This past week the Elders met for our monthly meeting. In preparing for the meeting, I looked over the list of people that we have on our contact list, and on our membership roster, and began to make up a list of “inactive” people. Over the course of the last year we have had some individual and families who, or one reason or another, have moved on to other locations, cities or nations, and are no longer part of our church community. We don’t want to eliminate their contact information completely from our records, so we discussed moving some people on the roster of the church from “active” to “inactive” status.

As I created the list, and began to move some names from the “active” to “inactive” status, I thought about those titles. I didn’t really like doing it. Of course, we miss those who have left— but there was more. I didn’t like the idea of some people being listed as “inactive.” Just because someone is not attending our church doesn’t mean that they are “inactive.” During the meeting, I mentioned that I didn’t like it, and Igor suggested that perhaps a better name would be “Alumni,” and I agree with him! That is a much better title—because in the church of Jesus Christ there is no place for an inactive member! The idea of someone being a part of the church, and inactive is simply not a biblical concept.

For years at the top of the program at the little country Methodist church where my mother attends, they have these words beneath the name of the church: “Ministers: All Members.” Like Igor with his idea of “Alumni,” that church got it right! For the next several weeks, we are going to be looking at how the mission and ministry of the church should be done. We are calling our study, “Every Member a Minister.” And whether you are a member of Converge International Fellowship or not, if you are a member of the Body of Christ, then you are called to be a minister of His love, faithfully serving in a unique way for which you are particularly gifted and called. Simply put, in this church, we want to have the right people, serving in the right places, for the right reasons.

So what does that mean?

First, The “Right People.”

Believe it or not, that may mean you! If you have made a decision to follow Jesus, then it does mean you. Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians chapter 12, verses 7, and 11-13:

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all (vs 7)...one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills (vs 11)...for by the Spirit we were all baptized into one body (vs 12)...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (vs 13).”

Paul’s discussion of Spiritual gifts is clearly inclusive of every believer. Clearly, no one is left out of that discussion. This is exciting news for you! You may not realize it, or recognize it, but you have not been left out of the Spiritual Gifts Distribution Program! There is within you a unique mix of gifts, passions, personality and style that allows you to make an
impact on your church and your world like no one else. When you discover what that Gift is, and how you can use it, you will experience something you may have never thought possible – a place of service that will be energizing, not draining; fulfilling not frustrating; you will find yourself built-up not burned out. It is a type of Spiritual synergy that produces the ability to devote yourself completely to a task and find yourself looking for the next opportunity to serve, not a way out.

“The Right Person” is you!

“The Right Place”

“The Right Place” refers to the actual description of the ministry that will be done when we discover how God has gifted us. The key to this part of the goal is the adjective. We don’t want you to simply find a “place” to minister; we want you to find the “right” place to serve. The last thing we want is to force you to teach 5th grade boys Sunday School if your gift is hospitality, and we don’t want to force you to invite people to your home for a dessert if you gift is teaching. Both of those activities are important in the church, but both will suffer if people whom God has gifted to accomplish them are not doing them.

It is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces. When you put a jigsaw puzzle together, you start by getting all the colored sides facing up, then you look for the pieces with the two straight edges – the corners – then you look for the ones with one straight edge – the sides. Once those are put together, they form a frame in which the rest of the pieces fit.

Our goal in this study is not to burden you by giving you more pieces to carry around. We don’t want to add more to your workload. Instead, we want to help each person find out where they fit in the puzzle of God’s ministry in this church and in this community. Then, when we are all in the right place, we will form a beautiful picture of what God has intended the church to be.

Paul talks a lot about Spiritual Gifts, and in Ephesians, chapter 4, he gives us an example of the people in the right place.

Paul writes, in Ephesians 4:11:

11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

In Paul’s writings, in Ephesians, Corinthians, and elsewhere, he describes a wide variety of gifts, and Peter, and Old Testament writers describe gifts as well. None of the lists given in Scripture claims to be or was intended to be exhaustive – none of them contains all the gifts or excludes any of the other lists. But if you compare the lists, and combine them, there are more than twenty gifts mentioned in Scripture. Our focus today is any of the specific gifts mentioned here or elsewhere (we will get to that in a couple of weeks), but rather to see that Paul makes it clear that Jesus Himself has appointed specific people in specific roles to accomplish specific tasks. This idea is a common theme through all of the writings about spiritual gifts. Peter describes it in I Peter 4:19 as a “special gift.” He writes, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another…” (NAS)
Our goal in these weeks is to help you discover the place that God has uniquely shaped you to fill. We want our church to have all the pieces perfectly fitted together to create a portrait of God’s love to the community. With all due respect to Picasso, we don’t want a picture of the body that is abstract and disjointed, instead, we want the body of Christ to be fully functioning and properly fitted together.

