheia* later described a person who was concerned only with his own welfare, a person susceptible to being bribed, an ambitious, self-willed person seeking opportunities for promotion. From there it became electioneering, a partisan factious spirit that would resort to any method for winning followers."²²

I actually saw a parallel in the above progression in the meaning of *eritheia*, with the progressive development surrounding self-seeking from earthly, to sensual, to demonic. Selfish ambition originates in the flesh and if left uncontrolled by consistent subjection to the Word and Spirit, it can grow little by little until that person's ministry becomes more and more unspiritual, sensual, and limited to only what he or she feels or understands. I always

²² Jack Hayford. General Editor, *New Spirit Filled Life Bible* (2002), Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville. Word Wealth on Phil. 1:16, p. 1661.

remember what my spiritual father told me after he patiently listened to me share my feelings. He said, *“This I do know, ‘Our faith is not based on feelings, but on the Word of God.’”* He did not mean my feelings were unimportant. Rather, he guided me to the wisdom of God. This is exactly what James, the Lord’s brother, was doing by contrasting demonic wisdom with God’s wisdom.

Demonic Wisdom

Bitter envy
Self-seeking
Boasting
Earthly and sensual
Lying against the truth
Confusion
Evil things present

God’s Wisdom

Pure
Peaceable
Gentle
Willing to yield
Full of mercy and good fruits
Without partiality
Without hypocrisy

Selfish ambition is human wisdom cooperating with demonic wisdom. The pride and arrogance that is displayed in varying degrees weakens leaders and confuses others about who God is and His plans. Selfish ambition in a leader attracts people to the leader more than to God. This is bad cholesterol in the body of Christ. Young leaders need to take heed to the biblical warnings about selfish ambition. They need to discern it along with other believers and work together to overcome it by avoiding doing or speaking things that draw too much attention to self. The primary antidote is genuine and obedient humility before the Lord and His people. Look as what James, Simon Peter, and the Holy Spirit say:

- James 4:5-10 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”* ⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.
- 1Pet. 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”* ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...

Notice how the Holy Spirit in us intensely craves our partnership. He is jealous for us to do the work of ministry in God’s wisdom and power rather than the worlds. The way a leader demonstrates God’s wisdom with spiritual understanding among others is by showing them that what he does is in ***“the meekness of wisdom.”*** (James 3:13). This is a direct reference to obedient humility to God in the work of ministry. The Holy Spirit is ready to lift up this generation of leaders and believers. This cannot happen with the applause of people, but only ***“under the mighty hand of God.”*** The price of such elevation by God is to lower yourself before Him and His people, and help each other flow with the Holy Spirit.

Competition

The leadership issue of competition continues to plague the church of the Living God. Even the weakest vessel among God's people can see this. Where to attend church is mostly about whether they like the pastor or not rather than the direction and work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, leaders compare and compete with one another, and church members do the same. This was the first problem Paul dealt with in the Corinthian Church.

New King James Version

2Cor.10:12 For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

1Cor. 3:1-9 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal? ⁵ Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.

The Message

2Cor.10:12 We're not, understand, putting ourselves in a league with those who boast that they're our superiors. We wouldn't dare do that. But in all this comparing and grading and competing, they quite miss the point.

1Cor. 3:1-9 But for right now, friends, I'm completely frustrated by your unspiritual dealings with each other and with God. You're acting like infants in relation to Christ, ² capable of nothing much more than nursing at the breast. Well, then, I'll nurse you since you don't seem capable of anything more. ³ As long as you grab for what makes you feel good or makes you look important, are you really much different than a babe at the breast, content only when everything's going your way? ⁴ When one of you says, "I'm on Paul's side," and another says, "I'm for Apollos," aren't you being totally infantile? ⁵ Who do you think Paul is, anyway? Or Apollos, for that matter? Servants, both of us—servants who waited on you as you gradually learned to entrust your lives to our mutual Master. We each carried out our servant assignment. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but *God* made you grow. ⁷ It's not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow. ⁸ Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages. ⁹ What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God's field in which we are working.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to the church through His apostolic servant, Paul? One thing is very clear. The sectarian spirit displayed through unwise comparisons and competition among leaders and believers is sin. The level of division between leaders, churches, and all the saints was increasing in the Corinthian Church and it's even more rampant today. The Bible says this is a sure indication that believers are still nursing infants and filled with carnality rather than the Holy Spirit. The apostolic instruction is not to measure up to those who claim to be something superior. Rather, consider them and other believers as equally servants of God and place your attention upon Christ and His word. The following commentary captures the full picture what was happening in the Corinthian Church and what the Spirit is saying through Paul to the church at large today.

"Division over leaders in the church was beginning to develop. Some church members were becoming more attached to certain ministers than to Christ's message itself. Paul condemns this attitude, reminding them that neither he nor any of the leaders had given their lives for the church; only Christ had given himself, and he was the rightful head. Churches and individual Christians today have the same misguided pull toward a certain pastor, evangelist, teacher or some other ministry personality rather than to Christ and his Word. This attitude can cause them to betray Christian principles, and it continues to cause division in the church. We must always be careful to center our love and loyalty on God and his Word, not on any of his messengers."²³

The goal of competition is to gain positional superiority over others. God does not approve of this. Our final approval is based upon God's faithfulness. The Gospel message is all about Jesus Christ and our allegiance belongs to Him and all position is in Him. There's a growing separation with the Holy Spirit in the church. I urge young leaders to walk away from comparing and competing among themselves so the Holy Spirit can flow unhindered in purity and power through the saints of God. The current condition of the church today is a direct result of increasing levels of competition among leaders. One thing that will greatly help as a starting point is something God showed me through another leader. I was meeting weekly with a small group of young leaders to prayer over our community. I was surprised when he came to the meeting on November 15, 2013 but I have never forgotten the word he quoted from the Scripture: **"...from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh."** (2Cor. 5:16). This man had been a highly respected and successful pastor of a good sized church in the community. He began in obedience to God and in His wisdom to move the church into the full operation of the Holy Spirit. It ended up costing him the ministry in that church and he could have been focused upon those who had rejected him and his ministry. But here he was at such a small meeting saying to us and urging us to from that moment to view no one from an earthly perspective, but according to the Spirit of God. Look at how The Message Bible explains this:

- 2Cor. 5:16-20 Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. ¹⁷ Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! ¹⁸ All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. ¹⁹ God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. ²⁰ We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

Competition among leaders and believers diminishes their effectiveness as Christ's ambassadors. The new generation needs a fresh view, a spiritual view of others. God is wanting to transform the way leaders relate to other leaders and among believers as well. This will require a great adjustment for the new generation.

