

The Church: How Jesus Builds It #4 - Ministry to the Church

by Bob Hoekstra

Jesus builds the church by using his instruments, his people, as members in the body of Christ, and we are called to minister to one another in various ways.

Duration: 38:55

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:10, Romans 15:14, Galatians 6:2

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

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of ministering to one another in the body of Christ. He highlights the need for grace, humility, and a desire to seek and please God. The speaker encourages believers to seek counsel from God and pass it on to others, whether it be confronting or consoling. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of showing kindness and love to fellow believers, even those who may seem unlovable, as a powerful ministry in the body of Christ.

Transcript

This is the fourth of six studies that we are going through together in the Word of God concerning the church and how Jesus builds it. Remember, Jesus said as recorded in Matthew 16-18, I will build my church. The builder of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the body of Christ.

And he promises he will build this church. He's been doing it for nearly 2,000 years and he's going to continue doing it. But how does he do it? Well, he definitely wants to use us as his instruments, as his people, as members in the body of Christ.

When we enter a study like this one, which is about ministry to the church, we're talking about the function of the church. We've looked at the nature of the church, that is who we are. We've looked at the purpose of the church, that is why we are here.

And now we're beginning to look at the function of the church, that is what we are to be doing while we are here. The function of the church must be related totally to the purpose of the church. The purpose of the church? To make disciples, to go around the world and call out in the name of the Lord followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's our purpose. It's why we're here. So now we're talking about how we do that in the functioning of the church.

And we saw that involves evangelism and edification. Well, ministry to the church, that's the edifying ministry of the body of Christ. Our next visit together this Wednesday evening, we'll look at the evangelism or witness aspect, ministry to the world, that's the other part of disciple making.

To the world, calling people to Christ, to the church, being built up in Christ, that's discipleship. This study will be an elaboration actually of Ephesians chapter 4 verse 16. Remember that? We looked at that extensively together.

Ephesians 4 verse 16, speaking of 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 it share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. This is that beautiful picture of we the people of God being the body of Christ. Christ is the head.

We are the members of His body. We are the hands and feet and eyes and ears and arms of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world today. He is our head and we as His body share in His love life and we share His life with one another.

Now this matter of one another is very big in the body of Christ. It's all about how we minister member to member, developing relationships or joints in the body and supplying through those fellowship joints, those relationships, the things of God to the people of God for growth and service. One another ministry.

Many places in the New Testament the Lord addresses this and it's how we function member to member. For example, in Romans chapter 15 at verse 7. Romans 15.7 is the ministry of receiving one another. Therefore receive one another just as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

One of the ministries we can have one to another is receiving one another. That is accepting one another. Welcoming one another into each other's lives.

To put it another way, it's being open to the developing of relationships. The world has a very standoffish approach to life and to other people. It's sort of here's my boundary.

Don't cross it. I don't know if you deserve any of my time or space or attention or resource. The world loves to shut people out.

The world loves to form cliques. Well, the same thing can happen in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ if we walk according to the flesh. That's the natural way of man.

Here's the supernatural way. As we hold fast to the head and receive from him a new life, a godly life, a Christ-like life, even a share in the life of Christ, we can be those who receive one another, make room for each other in our lives. To do it, it says here, as Christ did for us.

He did it graciously, willingly, sacrificially. When he did it, it was to the glory of God. When we receive one another, make room for each other in our lives, this brings glory to the Lord as well as touching each of us.

It's a simple ministry, but it's one of the important one another ministries in the body of Christ. One another, one behaving this way toward the other, and the other back, and each to the other. Mutuality and reciprocity of ministry is what the body is all about.

The physical body does that. One member ministers to the other, all out of the same common life. That's what we're to do in the body of Christ.

Romans chapter 12 verse 10. Romans 12.10 speaks again of one another ministry. Here, giving preference to one another.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love. We'll look at that in a moment. In honor, giving preference to one another.

In the world, it's me first. In the body of Christ, it should be you first. Go ahead.

You be blessed. Go ahead. You take the initiative.

You enjoy what's coming. Let's see your interests and needs dealt with first. Preferring one another in honor.

Delighting that others are blessed and honored and touched, even above ourselves. One version translates it this way. Outdo one another in showing honor toward each other.