**The Right Reasons**

But finding your spiritual gift, and discovering where you fit best in God’s plan are only two parts of the goal of this study. We do want you to discover your gift, and we want you to be in the place that God has designed for you, but we only want you to do it for the right reasons.

The right reason is shown in this passage from Ephesians

\[11\text{It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,}\]
\[12\text{to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.}\]

Notice how the Right People in the Right Place for the Right Reasons creates cascading positive results. First, we serve to prepare God’s people, or in some versions “to equip the saints.” Now it’s obvious that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are preparing God’s people, but that preparation in turn motivates and liberates all of God’s people to works of service. Those served by the apostles, pastors and teachers are then used by God to serve others. And the result of that service is that the entire Body of Christ – the church – is built up.

That word is exactly what it sounds like. This is how a church is built – not with bricks and mortar. Not with websites and marketing plans and slick advertising. A church is built when each person is equipped and released to serve each other in the church. And when the church is built up, we see three important results: the final purpose for which God has gifted every member as a minister. First, unity in the faith. This one is especially meaningful for us in our setting here. We welcome people here not just from more than 30 nations and multiple cultures, but from a wide variety of denominations and theological backgrounds. In this church we have people from the whole spectrum of the Christian faith – people from Pentecostal backgrounds and people from Presbyterian backgrounds; we have Baptists and Mennonites – and it’s OK! Paul tells us that when the church is using the right people, in the right places for the right reasons, we can be brought to unity in the faith as we serve Christ and serve one another in love.

That unity in faith in turn leads to unity in the knowledge of the Son of God. This is not just an academic knowledge about Jesus – it is truly knowing Him – having an intimate, daily growing relationship with the Son of God. This is knowledge that is grounded in fellowship with Him – time, communion, worship, meditation and faith in Jesus Christ. That fellowship
with Christ leads us to maturity. As we are prepared for service, and engage in that serving of one another, the entire body of Christ is built – it is made greater and stronger. The body, though made up of diverse parts, is joined together in unity of faith and intimacy with Christ, and grows, steadily and gradually, into the full measure of what He intends us to be.

Conclusion.

Wouldn’t it be great to be a part of a church like that? Where gifted teachers taught, gifted leaders led, gifted intercessors prayed, and gifted craftsmen glorified God with their efforts? Where generous givers gave, passionate mercy-givers served, where enthusiastic evangelists proclaimed the gospel fearlessly? Where people with faith trusted God for greater things, pastors faithfully shepherded their flock, and administrators helped it become a reality?

This week Kurt Johanns told me that when someone in the church needs help with a move, or bringing home furniture, he wants to help. He wants to serve Jesus by serving others, and when we serve one another, we grow more like Christ – we become mature in Him. A few weeks ago, George Thia send me an email that he wanted to learn to help on the media team – to serve the body of Christ. Kevin Nickel has been serving the body of Christ as he trained George. Clarissa and Kenyatta have recently joined the praise team ministry – and are serving Jesus and assisting us all in our worship of the Lord. Imants supports a mission to people in Darmstadt who are victims of human trafficking and prostitution. When Patricia and Violet, or John and Magdalena gather for prayer for the church and for people in their workplace, they are serving the body of Christ. Each gift is vital in the mission of the church. Some are more obvious, done in public – others are more solitary and behind the scenes – but every one is critical in a healthy, maturing, effective church.

Wouldn’t that be a great church? Where every person knew their role, was valued for their unique contribution, and saw the value of everyone else? A church where God was glorified by the service of every person, not just a few, and the church as a whole was on a steady pace of maturity and growth. That is God’s desire for every church – and for every believer. It is His desire for this church. It is His desire and plan for you.

Let’s pray.

*Father, we have seen just a glimpse today of what you desire for your church, and it makes our heart pound faster as we think about the possibilities. We confess that we get a little uncomfortable when we think about what you might have for us, but we recognize that you have equipped each one of us to serve you in a unique and powerful way. In the coming days and weeks, help us to be sensitive to Your leading in our lives. Help us to be open to your teaching and direction, and help us to be obedient to serve as the right person, in the right place, for the right reason. That reason is to glorify you. May all that we do, in word or deed, accomplish that goal. In Christ’s name, Amen.*