One final thing needs to be said regarding the issue of competition among leaders. Things will not go well if present attitudes are passed on to the new generation. This is a major concern. There was a time when Israel and Judah were divided. This divided kingdom created a lot of competition between those who believed and served the same God. The Old

²³ Fire Bible Global Study Edition (2009). Life Publishers International, Springfield, MO. Note 1:12, p. 2141.

Testament records many disputes, dissensions, factions, and even violent acts against one another. Teamwork in the Spirit was non-existent between them. It was like when Abner, servant of Saul's son, Ishbosheth, and Joab, David's servant, met by the pool of Gibeon (2Sam.12-13). The Bible says, "**So they sat down , one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool.**" This appears to be an accurate description of the church today. Leaders sitting with God's people on different sides of the same pool of the Spirit. There was only one agreement between these two leaders, and this is what most alarmed me. Look at it!

- 2Sam. 2:14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

It wasn't enough for the two leaders to compete with each other. They involved the young men. My spirit reacted to this and what followed is even more alarming.

- 2Sam. 2:15-17 So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, *followers* of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. ¹⁶ And each one grasped his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which *is* in Gibeon. ¹⁷ So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

The Holy Spirit is sounding the alarm to every young leader. Do not go to the place called the "**Field of Sharp Swords.**" The competition there is fierce, earthly, and devastating to what the Spirit wants to accomplish through you. Don't go there! Instead, pursue in Christ teamwork in the Spirit and the full unhindered work of the Holy Spirit flowing and functioning in every believer. Help Jesus get His bride back! Partner with the Holy Spirit to equip and activate the body of Christ!

Biblical Teamwork Principles

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit was a vital aspect of teamwork in the Early Church. I love the account of the Antioch Church where Paul and Barnabas are worshiping, praying, and fasting with other leaders. This indicates that the Christians at Antioch were fulfilling a normal function of ministering to the Lord together in this way.

- Acts 13:1-4 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

What was happening as these leaders together ministered to the Lord? Undoubtedly, their worship and prayer with fasting ushered in the presence of the Lord because the Spirit spoke, and they obeyed with more fasting and prayer. The fact that they then laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas was much more than sending them forth. It was an act of spiritual impartation and commissioning of Paul’s great apostolic ministry and even more. They were participating with the Holy Spirit because it was the Spirit Himself that was sending them out. Leaders and churches who together in public worship seek and serve the Lord in prayer and fasting can expect the Spirit to speak. The new generation is needing this fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This is the liturgy (*leitourgeo*) of the New Testament. It is the liturgy of the Spirit. It’s the top teamwork principle in the Bible.

The most important relationship a leader and the church can have today is with the Holy Spirit. It’s the Holy Spirit that always testifies of Jesus; who convinces us of our sins and leads us to the cross of calvary. It’s the Holy Spirit that brings us willingly to the place of repentance and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s the Holy Spirit that puts the name of Jesus upon our hearts and lips forever. It’s the Holy Spirit that cleanses us and reveals the Word of God to us. It’s the Holy Spirit that empowers us to cast out demons, heal the sick, set captives free and more. And, it is also the Holy Spirit who brings about the spiritual fellowship so admired in the Early Church and so much desired by believers today. Why is this generation so divided over the Holy Spirit? Much of the differences in thinking is due to religious/denominational teachings; however, there seems to be a shallow understanding of what it actually means to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

- Phil. 2:1-4 Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.
- 2Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

The Greek *koinonia* (koy-nohn-ee'-ah) in the above verses describes a relationship with the Holy Spirit that is very deep and intimate. It is this relationship that transforms the way we think and relate to others. The following description captures this truth:

"Sharing, unity, close association, partnership, participation, a society, a communion, a fellowship, contributory help, the brotherhood. *Koinonia* is a unity brought about by the Holy Spirit. In *koinonia* the individual shares in common an intimate bond of fellowship with the rest of Christian society. *Koinonia* cements the believers to the Lord Jesus and to each other."²⁴

You can't get this fellowship on social media. This close relationship or communion with the Holy Spirit directly and intentionally moves you from the acknowledgement of His identity and activity at conversion to a divine encounter in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and an ongoing partnership and participation with Him in the demonstration of His supernatural power. It begins with a hunger and thirst for a divine encounter with the Holy Spirit. The church has been playing around with this for too long. The reason for much of the lack of teamwork among leaders and believers is due to a lack of communion and participation with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Agreement

Teamwork in the Spirit is greatly enhanced when there is spiritual agreement. The prophet Amos spoke to this principle of teamwork with a very profound rhetorical question:

- Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

The above question anticipates the answer, "*No, of course not!*" What does it mean to agree? The prophet is referring to having an appointment or meeting place together. Isn't it time for this generation to meet in one accord at the "*Upper Room*" again? There can be no agreement without the same mind and purpose when it comes to the identity and operation of the Holy Spirit. It's time for this generation to accept the spiritual truth that we can accomplish more together than any of us can alone. The independent attitudes so ingrained in doing ministry today need to be put to rest. The principle of spiritual agreement is at the heart of teamwork in the Spirit. The Bible confirms that teamwork in the Spirit is stronger than individual ministry.

- Eccl. 4:8-12 There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet *there is* no end to all his labors, Nor is his eye satisfied with riches. *But he never asks*, "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?" This also *is* vanity and a grave misfortune. ⁹ Two *are* better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up. ¹¹ Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm *alone*? ¹² Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
- Lev. 26:8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.
- Matt. 18:18-20 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that

²⁴ Jack Hayford. General Editor, *New Spirit Filled Life Bible* (2002), Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville. Word Wealth on Acts 2:42, p. 1494.

they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The importance of this principle of teamwork in the Spirit in the above verses cannot be emphasized enough. Victory and blessing are associated with such agreement, even among two or three Christ followers. The Greek *sumphoneo* (soom-fo-neh') refers to sounding together or making a harmonious sound together that is audible. In the context of the church, it's a heavenly sound when in spiritual agreement with God's word and the Holy Spirit. This is a spiritual agreement that we must make every effort and be prompt and earnest about pursuing. This generation needs more agreement with the Holy Spirit. There's much prayer for unity, however, the unity Christ prayed for and the Early Church displayed and were **“endeavoring to keep”** was **“the unity of the Spirit.”** (Eph. 4:3).

How can there be any meaningful teamwork in the Spirit if there is little to no spiritual agreement about the Holy Spirit and His work? I urge this generation to renounce the past response to disunity that resigned itself to *“we agree to disagree.”* The intention of this convenient application may be admirable, but it does nothing in keeping the unity of the Spirit in the church. It has no power to maintain the unity Christ prayed for and was displayed in the Early Church. Rather, the Early Church was of the same mind and heart on the Holy Spirit and His work. I was reading First Corinthians where Paul was giving thanks to God for the church and how God had enriched them **“in all utterance and all knowledge”** and how Christ was **“confirmed”** in them (1Cor. 1:4-9). But what drew my attention was this statement of purpose, **“so that you come short in no gift.”** This *charisma* (gift) is referring to a spiritual endowment or miraculous faculty pointing directly to the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This was followed by a plea to be **“in the same mind.”** These appeals for spiritual agreement consistently appear in the New Testament messages to the churches.

