

As Every Part does its Part

Ephesians 4:1-16

All or a Few

What are some situations where everyone who goes to an event is an active participant?

What are some situations where only a few of those who go to an event are active participants?

When is everyone supposed to be an active participant, but maybe not everyone is?

Why aren't some people active participants?

What is the right model for church?

Ephesians

Letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus

Chapters 1-3: Theology

→ Right thinking about God and people

Chapters 4-6: Practice/application

→ Right attitudes, words, and actions which should flow from and express the right thinking

Theology: unity including great diversity

"the mystery of his will...—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." 1:9-10

"And God placed **all things under [Christ's] feet** and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, **the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**" 1:22-23

"His purpose was to create in himself **one new humanity** out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to **reconcile both of them to God through the cross**, by which he **put to death their hostility.**" 2:15-16

Ephesians 4:1-16

1-6: We are called to unity rooted in the unity of God

The quality of our lives should match the wonder of God's design for filling the universe with Christ's glory

"With all humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love" → beautiful!!

NOT enforced, and NOT covering injustice

Our commitment: make every effort for unity

NOT ignoring unity until everything is good

Rooted in the unity of God

He has authority over all people

He works through all people

His presence is in all His people

7-10: Expressed in the diversity of our gifts from Christ

"Grace" = gift for serving (rather than salvation)

Christ's victory over sin and death is matched by His giving these gifts to all His children

By His wise and loving choice and design

Different gifts in different amounts

As Jesus chooses

So no pride!! And no envy!!

Every one has His signature

So that He can fill the whole universe through us!

11-16: Equipping every one to do the works of service to build up the body of Christ into Christ

Some gifts are for the purpose of growing and empowering all gifts

All God's people are to do the "works of service"

This is the real ministry of the church

Builds up the body to unity and maturity

Otherwise, the church is like a perpetual infant

This only works as every part does its work

The Big Idea

God's will & work in the world is through each and every Christian united and working together in Christ using the gifts given to each one as Jesus chooses and equipped by God's work in the church

What muscles does it take for the human body to do useful work?

What is the role of the heart and lungs?

The heart and lungs make it possible for the other muscles to do the real work.

What people does it take for the church to do useful work?

What is the role of the church leadership?

The church leadership make it possible for the people to do the real work.

Application

Deeply value every person in the church

All ages, races, nationalities, sexes, life situations, personalities, socio-economic classes, abilities, ...

Intentionally look for and correct possible hindrances

Actively work to overcome individual prejudices and systemic barriers and biases among us

In other words: choose to love us all!

The good of the overall church depends on the contributions of each person in the church

We know we need to grow in this

We want to grow in this

Do you see a problem? Let's work together to address it!

Call each person to do the works of service as gifted and enabled by Christ

The real work of the church is done by all the people of the church

"It is every believer's responsibility to find, develop, and fully use whatever capacities for service God has given."

Different roles have different qualifications. For example...

For some roles you must be a Christian or a member

For other roles that isn't required

What are these "capacities for service"?

There is no fixed list. Let's be creative!

Traditional categories: Word and Action

Or...

Head: words / thinking → writing, editing, speaking, analysis, ...

Heart: relational / emotion → connecting with people/God, ...

Hands: action / productivity → setup, food, helps, rides, ...

Some combination

All: love! → otherwise only 'clanging cymbals'

The focus: external or internal (or both)

Explicitly Christian, or implicitly (enacted values of God)

Old tech (birthday cards) or new (virtual worlds)

How to find my place...

What does the Bible describe and illustrate?

What values are important in my culture?

What do I care about?

What do I have some ability for?

What are the needs we see and sense?

Let's explore and experiment!

Together

Take “equipping” seriously

It is the church’s responsibility to call, to equip, and to empower every one of Christ’s people to engage in the works of serving for the good of Christ’s body and for the good of world

We know we need to grow in this

We want to grow in this

And some of us have a gift for this!

There is great joy...

in using what God has given you to do what God wants done.

We invite everyone into this joy!

“Exercise”: usually a struggle

→ sometimes a joy

When the human body is functioning in harmony to do productive work with each part doing its part, it is a joy to see!

When Christ’s body is functioning in harmony to do God’s work of loving service in the world with each part doing its part, it is great joy to be included and to be a part of God’s plan

Reflection Questions

1. If you are currently serving with gifts God has given, what is that work? How is it going? How would you like to grow in those areas?
2. Are you looking to new or different ways to serve? What might that people? What descriptions in the Bible of people giving and serving stand out to you? What needs do you see and care about? What abilities do you have? What would you like to grow in?
3. What are some hindrances in our body that might be getting in the way of everyone serving?
4. What does it look like to serve and lead with “complete humility and gentleness”?