

Does Every Believer Have a Ministry?

by Anton Bosch

Every believer has a ministry, and the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to each believer individually, allowing every member to contribute to the growth and edification of the church.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:11, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Ephesians 4:12, Ephesians 4:16, Philippians 2:4

Topics: "Body Of Christ", "Church Ministry"

Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of every member in the church playing an active role in fulfilling their function within the body of Christ, highlighting that each believer has a contribution to make and should not be mere spectators. The New Testament principles stress the involvement of all members, not just leaders, in edifying and serving one another, with the goal of building up the body of Christ in love and unity.

Transcript

This question is often debated by those who strive after a church running along New Testament lines. The views are divergent and range from what borders on a "one man ministry" to a situation where each member is coerced into participation. Although we can derive some principles from the New Testament, we must allow for variations based on the gifts, personalities and dynamics present in each group of believers.

The word "each" is used 35 times and the phrase "one another" is used 79 times in the New King James Version of the New Testament in the context of our duty towards the body of Christ. Let's examine a few of the texts.

1Corinthians 12:11: "...[T]he same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." There is a tendency among some modern churches to dispense gifts by the whim of the leaders. People are prayed and prophesied over by others who have the gift of "impartation." The prerogative to give a gift and to determine what that gift will be is entirely up to the Holy Spirit. Although the Corinthians are encouraged to "desire the best gifts," it is not up to us to determine what that gift is or will be. This is emphasized later in the same passage: "God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."

1Corinthians 14:26: "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation." What could be clearer? It does not say "some" or "the

leaders," but each one has a contribution to make to the meeting. Some dodge this Scripture by speaking about those who act in a representative capacity. That is exactly what the priesthood of the believer is not about.

Philippians 2:4: "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." The job of looking out for others' interest is not the sole duty of those with a pastoral ministry. Each believer has to do so. This does not teach a theoretical response either. It calls for a practical lifestyle which places the interests and needs of others above our own. This is surely the essence of what Jesus did in taking upon Himself the form of a servant in order to save us.

Ephesians 4:16: "...[F]rom 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." There is little escape from the directness of this verse. Clearly Paul indicates that every member of the church has a part to play - there should be neither passengers nor spare parts. Obviously, this process cannot be forced. And new, shy and carnal believers must be given grace to grow to a point where they are able to participate fully in the life of the church.

Christians speak of "pew-warmers" in jest, yet the truth is that this is the most common "ministry" in many churches. Pew-warming did not seem to be the practice in the New Testament churches and it certainly is not the intended teaching of the Epistles. The primary function of ministry gifts is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry or, as translated in the NIV: "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Watchman Nee says that it would be very difficult to find many like Paul who had five talents, and local churches may wait a lifetime to have such a "five talent" visit them even once. Yet every redeemed person has one talent unless he has buried it. That means that if only six believers gather together and each brings his one talent, the church will have more than they would have had if they had waited for the man with the five talents. This illustrates the tremendous riches that are available to the church when every member plays their part.

...[T]he ideal is that every member of the church should have his or her function within that life and witness made plain, then recognition becomes the open acknowledgement by the congregation of the formal place of each of its members. In this way the churches can be revolutionized by a partnership of grace in which every member has his or her own function to fulfill, without jealousy or frustration, and where the Holy Spirit will weld the individual gifts of the many into a united testimony to His power.

(This article is taken from Anton Bosch's new book "Building Blocks of the Church - Re-examining the basics." The book is now available from )

1. Based on a physical count of only those occurrences of the words as they appear in the above contexts in the New King James Version. A computer search engine was used to find the occurrences after which each was examined for its context.

2. 1Corinthians 12:18.

3. While we do accept that all true believers are precious in God's sight, and that all should always be made to feel welcome in the assembly, it should remain the objective of leaders to encourage and train believers to realize their true potential as a fully functioning member of the body of Christ.

4. Ephesians 4:12 (NIV).
5. Nee. Revive Thy Work. p182.
6. Coad. A History of the Brethren Movement. p272

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