- 1Cor. 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- 2Cor. 13:11-14 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints greet you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.
- Rom. 15:5-6 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Phil. 1:27-30 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.
- Phil. 2:1-4 Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 1Pet. 3:8-9 Finally, all of *you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Did you notice how the plea to the Corinthian believers is by the name of Jesus and how speaking the same thing and having the same mind is an antidote to the divisions in the church. This unity of the Spirit is enhanced by the level of spiritual agreement where the church is “**perfectly joined together**.” This is the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17 and it’s the unity of the Holy Spirit. How can the church arise to such a unity and display the teamwork in the Spirit that Christ has called us to be and do? I received a clearer understanding of how this can come about when I encountered on September 6, 2019, something Jesus said:

- John 5:19-20 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

Unity and teamwork in the Spirit go together in the above words of Jesus because there is spiritual agreement with complete and perfect alignment with one another. He says He could not do anything but what he saw His Father do, but what captured my mind was that Jesus said He does the works “**in like manner**.” What I believe I was seeing was that unity and teamwork in the Spirit flourishes when we see what Jesus is doing and then do it with Him in the same manner. What predicated these words of Christ was the healing of a 38-year-old man with an infirmity at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. When the Jews took offense, He answered, “**My Father has been working until now, and I have been working**.” (John 5:17). Jesus was committed and engaged in the work of the Father. Now what should the church be doing?

- John 14:12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Notice the word Jesus speaks applies to all who believe in Him. This is a prophetic word ready to be fulfilled in this generation. It’s time for this generation to get to work! The church, however, cannot fulfill this word without agreeing with the Holy Spirit. Apostolic leader, Guillermo Maldonado, of King Jesus International Ministry in Miami believes the church today is not carrying out the ministry of Jesus.

“As the church, we are not carrying out the ministry of Jesus the way He lived it and taught it; thus, we are not truly following Him as His disciples. We are meant to do greater works that He and to walk by the grace of the Helper, but we have lost sight of the mandate and the promises Jesus gave us to continue His work on earth. We have stopped listening to His voice and obeying His mandate, and instead have tried to conform to a worldly society. Because the body of Christ has not understood the magnitude of the work that God has entrusted it with, it folds in on itself and bends to the circumstances around it.”²⁵

The above situation is paralyzing the church’s ability to effectively continue the work of the Lord because the church cannot agree on the experience with and operation of the Holy Spirit. The work cannot be done without the power of the Holy Spirit. *Be in the same mind* is something I believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to the church today. Human efforts cannot join the church together in this way. We must harmoniously agree with the Holy Spirit and align

²⁵ Guillermo Maldonado (2017). Divine Encounter with the Holy Spirit. Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, p. 119.

with the ways He chooses to manifest God's presence. And, we need be vocal about our agreement. This generation needs to quickly get on the same page with the Holy Spirit.

Mutual Accountability

Teamwork in the Spirit has something that is missing in so many self-built independent ministries. I call it mutual accountability. The Cambridge Dictionary defines accountability as *"the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens"* or *a situation in which someone is responsible for things that happen and can give a satisfactory reason for them.*"²⁶ But what about mutual accountability in the church? A national study by the Barna Research Group described an alarming statistic regarding the accountability of churches today.

"The practice of accountability for life choices and behavior is central to our spiritual transformation. Yet, a national survey by the Barna Group among people who describe themselves as Christian and involved in a church discovered that only 5% indicated that their church does anything to hold them accountable for integrating biblical beliefs and principles into their life."²⁷

This reveals that the practice of accountability in churches today is mostly nonexistent and I believe in many churches the same can be said about the operation of spiritual gifts in the church. Those who seek to exhort and admonish others in the right spirit are often viewed as judgmental and unloving by church members. However, the Bible has much more to say about mutual accountability than most realize. The following is an overview of some of the passages of Scripture dealing with mutual accountability.

- Matt. 18:15-20 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *"by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ¹⁸ "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
- 1Th. 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.
- Heb. 3:12-14 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called *"Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,
- Heb. 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
- James 5:16 So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.
- Gal. 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
- Col. 3:15-16 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

²⁶ Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/accountability>.

²⁷ Barna Research Group. Accountability in the Church. <https://www.barna.com/?s=accountability+in+the+church>.

- 2Cor. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 1Pet. 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:
- 1Tim. 5:19-20 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

What do the above Scriptures show us about mutual accountability in the church? One thing is that it's not only practiced among leaders, but the whole church participates. The church is not properly functioning in the absence of mutual accountability. This is why this teamwork principle is so important. Why has the church abandoned the practice of mutual accountability? I recently read an article by Christian Educator, Luke Gilkerson, that listed ten reasons why accountability is unpopular and even distasteful in the church.²⁸ I will paraphrase some of these reasons.

- 1. People hate conflict.** They don't want to be confrontational. The same is true among church members. Few people want to call out others on their sin. They don't want to be accused of being judgmental or appearing more spiritual.
- 2. Christians do not understand that sanctification has a teamwork aspect.** The Bible involves a Christ-centered involvement with one another as one of the ways to grow as Christians. The New Testament places great importance motivating one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25), bearing each other's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2), and instructing one another (Romans 15:14). Many Christians are never taught about this.
- 3. People like their privacy.** Accountability is about confessing sin to one another, but few today like this idea because it's far too personal for most.
- 4. Christians are not taught (seriously) about biblical accountability.** Admonishing and exhorting one another is viewed negatively rather than a means to help Christians grow and mature in Christ.
- 5. Christians falsely believe accountability is only for behavior modification.** But the Bible says there's a kind of conversation we can have that actually addresses the heart—not just outward behavior (Hebrews 3:13).
- 6. Some Christians have experienced unhelpful accountability.** For some Christians, their accountability with others simply did not "work" for them. They experienced no change or in some cases those speaking into their lives display a controlling nature.
- 7. Christians falsely believe accountability in the church is only a crutch for when things get really bad.** Often we seek out accountability when things have come to a head in our lives, when we are facing a grave consequence. But the various "one anothers" of the New Testament (59 in total) are not just for those facing specific consequences for their sin, but for all Christians.
- 8. Christians are not disciplined.** Accountability makes most sense in a context of discipleship: being personally mentored, guided, and directed by spiritually mature individuals, and in the context of a community of disciples. In a church culture that makes true disciples, accountability is the most natural thing in the world.
- 9. Christians lack quality friendships.** Accountability is also most natural in a Christ-centered friendship. We need the Proverb kind of friend and not the Job kind: men and women who stick with us through thick and thin, who aren't afraid to confront us, and who compel us to do what is right. Accountability is not only giving an account of my sin to another but receiving an account of God's grace in return from a Christian friend.