Well, that's not the way of the world. But this is a new life we find in Christ. Simple ministry again, but a supernatural one.

This is not the way of man. But joined to Christ, his life flowing through us, we can grow in this kind of living. And it touches lives.

It builds the body. Ephesians 4.32 picks up this other matter of kindness that we just read about. It also is a one another ministry.

Ephesians 4.32, and be kind to one another, tender hearted. How many of us would stop to think that this is an important ministry in the church of Jesus Christ? And yet it is. Being kind to one another.

That also is not natural. Look in the world how much harshness, unkindness, how missing is tender heartedness in the world. Well it's not to be that way in the church of Jesus Christ.

We're to be kind to each other. Just be nice to each other. The scripture says, be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

We should grow in godliness because God is holy. We want to be like our Lord. I guess in these terms we could say, be nice because God is nice.

God is not mean, nasty. He's tender hearted. He's affectionate toward his children.

It's just right to be nice to each other. It's a ministry. Be kind to one another.

As Romans 12.10 put it, be kindly affectionate with brotherly love. In the family of God we're to show a family love kind of kindness to each other. Now not that every family shows that all the time.

When our kids were four, five and six, kindness was easier to enjoy in the household than when they were 15, 16 and 17. But now that they're 25, 26 and 27, I marvel at these kids now. How kind they are to each other.

Really it makes me tear up sometimes. It just melts my heart. Are these the kids that used to clamber for that choke hold on the other one? We're not talking puppy scuffling.

We're talking rough stuff. Or could even go at great length and not say boo to the other one as though they didn't exist. It's wonderful when a family treats one another like family.

Just kind, considerate, affectionate. Well, we can do that in the name of the Lord. Drawing on the life of the Lord Jesus.

Who was as kind as He? He's now our head. He's our life. We're His body.

His life flows through us. We can pour out His kindness upon one another. We are His family.

It's just right and it is a powerful ministry. Who knows but what the kindness that you or I might show to a brother or sister today or this week might be the only kindness they find all week long. The world is not a kind place.

Oh, sometimes they'll treat you with a professional courtesy, sometimes. But real kindness, just a genuine nice affection out of the heart, what a ministry to one another. It's one of the ways the body of Christ is built up.

God knows who we are. We're not a collection of rocket scientists here, you know. So God says, I'll just use kindness to build them up.

I'll share my kindness with them, urge them to share with each other and through that they can touch each other's lives. So simple but so divine. Being kind to one another.

And right in this same verse is another one. Forgiving one another. Oh, this is a mega ministry.

Forgiving one another. Forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave you. Another great one another ministry is forgiving one another.

Not holding things against each other. Not building up grudges or plotting vengeance against one another. Again, this is unlike the world.

Again, this is not like we used to be before we came to Jesus Christ. The flesh loves grudges. The flesh can feast on plots and plans and dreams of vengeance.

By the grace of God we can leave those things out with the world, the flesh and the devil. We're to forgive one another. Not hold things against each other.

And let's face it, don't we now and then give each other a great opportunity to exercise this ministry? At times we do things that can only be fully dealt with by gracious measures of forgiveness. Well, praise God. We've received such in the Lord.

We can pass that on to each other. Look how we're to forgive. As God in Christ forgave you.

We're talking radical forgiveness. Comprehensive. Extensive.

A forgiveness that was at His loss. A forgiveness that was at His cost. A forgiveness that He doesn't take back.

Well, I forgave you but forget it now. We ought to forgive as God in Christ forgave us. What a powerful way to minister to one another.

Forgiving one another. Here's another one a bit related to it. Colossians chapter 3 verse 13.

Colossians 3.13. Christians are to be those who are bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another even as Christ forgave you so you also must do. An elaboration here of course extension of the forgiveness matter. Are there any complaints that you hold against any Christian? You have reason to complain against a brother or sister in Christ? Well, here's God's word for us.

If anyone has a complaint against another even as Christ forgave you so you also must do. A great heavenly remedy for complaints. Cover it with forgiveness.

But the issue we're looking at now is bearing with one another. Start of the verse. Colossians 3.13. Bearing with one another or forbearing as it could be translated.

This again is a very simple ministry but a powerful one. It's all about patiently putting up with each other. Do you find it naturally easy just to get along with every Christian you ever meet? Me neither.

