

WHERE JESUS LEADS

Sharing Ministry and Leadership

O gracious and loving God, you work everywhere reconciling, loving and healing your people and creation. In your Son and through the power of your Holy Spirit, you invite each of us to join you in your work. We ask you to form us more and more in your image and likeness, through our prayer and worship of you and through the study of your Scripture, that our eyes may be fully opened to your mission in the world. Then, God, into our communities, our nation and the world, send us to serve with Christ, taking risks to give life and hope to all people and all of your creation. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Body of Christ

Jesus chooses to have his followers continue his ministry and makes his followers indispensable to his mission (Matthew 10 and 28:19-20). To our astonishment, Jesus says "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (John 14:12).

A strong and effective mutual ministry happens best as each and every person is encouraged and empowered to recognize and use his or her unique gifts "for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). This is an important part of our work as Christian leaders.

Scripture Reflection

1 Corinthians 12: 1, 4-30
(Today's New International Version)

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. . . .

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and [the Spirit] distributes them to each one, just as [the Spirit] determines.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

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Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as [God] wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

Questions for Discussion

What did you hear?

Why is it important for each of us to discover our gifts and vocation and participate in the body of Christ?

Are we focusing as much on our working relationships with one another as on the ministry tasks we seek to accomplish?

Are we identifying and serving one another with whatever gifts each of us has received (1 Peter 4:10)?

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Are we helping others to discover their special gifts and encouraging and empowering them to use them?

Are we approaching all that we do together as opportunities to do the works of Jesus?

Are we sharing our love for one another in mutual ministry?

Fully involving others

Moses said, "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29). This happens in baptism.

The Holy Spirit is active in everyone's life, gives us each unique and incomplete gifts, and unites us in a larger whole (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4)

- Mission of the church is the work of all of us
- Each part takes on significant responsibility for functioning in and/or leading some parts of our ministry and collaborating with other parts
- Every person's gift is important to the Body of Christ
- We are each more significant because we are part of Christ's Body

All baptized persons have a ministry (Baptismal Covenant; TEC Title III, Canon 1)

Equip, unite and empower people and help them grow together to become the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16)

A body does not function and has no power unless the parts work together.

- Teams achieve more than individuals (gifts, skills, resources)
- Involvement in planning and execution provides understanding and eliminates fear
- Teamwork increases energy and enthusiasm

Leadership is more than deciding or directing. It is:

- Bringing others along on our common journey
- Using the variety of gifts (1 Corinthians 12)
- Broadening ministry and mission (developing followers and leaders)
- Increasing commitment
- Leading change (including changing community behaviors)
- Broadening perspective
- Sharing the load (Exodus 18)

As leaders, we need to develop followers

- Jesus chose to have disciples continue his ministry and made disciples indispensable to his mission

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- "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (John 14:12)
- Expand and deepen kingdom love through the growth and development of people into disciples (Matthew 28:19-20)

As leaders, we need to develop leaders

- Jesus helped his closest followers grow into leaders who could help others become disciples
- Christians mature in faith by discovering and using spiritual gifts in service to God and other people

Christian followers never become wholly independent (i.e., "I am the vine, you are the branches" and "I am with you always").

How Jesus prepares his disciples

- Calling them into ministry (Mark 1:16-20)
- Encouraging them (John 15:11)
- Supporting Peter when he was about to sink into the sea (Matthew 14:28-31)
- Sharing vision and expectations (Matthew 5)
- Teaching them how to do ministry (Matthew 10)
- Directly explaining why they sometimes failed (Matthew 17:15-16)
- Being honest about when they were likely to be challenged (Mark 8:31-35; Matthew 10; John 21) or fail (Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:61; John 13:38)
- Teaching them to pray (Matthew 6:8-13; Matthew 21:21)
- Praying for them (John 17:6-19) and for their followers (John 17:20)
- Reconciling with them and restoring them to ministry when they fell away (John 20:19-31; John 21)
- Jesus brought his disciples with him and was with them (Matthew 28:20), knew and understood them, loved them (Mark 10:21), and was actively involved in their lives and ministries
- Jesus showed confidence that his disciples loved him (John 21:15) and were ready to lead by sending them to take care of his flock (John 21) and to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28)

The challenge is to risk ourselves to others: "to be abandoned to the talents and skills of others, and therefore to be vulnerable. The same risks as one has when falling in love" (Max DePree, Leadership is an Art).

How are you equipping others for ministry? Do you prepare disciples in ways similar to Jesus?