²⁸ Luke Gilkerson (2013). 10 Reasons why Accountability in the Church is Unpopular.

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2013/07/15/10-reasons-why-accountability-in-the-church-is-unpopular>.

10. Christians have not tasted gospel-centered accountability in the church. The gospel of Christ and the Holy Spirit is what guides and protects mutual accountability. Christians will not be condemning, but gracious with one another. However, they will also speak the truth in love and treat sin seriously because Christ took sin seriously. They will share the word of God to motivate each other to grow and mature in the Lord. Christians need to be taught how to do this well.

I hope you can see that the principle and practice of mutual accountability in the church and among leaders is a team responsibility. Teamwork in the Spirit is hindered greatly when it is lacking in the church. In addition, this affects the credibility of church leaders and the church as a whole. This generation needs the practice of mutual accountability restored in the church.

Facilitation of Giftings

Who determines the various giftings in the body of Christ? The Bible says:

- **James 1:16-17** Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The source of all giftedness is from above. Paul made certain the Corinthian Church understood this.

- **1Cor. 12:4-6** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

The emphasis on “**same Spirit**,” “**same Lord**,” and “**same God**,” in these verses confirms the source of all *charismata* (spiritual gifts) is God. The entire Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are flowing together in the giving of a diversity of powerful gifts to individual members of the body of Christ. This is how God works. He is the One “**who works all in all**.” This means our God is powerful, active, and operational in the giving and the manifestation of the things of the Spirit. And God’s plan is for His church to powerfully and actively operate in His work. As every crew member on ship understands, “*It’s all hands on deck!*”

This generation must encounter the Holy Spirit and begin to demonstrate His power. New generation leaders and believers need to receive a spiritual impartation and learn how to facilitate or flow with the Holy Spirit in the church. First, let’s consult God’s word about spiritual impartation.

- **Rom. 1:11** For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—
- **1Tim. 4:14** Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.
- **2Tim. 1:6-7** Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

In each of the above instances spiritual gifts (*charismata*) were imparted (*metadidomi* – to give over, bestow, share) from one anointed servant of God to another or by a team of leaders. There are also many examples in the Old Testament of individuals or groups of people receiving impartation through another person.

- **Joshua and Moses:** “Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Deut. 34:9).

- **Moses and the Elders:** “So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied...” (Num. 11:24-25a).
- **Elijah and Elisha:** “And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?’ Elisha said, ‘Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me’” (2 Kings 2:9).

The laying on of hands also appears as one of the ways for spiritual impartation to take place. Interestingly, the laying on of hands is one of the six foundational principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1-3). Oil is also used in Scripture to anoint someone and, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, an anointing of the Spirit is received from one to another. The evidence for spiritual impartation as a way God works to facilitate the gifts in the church is much more conclusive than I first realized. As I looked at the Scriptures, I saw three ways spiritual impartation occurred: 1) through the laying on of hands by an individual; 2) through the laying on of hands by a team; 3) by God directly taking some of the Spirit from one and placing it on another or a group. It’s also important to understand that such impartations are connected with our being firmly established in Christ. I like what Matthew Henry says about this point:

“The best saints, while they are in such a shaking world as this, have need to be more and more established; and spiritual gifts are of special use for our establishment.”²⁹

Spiritual impartation, therefore, is an important way of facilitating and activating spiritual gifts in the church. However, one can only impart like Peter and John what they have to give under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

- **Acts 3:6** Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

Does not Jesus Himself impart to us what He has to give?

- **Luke 4:18-19** He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

He has imparted to us the same Spirit that was upon Him with the same powerful anointing. This generation needs this anointing to flow with the Holy Spirit. They need to consciously speak what’s been imparted to them and let the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit flow through them.

Facilitating the gifts requires learning how to flow with the Holy Spirit when He manifests and desires to go to work in the church. Many pastors and churches fail to facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit when He makes His presence known either in corporate worship, corporate prayer, or during or immediately following the ministry of the Word. I remember during an anointed worship time at Amsterdam 2000 where 10,289 participants from 209 nations gathered for ten days of training and strategy to fulfill the Great Commission by the end of the decade. Although you can be filled with expectation, you never know when the

²⁹ Accordance XII. *Matthew Henry Commentary*. Rom. 8:8-15, p. 38858, paragraph III. 1.

Holy Spirit will show up. But He did that morning and came upon the Central and South America delegation. They began to praise at an unearthly level. They were shouting unto God with unified voices of triumph and high praise followed by a Jericho march. The late Cliff Barrows rose up to restrain them and then returned to his seat when he saw they could not be restrained. I say this respectfully, but do not try to restrain God's people from spontaneously worshipping and praising the Lord when the Holy Spirit shows up. What would have happened if Peter interjected himself like that in the house of Cornelius?

- Acts 10:44-46 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Peter would have withstood God (Acts 11:17) but thank God He did not. As a result, salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit came to the Gentiles.

I also recall a Promise Keeper's event in Atlanta where about 25,000 pastors came together for a week of worship and the ministry of the Word. Ministers from almost every denominational background were in attendance in the massive indoor stadium. It was again during worship that the Spirit filled the place and heavenly singing like a united symphony was heard and the lifting of hands appeared all over the stadium. A prominent and very successful leader who was well known worldwide came to the microphone and said, *"Put your hands down, we'll have none of that here!"* The result was that hands went down, ministers sat down, the place became silent, and the Holy Spirit departed. What was so important that this highly respected man of God felt he had to do such a thing. Had he never read what is written, ***"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD."*** (Psa. 134:2). New generation leaders and believers must learn to discern the Holy Spirit's presence and obediently follow His lead in corporate gatherings. Teamwork in the Spirit cannot take place unless you learn how to facilitate and flow with the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

The Holy Spirit often manifests Himself and His gifts during corporate worship. The practice of some worship leaders and pastors to conjure up excitement in the people to praise and worship God much like cheerleaders at sporting events or motivational speakers does nothing to usher in the presence of God. Instead, it distracts from it. In addition, some have shut down singing in the Spirit during corporate worship using Paul's instructions in First Corinthians. First, let's take a look at a group of Scriptures addressing worship.