In fact the marvel of it is that here we all sit coming from a thousand directions of sin and self gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a new life we found through forgiveness in Him and here we are together. What would happen if you extracted out of our common life together the presence and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ? Whoa. Number one most of us wouldn't be here.

Why? Because he's here. Or she's here. In the world who knows if we ever would have hung out together.

Unless a few of us had the same kind of sin we like to get into. Have you noticed in the body of Christ the amazing gathering the Lord brings? What do we really have in common? Well it's not things that naturally draw people together. What we have in common same great need of forgiveness.

Same great need to have a new life. Oh the old one. We totally messed it up.

It was a mess from the beginning. We were born in sin and death as part of Adam's family. We hold in common our desperate need for that new life in Christ.

But far greater than that we now hold in common the Lord Jesus Christ. We are members of His body. He is our head and we're called to patiently put up with one another.

One of the sisters after the first service when her husband walked by and I was kind of hugging and we were kidding each other and she said, he's my ministry. I thought that's great. As mates we are each other's great ministry you know.

And part of it is patiently putting up with each other. Just hanging in there. It's not always that easy.

But it's the way the Lord Jesus Christ treats us. Aren't you glad He puts up with you? I'm so glad He'll let me hang out in His family. I'm just so thankful.

In His name we can put up with each other. It's a ministry one to another. Galatians 5. Galatians 5.13 speaks again of one another ministry.

Galatians 5.13. For you brethren have been called to liberty. Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another.

The ministry of serving one another. What a great ministry that is. Helping out.

Meeting needs. Taking the place of a servant among the family of God. It's the way God wants us to use our liberty.

It's something isn't it? Almost a paradox. Before we came to the Lord Jesus Christ we thought we were totally free. Do anything we wanted to.

Romans 6. 6 tells us we were slaves of sin. Now we come to Christ and we want to be His bond slaves forever. And the world looks at us and goes you lost all your liberty.

You don't do this. You don't do that. You're on the straight and narrow.

What's it like living in a straight jacket? Well that's the paradox of it all. On the straight and narrow is where the abundance of life is. It's where true liberty is.

Yeah we could go anywhere we wanted to and do anything we wanted to before Christ and it all was sin and death and bondage. The devil had us on a leash and we didn't even believe he existed. I'm free.

Now in Christ we have true liberty. What are we going to do with that liberty though? The flesh wants to use it for self indulgence. Real liberty is here in Galatians 5. 13.

We've been called to liberty only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another. Yes we are free.

We are at liberty. You know how free we are? We're so free we can now serve each other. Well that's liberty.

Why? Who did you serve before you came to Jesus Christ? That's right. S-E-L-F with capital letters. Praise God we're free from that now.

Life does not have to be all caught up in me, myself, and I. My interests, my plans, my feelings, my possessions, my everything, my universe. We're free from that. And we can use that liberty to actually serve one another.

Glorious way to build up the body of Christ. Here again one another ministry is spoken of in Galatians in chapter 6 verse 2. Chapter 6 verse 2 says, Chapter 6 verse 2. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Helping to carry the loads that each of us have.

The loads of life, the loads of battle and warfare. It would be very instructive to us no doubt if it were possible just at this moment to have the Lord do a work where we all of a sudden could see the unseen. What would happen to us if right now we could physically, visibly, literally see the loads that are pressing down on each of our lives? What if just like that we could see those loads on each other's shoulders? You go, whoa, I didn't know he was under all that.

I thought he had it totally all together. You know that great myth? Everyone's aiming to be that person thinking everybody else is. The only one who ever had it all together was the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rest of us have just been watching it fall apart. The world and our lives. Life gets tough.

The battle gets heavy. The loads get enormous. If we could see, some folks right now, it's like they've got a fully loaded semi truck and it's parked right square on their head.

Burden for family. Burden for kids. Burdens about bills.

Health burdens. Looking at the church and its tendency in these days to chase after the things of the world and the flesh instead of after Jesus. Looking at the world where there's war and strife and torment and brutality.

There's opportunity for burden everywhere you look. Here's one of the great ministries in the body of Christ. Bearing one another's burdens through concern, through prayer, through assistance.