- John 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
- Eph. 5:17-21 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.
- Col. 3:15-16 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

The above verses appear to permit a variety of vocal expressions in the church during corporate worship. The Spirit Filled Life Bible defines these expressions in this way:

“Eph. 5:19 Note the place of songful worship as a means to fulfilling the directive in v. 18 – to be filled continually with the Spirit. Psalms are scriptural lyrics in song; hymns are humanly inspired lyrics in song; spiritual songs are impromptu rhythmic lyrics given by the Holy Spirit in one’s language or in “tongues” (See 1Cor. 14:15)”³⁰

Let’s sequentially follow a simple and orderly step by step understanding of what the Holy Spirit wants to take place in corporate worship settings.

- God is Spirit. He is the audience. (John 4:24)
- True worshipers worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).
- Believers are continually filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- Spirit filled believers speak to one another and sing unto the Lord in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and singing from the heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).
- Spirit filled believers give thanks to God for everything in the name of Jesus (Eph. 5:20).
- Spirit filled believers are obedient together in respect to God (Eph. 5:21).
- Peace rules in the hearts of a thankful and agreeable body of Christ (Col. 3:15).
- The word of Christ is abundant with all wisdom within members of the one body (Col. 3:16).
- Believers teach and admonish (mildly rebuke, warn) each other in the Word (Col. 3:16).
- Believers minister to one another in the Word and Spirit with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord (Col. 3:16).

The above sequence facilitates an environment in corporate worship that honors and welcomes the Holy Spirit to manifest and His gifts to operate. Worship leaders and pastors who are sensitive to the Holy Spirit know when He shows up and they know when He doesn’t. Some have shut down singing in the Spirit or spiritual songs (*pneumatikos*)³¹ in corporate worship; however, it certainly looks like the Holy Spirit desires the body of Christ to speak and sing to one another and to the Lord in this way, as well as the other divinely inspired expressions. Paul certainly practiced and encouraged believers to pray and sing in the Spirit.

- 1Cor.14:15 What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Paul recognized and encouraged such spiritual language; however, some believe he restricted such spiritual songs to private use only. We have to understand that Paul’s guidelines to the Corinthian Church deal with the manifestation of spiritual gifts through believers for the edification of the church. Paul is not restricting singing in the Spirit during corporate worship or prayer meetings. How can you be certain of that? Remember, God has also appointed a variety of tongues in the church (1Cor. 12:28). The silent statements alone

³⁰ Spirit Filled Life Bible (2018), p. 1718, note 5:19.

³¹The Greek *pneumatikos* for spiritual is the same word used by Paul in 1Cor. 12:1 referring to the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

demonstrate Paul is talking about the spiritual gift of tongues to facilitate the operation of the gifts in the church in accordance with God's order.

- 1Cor. 14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.
- 1Cor. 14:30 But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.
- 1Cor. 14:34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says.

If these “**keep silent**” verses are applied in the context of what was actually taking place in the Corinthian Church, then we understand that God's word is not saying women would never speak in the Church, but that they must minister under the same spiritual authority as everyone in the body of Christ. In the same way, he was not saying the use of spiritual songs could not be used in corporate worship for that would contradict the Scriptures we reviewed earlier. One prominent leader indicated singing in tongues or what he called “spiritual language” was only appropriate in corporate settings when no unbelievers were present. I share this all with you because when we restrain one of the primary avenues by which the Holy Spirit manifests and displays His gifts, then we default to our own human understanding and control. Teamwork in the Spirit is dependent upon encountering the Holy Spirit and flowing with Him when He manifests and demonstrates His supernatural power in the church. The message from heaven is, “*Let the Spirit flow!*”

Activation of the Body of Christ

Team Training

The activation of the body of Christ is long overdue in this generation. As young leaders are learning how to welcome the Holy Spirit and make room for the operation of His gifts, it's important to train the church in the things of the Spirit and the importance of working together with Him. I noticed in the Gospels how Jesus after He was filled with the Holy Spirit's power continually taught the disciples and the multitudes. He frequently entered the synagogues and taught. The Bible says **"He was accustomed"** to teach the multitudes again (Mark 10:1). In this context, many miracles would be done for the glory of God. He cast out demons and healed the sick under the powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught them in houses, from boats in the sea, in the marketplaces, and on mountaintops. He answered the high priest that He **"always taught in synagogues and in the temple"** (John 18:20). Supernatural signs and mighty works astonished the people. The Bible summarizes Jesus' ministry in this way:

- Matt. 4:23-24 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ²⁴ Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.
- Matt. 9:35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Jesus followed this pattern for a reason. He was training His disciples for teamwork in the Spirit with demonstrations of His power. Look at the scenario of this training mission in the following verses from the time He called His disciples to His instructions He gave the church through the Holy Spirit during 40 days after His resurrection.

- Mark 3:13-15 And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. ¹⁴ Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:
- Mark 6:7 And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.
- Mark 6:30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.
- Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.
- Luke 10:17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."
- Luke 24:48-49 And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."
- Acts 1:8 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."

I see a pattern in the way Jesus trained His Disciples and the Seventy for teamwork in the Spirit and the activation of the body of Christ in the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. The Early Church followed the training pattern of Jesus and it impacted four generations.

- 2Tim. 2:1-2 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Many ministers are engaged in the work of the Lord. They are working hard for God and we must praise the Lord for every laborer. However, too many are working mostly in their own strength striving to be successful in the ministry. Apostolic Leader, Guillerermo Maldonado, is correct when he says ministry cannot be done in this way:

“True ministry cannot be developed or carried out through our natural abilities. We need the power of the Holy Spirit, which comes only through an encounter with the Holy Spirit...If you are a leader in the church, do not pretend to run a supernatural ministry using your natural abilities! That is not the principle that Jesus Christ entrusted to us.”³²

This is why Jesus’ ministry began in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1) and His training for the church begins with an encounter with the Holy Spirit and His supernatural power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). The Early Church understood this because the first thing they did with believers was to lay hands upon them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This was a firmly established pattern in the Early Church, and it needs to be the same in the new generation church. We are all familiar with this pattern in the Book of Acts; however, the following questions loom heavily over the church today:

- Acts 19:1-2 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”
- Gal. 3:2-5 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Nothing can replace the Holy Spirit. What has happened to the church today? Maldonado says, we are in an “age of replacements.”

“It was the Holy Spirit who characterized the Christian movement in the first century. Miracles, signs, and wonders were not isolated events but were a common part of the lives of the early believers. However, in the course of history, the church fell into an “age of replacements,” still prominent today, in which charism replaced anointing, human abilities replaced power, talent replaced spiritual gifts, and methods, programs, and formulas replaced the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”³³

I call; this generation to return to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts with hungry and thirsty souls and with humble and contrite hearts. A prayer of activation is most appropriate at this time:

“Dear Jesus, I ask that You reveal to me the person of the Holy Spirit and give me a supernatural encounter with Him. I want to be empowered and activated in the supernatural to be Your witness here on earth. Holy Spirit, I surrender my will, my heart, my mind, and my emotions to You so that You may fill all my being. I renounce the works of the flesh; I renounce the sinful nature. Change me and transform my heart. Break the patterns and cycles of bad habits in my life that prevent me from having an encounter with you. Purify the motivations and intentions of my heart, and establish Your holiness in me. I die to myself, crucifying my flesh, so that You will become more real to me than anything else. I cry out to You, Spirit of God, so that You may make Jesus Christ real in me; so that You may make the Father real in me; so that You may make the Word of God real in me. I ask You to move in and through me, just as You moved over

³² Maldonado, Divine Encounter with the Holy Spirit, p. 36, 38.

³³ Ibid., p. 45

the face of the waters in the beginning when the world was created. Holy Spirit, make me a carrier of the power and glory of the Father; make me a custodian of the supernatural, to perform miracles, signs, and wonders in Jesus' name wherever I go, and to make Christ real in people's lives. Reveal Yourself in my life and empower me to fulfill my assignment on earth. I welcome You and I recognize Your presence. Fill me, Holy Spirit!"³⁴

Team training needs to begin and continue with the Holy Spirit. This is the starting point for all team training. Therefore, the message to this generation is to encounter the Holy Spirit. Walk and minister in His supernatural power. Carry and release the fire to others!

Team Modeling

Jesus taught and ministered openly in the presence of His disciples. His disciples were present with Him almost all the time. Look how Jesus called them to Himself. He called them to be with Him.

- Matt. 15:32 Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."
- Mark 4:34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.
- Mark 12:43 So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;
- Matt. 26:37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

What was Jesus doing? He took the disciples with Him to model or provide an example for them to follow. There are many instances of Jesus modeling for His disciples, things like prayer, preaching, casting out demons, healing the sick, etc. However, the feeding of the 5,000 provides a great example. This miraculous event is included in every one of the Gospel accounts, so we will look at these to extract unique details related to team modeling.

- John 6:1-13 After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the* Sea of Tiberias. ² Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. ³ And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. ⁷ Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ⁹ "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" ¹⁰ Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." ¹³ Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.
- Luke 9:10-17 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. ¹¹ But when the multitudes knew *it*, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. ¹² When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."

³⁴ Maldonado, p. 40-41.

¹³ But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.” ¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, “Make the people sit down in groups of fifty.” ¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶ Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke *them*, and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude. ¹⁷ So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

- Mark 6:30-44 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. ³¹ And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. ³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. ³³ But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. ³⁴ And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. ³⁶ Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” ³⁷ But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?” ³⁸ But He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. ⁴¹ And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all. ⁴² So they all ate and were filled. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. ⁴⁴ Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.
- Matt. 14:13-21 When Jesus heard *it*, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” ¹⁷ And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸ He said, “Bring them here to Me.” ¹⁹ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. ²⁰ So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. ²¹ Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The team interaction in the above miraculous event is team modeling at its best. Jesus’s had sent out his disciples and they had just returned to report on what they had done and taught. Multitudes gathered around them because of Jesus’ compassion for them and the healing miracles He performed. Now it was evening, and Jesus gives His disciples an examination.

Jesus	His Disciples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can we buy bread to feed this multitude? • This He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them. • Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little. • Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them <i>something</i> to eat?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not need to go away. • You give them something to eat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many loaves do you have? • Go and see. • Bring them here to me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? • And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish. • We have here only five loaves and two fish.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the people sit down. • Make them sit down in groups of fifty. • Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. • And they did so, and made them all sit down • So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed <i>them</i> to the disciples. • He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke <i>them</i>, and gave <i>them</i> to the disciples to set before the multitude. • He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. • the two fish He divided among <i>them</i> all. • and the disciples gave to the multitudes. • So they all ate and were filled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they gathered <i>them</i> up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten • twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them. • they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. • they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

What can we learn from the details of this miracle? Jesus is showing the disciples that He desires to work through them to do mighty works. Jesus engages them in performing the miracle from His hands to their hands, then into the people’s hands. Jesus looked to heaven before He began the miraculous process. This kind of modeling is very important when centered in Christ and directed by the Holy Spirit.

- Look to heaven (the source of power and authority)
- Know what God is going to do (expect a miracle)
- Bring the sick, the lame, and the tormented to Jesus (Don’t send them away)
- Give what you have to give (You have supernatural power in the Holy Spirit)
- Let them all be filled and satisfied

The Early Church understood and followed the team modelling of Jesus. They knew they needed to be imprinted with Jesus. Even the religious leaders who question Peter and John about the healing of the lame beggar asking, “***By what power or by what name have you done this?***” (Acts 4:7), recognized that “***they had been with Jesus.***” (Acts 4:13). Paul also urges others to imitate him.

- 1Cor. 4:16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.
- 1Cor. 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

- Eph. 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.
- Phil. 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
- 1Th. 1:6-7 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.
- Heb. 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
- Heb. 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

The above Scriptures reveal that team modeling was a strong and active thing in the Early Church. Paul offers himself as a model to follow. This generation needs many likeminded models.

Team Releasing

Jesus taught the disciples. Jesus modeled ministry for the disciples. They observed how He ministered in all situations. Jesus engaged them and sometimes observed them in certain ministry situations. He worked often with all his disciples and sometimes with the team of three: Peter, James, and John. Jesus also established a pattern of releasing His disciples in teams. This was His intended purpose as we discovered earlier (Mark 3:13-14). More and more young leaders need to discover the biblical practice of team releasing. Pay close attention to how Jesus released them in the following verses, keeping in mind that He first gave them authority and supernatural power.

- Matt. 10:1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.
- Matt. 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them...
- Matt. 10:7-8 And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
- Mark 6:7 And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out *two by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits.
- Mark 6:12-13 So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.
- Luke 9:1-2 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.
- Luke 9:6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.
- Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.
- Luke 10:6 And heal the sick there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

There's a very clear pattern in the way Jesus sent out the disciples.

1. He empowered them (to heal the sick and cast out demons, etc.)
2. He instructed them (included ministry in observation and on the job training)
3. He released them in teams (two by two)

This is the identical pattern young leaders need to follow today. I find it fascinating how the disciples went forth and were engaged in the same mighty works with the same supernatural power as they had observed from being with Jesus. They were fulfilling the prophetic words of Jesus.

- John 14:12-14 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. ¹³ And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.”

Jesus has not changed the way He sends forth His disciples in the 21st century. How do young leaders get empowered today? It’s by encountering the Holy Spirit and receiving His power and anointing. How do they get instructed? It’s by the Word of God? How do they get released? It’s in teams. What do they do? They do what Jesus did. Preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, cast out demons, etc. And, Jesus calls all disciples (believers) to be actively engaged in His miraculous ministry with supernatural power.