Really what we need to do is be willing to get under those loads with each other, but not just to carry them, but to help that person dump them off on the Lord. That's the ultimate carrying of the burden. Get under there and help, taking it all to the Lord for remedy and resource.

What a great ministry. If we would minister that way increasingly to one another, you'd almost hear throughout the body of Christ a great, whew, that's a load off my back. This is wonderful ministry.

Bearing one another's burdens. Here's another one in Romans 15. Romans 15 verse 14, the ministry of administration and admonishing one another.

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Oh how this fits the picture of the body of Christ and Christ the head. How else could we be full of goodness and filled with all knowledge only as we're drawing life from the head? None is good but God alone.

The Lord Jesus is the goodness of our lives and we draw from Him and we have this goodness of God to minister to each other and knowledge of God to minister to each other. And it makes us able also to admonish one another, to confront one another, to warn one another. I must confess, I'm not enamored of this ministry, confronting one another.

One of my great dilemmas in it is I don't know which I like least, giving it or receiving it. But you know what? It's an important ministry. The Lord nailed my flesh back in the 1970s after I'd been pastoring for 5, 6, 7 years.

I was unwilling to confront, warn, admonish. It just wasn't my natural Adamic old creation bent. I didn't like it.

I didn't like putting people on the spot. I didn't like calling people to account. Well shame on me.

In our church ministry, though the Lord was doing wonderful things, there were many needs for spiritual admonition or confrontation. But no, not me. I'm Mr. Nice Guy.

Probably because I wanted people to think, hey, what a nice guy. This is a strategic ministry. Now if you love it, if you live for it, I'd say watch out.

Don't do too much of it. It might be your natural bent you're leaning to and you just love to get in people's face. But confrontation is a critical part of the ministry of the body of Christ.

It's bringing the truth of the Word of God right up before someone and saying this is the way of God. Take heed, please. Don't you see the danger of the path you're in? Where you're walking is wrong.

This is right. The way of Christ. It's a critical ministry.

The church I pastored in Dallas suffered greatly because I was unwilling to confront. I don't like confronting, but praise God I'm more willing to do it than ever in my life and I've done more of it in the past five years than probably the previous twenty years of ministry put together. It's important.

We all need to be ready to give it or receive it if it's of the Lord. Admonishing, warning one another. There's another ministry member to member that is somewhat like this, but it sounds so different you'll wonder why I say it's like it and that is comforting one another, 1 Thessalonians 5. We'll talk about the kinship between the two in a moment.

1 Thessalonians 5, verse 11, comforting one another. Therefore, comfort each other. We are to comfort each other, console each other, encourage one another.

The comforting ministry of the body of Christ member to member, oh how we need this. In so many ways life is uncomfortable. In many ways growing up in Christ is uncomfortable because the flesh is being nailed as the spirit is being nurtured.

And we have both growing pains and dying pains taking place simultaneously. Oh how we need to comfort each other. Like a mother would a crying baby or a dad picking up a tumbling toddler.

Oh it's okay, I love you, God loves you. The Lord will heal that boo-boo on your knee. Comfort one another.

We need to do it with each other. I heard a brother who'd been in ministry for many, many years and he shared this many years ago. He announced in a sharing time one day he said, you know what the number one destroyer of ministry is? I'm immediately thinking of some of the popular biggies, power, money, immorality.

What is it? He said it's discouragement. I've thought on that a lot since those years. He nailed me totally.

I had not been undermined in those three arenas in ministry, but I'll tell you I couldn't count on all my hands and toes the times I'd been in the pits of discouragement ready to quit. Everyone goes through that. The battle is so discouraging and just wanting to serve the Lord, even minister in the body of Christ sometimes is discouraging.

We need comfort. We need to encourage each other. It's a great ministry.

It's right there for any of us to do any day, one to another, mutually encouraging each other. I suggested that this admonishing one another and comforting one another that they have a close kinship, but though they speak of giving personal counsel, guidance to one another, they have a different flavor. One is counseled by confrontation.

The other is counseled by comfort. One is counseled by law. The other is counseled by grace.

And in those words is a glorious, simple though, theology of New Testament biblical counseling one to another. We're always ministering in our counsel to each other either law or grace or measures of each. Law, when there's rebellion and insubordination, 1 Timothy chapter 1. Grace, where there's humility, brokenheartedness, a desire to seek and please God.