- Mark 16:17-20 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” ¹⁹ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

The Lord wants to work with this generation. His plan is to establish His word the same way Jesus did: with signs, wonders, and miracles. This is a call for believers to start working with God the way He desires to work with us. Teamwork in the Spirit is only as effective as our alignment with the design and purpose of God.

Team Reporting

The disciples also returned to report to Jesus what they had done and taught. This is also an important aspect of teamwork in the Spirit. The Bible documents team reporting after Jesus when His disciples and the seventy returned.

- Mark 6:30-32 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. ³¹ And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. ³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.
- Luke 9:10 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.
- Luke 10:17-20 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” ¹⁸ And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

The team reporting was also important because it provided the opportunity for Jesus to further instruct and train them.

The Early Church continued the practice of team reporting. In fact, such reporting triggered one of the most powerful prayer sessions recorded in the Bible (Acts 4:23-31).

- Acts 4:23-24a And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said:

In addition, team reporting played a significant role in the acceptance of the Gentiles into the body of Christ.

- Acts 11:1-4 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, ³ saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!” ⁴ But Peter explained *it* to them in order from the beginning, saying:
- Acts 11:17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He* gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? ¹⁸ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

Paul and Barnabas also returned to report back to the Church at Antioch as well as the Jerusalem Church. This had a huge impact on the outcome of the Jerusalem Council where their conclusion to the conflict over circumcision was ***“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us...”*** (Acts 15:28a).

- Acts 14:27-28 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.
- Acts 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

Reporting in the Scriptures means to carry word back. The Bible seems to indicate that a person is charged to announce or declare plainly what has taken place. Those who are sent out need to bring word back. Paul kept returning to do this important task.

- Acts 21:17-20 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord.

Team reporting was established by Jesus and continued in the Early Church. The response by those who hear is to glorify and praise God. This is why 5-Fold Global operations have After Action Reports upon each team’s return that include what was taught, what was done, lessons learned, and miracles God did through the team. When was the last time the church heard a team, they sent out return to report to them in detail all they taught and did and declare how many miracles God did through them? Team reporting contributes greatly to the activation of the body of Christ.

Concluding Remarks

Teamwork in the Spirit is greatly lacking in the church today. The teamwork we see in the Bible has been mostly replaced with human resources gleaned from the business world or successful athletic coaches. Mentors and life coaches have replaced spiritual fathers and human abilities have replaced spiritual gifts, and emotions have replaced powerful encounters with the Holy Spirit. This is not teamwork in the Spirit. Teamwork in the Spirit involves everyone receiving the power of the Spirit and then working together in partnership with Him and each other to do the mighty works of God. This generation is about to encounter the Holy Spirit. This generation is about to move in supernatural power to continue the ministry of Jesus who is ***“the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*** (Heb. 13:8). This

day, Jesus returns His church to the book of Acts! This day, Jesus activates His church again with teamwork in the Spirit! Pray this activation prayer from your heart:

“Holy Spirit, I need to be activated in You, to demonstrate Your power to this generation that loves knowledge but rejects a supernatural experience with a supernatural God. Father, I am Your child, and I want to manifest Your power as I walk through life, whether in school, at work, on vacation, or anywhere else. Confirm Your Word, Your truth, and Your revelation with miracles, signs, and wonders. Lord, help me to give this world an experience with You. Holy Spirit, impart Your boldness to me to shake me from my comfort zone so that I dare to take risks, to pray for the sick, to prophesy, to cast out demons, and to move in Your gifts. I know that You will support me in Your words and truth. If I make mistakes in the process, I know You are faithful to forgive me and to give me the grace to keep risking my reputation, as long as I see Your power being manifested here and now. Amen.”³⁵

³⁵ Maldonado, *Diving Encounter with the Holy Spirit*, p. 146.

Appendix I

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE EVANGELISTIC AND MISSIONARY WORK IN THE EARLY CHURCH

(from the ascension of Jesus, A.D. 30, to the imprisonment of Paul at Rome, A.D. 60?)

The apostles did not originally comprehend the extent of the Great Commission, Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15.

They wanted to establish a Jewish Christian church consisting of converted Jews and Jewish proselytes.

Later, through the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, they recognized the universality of the gospel and admitted Gentiles into full fellowship.

Three Periods	Dates	Acts	Outstanding Events <i>Note—The dates on this chart are only approximate.</i>
I A.D. 30–37 (?) Period of Organization	A.D. 30	1:4–12, 15–26 2:1–13	The ascension of Jesus was followed by ten days of waiting in prayer and the choice of Matthias as an apostle in place of Judas.
		2:14–36	The day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon believers, equipping them for service. Peter's sermon resulted in the conversion of 3,000 souls.
		3:1–4:1 4:23–33	The first persecution. The healing of the lame man, followed by a bold address by Peter, led to the arrest of John and Peter. They were released; and the church assembled in prayer, resulting in a great manifestation of divine power.
	30	5:1–11	A terrible judgment came upon Ananias and Sapphira, who suffered immediate death because of their deception. This sad event was followed by a period of rapid growth and a manifestation of miracle-working power in the church. Persecution arose and the apostles were imprisoned, but were delivered by an angel of God and continued their work in spite of opposition.
Jerusalem the Center	30	6:1–7 6:8–7:1 7:1–60	Seven deacons were appointed, among them Stephen, whose miracles and persuasive preaching led to his martyrdom.
II A.D. 37–48 (?) Period of Transition		8:1	The first evangelistic campaign outside of Jerusalem grew out of the scattering of Christians throughout the country by the persecutions under Saul of Tarsus.
		8:4–17	Philip, Peter, and John preached with great success at Samaria, where the Holy Spirit fell on the Samaritans, a prelude to the future work among the Gentiles.
		8:25–40	Revival spread throughout the region and Philip preached in many of the coast cities from Gaza to Caesarea.
	37	9:1–22	The conversion of Saul of Tarsus near Damascus, while on a mission of persecution, had a profound effect on Christian history.
The gradual recognition of the duty of the church to preach the gospel to the Gentiles	37	9:26	He preached first in Damascus, then went to Arabia (see Gal 1:17); returning to Damascus, he ministered until driven out by the Jews.
	37	9:30	He next went to Jerusalem and attempted to help the church there, but the hatred against him was so bitter that he was compelled to leave and returned to his early home at Tarsus.
	37–43	9:31	A period of rest for the church followed his departure.
	41	10:9–17 9:32–42	Peter's enlightening vision. While the apostle was on an evangelistic tour, he came to Lydda, where Aeneas was healed, and at Joppa, Dorcas was raised from the dead. While here the vision occurred which sent him out to preach to a Gentile congregation in the home of Cornelius at Caesarea.
Jerusalem the Center			Here the Holy Spirit sanctioned his work by coming upon the Gentile group.
Ac 8–12			
BEGINNING OF THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY MOVEMENT			
		11:19–21	Under the leadership of Christians driven out of Jerusalem by persecution, evangelistic work was carried on in Cyprus, Phoenicia, and finally as far as Antioch in Syria.
		11:22	Barnabas, sent to Antioch by the church at Jerusalem, found a rich field for evangelistic work and went to Tarsus to assist Saul. A strong church was established here, which became the center of the first foreign missionary work.
		ch. 12	Second persecution. About this time the church at Jerusalem suffered great persecution by Herod Agrippa I, who killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. Peter was also arrested and put in prison, but escaped by angelic deliverance.