We can minister these things of God to each other without measure. It's just there for the asking. It's there for the walking in.

This is the end of side 8. To listen to the rest of the message, please turn the tape over now. We can minister these things of God to each other without measure. It's just there for the asking.

It's there for the walking in. The counsel we need comes from our head, whose name by the way, Isaiah 9.6 is Wonderful Counselor. And as he counsels us, then we pass that counsel on to others.

Sometimes he confronts us. My child, that's wrong. Lord, thank you for that counsel.

I needed that. Sometimes he counsels us. My child, I'm here to console you.

I know your heart's broken. I know you want to please me. I'm for you.

I'm not against you. I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. And he comforts us.

We can pass that on to each other. It's tremendous ministry for the church. In the same verse, another ministry one to another, 1 Thessalonians 5.11, and edify one another just as you also are doing.

Edifying one another. Building one another up. Strengthening.

Helping each to grow. In the world, people want to grow and develop, but they're out there doing it for themselves. Hey, me, I'm going to make a life.

I'm going to be all I can be. In the church of Jesus Christ, we want to help each other grow up. And if we all give attention to serving the other to growth, the whole body will be built up.

The last ministry we'll look at is in 1 John 4.7. It's a one another ministry that you can say in one word, and that one word gathers all of the other one another ministries we've looked at thus far. 1 John 4.7, beloved let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. Loving each other. This is agape love, divine love.

A sacrificial love. A love not motivated by the lovability or the lovable-ness of the object. Think of the implications of that.

Aren't you glad that God's love did not have to be motivated by the lovable-ness of the object? Where would we be? Let us never think that the way we got in the family of God was like this. God's looking all over. He spots us.

Oh, I've got to have them in my family. Finally a place I can pour out love. Oh, is that person motivating me? Look at that.

The way they talk. The way they walk. Oh, look at that brain.

Oh, I've got to have that kid. Not quite. Not even.

The Lord loved us when we were yet sinners and sent His Son to die for us. Thank God His love comes from His nature, not my lovableness. Well, we're attached to Christ the head who is love.

And we can draw that same love and pass it on to others. One of our great ministries could even be, Lord, show me in the body of Christ those that the world thinks are totally unlovable and let me love them with the love of God. Oh, what a mighty ministry in the body of Christ.

Divine love. Agape love. To desire and exercise God's best for one another.

Now in conclusion, one another ministry. It's often overlooked. It's frequently undervalued and in too many places not cultivated.

One another ministry. It's a simple, powerful vision of ministry for every believer. Before the Lord sent me here to fellowship in this blessed place, He gave me the joy, the privilege of pastoring 25 years in two other churches.

I don't know how many thousands of times people came up to me and said, Pastor, I've need a ministry. As the years went on, you know what I loved to turn and say to them? Brother, let me give you a ministry. And they may be waiting for an office, a position, an activity, and here's what I love to say.

Here's your ministry. Go out among the body of Christ receiving, giving preference, being kind, forgiving, bearing with others, serving, bearing burdens, admonishing, comforting, edifying, go out there loving. Brother, you got a ministry.

It's available every day for all of us and there's no limit to it. You can pour your life into it. And you don't have to wait for someone to say you're now qualified to do it.

What a glorious way to serve God day in and day out. One another ministry. Note well though, the resource for this ministry and its varied forms must flow from Jesus Christ the head.

The vision must come from him, the direction from him, the heart to do it from him, the wisdom to do it appropriately from him. But he is abundantly available. In fact, we're told to hold fast to the head.

If we'll do that, clinging to him in faith and hope and expectation, wanting to be used of him, he'll fill us with his life by the work of his spirit and we can abound in one another ministry. It's ministry to the church that builds up the body of Christ. Praise God.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for this great calling. It seems so simple and humble and lowly in the eyes of man and yet it's high and lofty.

It's important to you. It's high priority. Thank you for the work you've done among us to make these things real.

Continue to cause them to abound in and through our lives. And Lord Jesus, we look to you. We want to hold fast to you.

What we need for this walk we know is in you. It's your life. Fill us, Lord.

Overflow us. Be our strength and resource. Be all that we've read about in and through us for your glory and the building up of your church.

We ask in the holy and mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

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