Three Periods	Dates	Acts	Outstanding Events
III A.D. 48-60 (?)	46-48	chap. 13 13:1-3	<p>Paul's first missionary journey, Ac 13:2-14:28 The church at Antioch, inspired by the Holy Spirit, ordained Saul (later Paul) and Barnabas as foreign missionaries, and they started on an evangelistic tour, accompanied by John Mark.</p> <p>Their work began on the island of Cyprus; from here they went to Perga in Asia Minor, where John Mark deserted them.</p> <p>Paul and Barnabas carried their evangelistic campaign to Antioch in Pisidia, then turned southeast to Iconium and Lystra, where Paul was stoned. They departed to Derbe.</p> <p>From Derbe they retraced their steps through the same cities to Perga and Attalia, from which port they sailed to Antioch, in Syria, the city from which they started. They covered a distance of about 1,500 miles, and their mission lasted about two years.</p> <p>For further details, see the map of Paul's First Missionary Journey, 4309c.</p>
Period of expansion and development of foreign missions	49	13:4-13 13:14-52 14:1-19, 20-26	
Views of the church leaders broadened	50-52	15:40 16:6 16:9-12 16:26 17:1-4 17:10-11 17:22-23	<p>Paul's second missionary journey, Ac 15:36-18:22 Starting from Antioch with Silas as his companion, Paul revisited the churches of Asia Minor established on his first journey, and extended the work into Galatia and Phrygia, and westward to Troas.</p> <p>Here the missionaries were called into Europe by a vision, and came to Philippi, where they were beaten and imprisoned, but were miraculously delivered by an earthquake. They established a church here and at Thessalonica, their next stop.</p> <p>As they moved on they found the Bereans receptive to the truth; but Athens proved to be poor soil for the gospel, and they left for Corinth. Here Paul met violent opposition, but was encouraged through a vision and remained to found a flourishing church.</p> <p>The missionaries started back to Antioch, by way of Jerusalem, stopping off at Ephesus, having been gone, it is estimated, about three years and having traveled about 3,500 miles.</p> <p>For further details, see the map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey, 4309d.</p>
Gentiles admitted to equal rights with the Jews, without the observance of Jewish rites and ceremonies	51-52	18:1-18 18:19, 21	
Antioch became the center Ac 8-12	53 54-58	18:23 18:24-28 19:1-20 19:23-41	<p>Paul's third missionary journey, Ac 18:23-21:17 Leaving the home church at Antioch, Paul revisited the churches of Galatia and Phrygia and came to Ephesus.</p> <p>During his absence some preliminary work had been done in the city by Apollos, which prepared the way for a successful campaign. Paul's preaching and miracle-working power made a profound impression, confusing those who used magic and deceived the people.</p> <p>A great work was accomplished and a church founded, but trouble with some craftsmen made it wise for Paul to leave, and he departed to Macedonia and Greece. He remained three months at Corinth, and then revisited the churches of Macedonia. At Troas, he preached a midnight sermon and raised Eutychus to life.</p> <p>On his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and delivered a notable farewell address to the Ephesian elders. Arriving at Jerusalem he found himself the object of intense hatred, and a conspiracy against his life was formed.</p> <p>He was arrested under false charges, but the Roman soldiers rescued him from the mob. His Roman citizenship secured him certain rights.</p>
	56 57 58	20:1-12 20:17-38 21:28-33 21:33-40	
	59-60	23:31-35 chaps. 24-28	<p>The voyage to Rome. Paul was taken to Caesarea and was a prisoner for two years, during which time he appeared before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa; but having appealed to Caesar, he was sent to Rome, where, chained to a soldier, he preached to Caesar's household and others who came to him.</p> <p>While confined he wrote letters to various churches he had founded.</p> <p>He was possibly beheaded in Rome about A.D. 67.</p> <p>For further details, see maps of Paul's Third Missionary Journey and Paul's Journey to Rome, 4309e, 4309f.</p>
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Appendix 2

25 Bible Verses on Teamwork

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (Now this, “*He ascended*”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Psalms 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*”

Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Proverbs 11:14 Where *there is* no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

Romans 15:5-6 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.

1 Peter 4:8-10 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “*love will cover a multitude of sins.*” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

3 John 1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Philippians 2:3-4 *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Matthew 18:19-20 “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Mark 6:7 And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits.

Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

1 Corinthians 12:20-25 But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.

Ephesians 4:12-16 ...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 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.

1 Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*:

1 Corinthians 12:17-19 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they *were* all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

John 17:20-21 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Romans 12:10-13 *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Romans 15:1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Appendix 3

The 59 “One Anothers” of the New Testament

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
4. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
5. “...Love one another...” (John 13:35)
6. “...Love one another...” (John 15:12)
7. “...Love one another” (John 15:17)
8. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
9. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16)
11. “...Love one another...” (Romans 13:8)
12. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
13. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)
14. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
15. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16)
16. “...When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
17. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. “...Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (I Corinthians 16:20)
19. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. “...Serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
21. “If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other.” (Galatians 5:15)
22. “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (Galatians 5:26)
23. “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2)
24. “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
25. “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)
26. “...Forgiving each other...” (Ephesians 4:32)
27. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Ephesians 5:19)
28. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)
29. “...In humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

30. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
31. "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13)
32. "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
33. "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
34. "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
35. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "...Encourage each other..." (I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. "...Encourage each other..." I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
41. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
42. "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
49. "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
52. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..." (I Peter 5:5)
53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)
54. "...Love one another." (I John 3:11)
55. "...Love one another." (I John 3:23)
56. "...Love one another." (I John 4:7)
57. "...Love one another." (I John 4:11)
58. "...Love one another." (I John 4:12)
59. "...Love one another." (II John 5)

*From Carl F. George, Prepare Your Church for the Future (Tarrytown: Revell, 1991), 129-131.