

## ***RECAPTURING THE MASTER'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH***

*(Part 2: Ephesians 4:11-16)*

The consumer mentality has already infiltrated the life of the American church. Church marketing consultants even encouraged Christians nowadays to think of churches like supermarkets with numerous options, choices and convenience to cater to their perceived needs. Hence, when looking for a church, "Customer first" instead of "Christ first" is the mantra of the day. What does God say in His Word about this self-absorbed and consumer-minded treatment of His church? The Bible never talks about being a church consumer preoccupied with your own perks and preferences. Scripture calls us, not as consumers, but as contributors in the body of Christ. In biblical language, we are called to be eager servants of the Lord and ministers of God's church (Matt. 20:26-28; Phil. 2:5-7; Rom. 12:10-11). Life in the church is not centered around me. It is centered around our Lord Jesus Christ. It's all about serving the Lord and His people.

Instead of adopting the market-driven, consumer-oriented, and self-centered perspective of the church, we must return to the Scriptures and let the Word of God, not the unbelieving world, define for us what our church life ought to be. Ultimately, our church life is not about what we want from the church. It's all about what Jesus wants for His church. Since the church belongs to Christ, it is Jesus' preference and agenda that matter, not ours. We must therefore recapture what Jesus, the Master and Head of the church, sets forth as the biblical plan, design and pattern for the church. Ephesians 4:11-16 presents the Master's plan for the church: Gifted and godly leaders equip the believers for ministry for the building up of the church towards unity and maturity. Let's consider the second feature of Christ's plan for His church.

### ***1. Christ gives gifted and godly leaders to His church.***

### ***2. Gifted and godly leaders \_\_\_\_\_ the believers for the work of \_\_\_\_\_.***

In verse 12, Paul identifies the purpose why our Lord Jesus gave gifted and godly leaders to His church. It is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The term equip means to prepare, to get ready, to be made spiritually fit and healthy, to be trained and instructed (Eph. 4:12; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40). The role of every church pastor and leaders is to equip believers, to bring them to proper spiritual health and to prepare and train them so that they may fulfill the work of ministry and effectively serve God and His people. The Word of God is primarily what equips, nurtures and instructs the saints for the work of ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:2 1 Pet. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 3:16). Along with the ministry of God's Word, believers are also equipped through the ministry of prayer (Col. 4:12; Acts 6:4).

Pastors and spiritual leaders are tasked by the Lord to equip and prepare believers through God's Word and prayer that they may function in the body of Christ not as consumers and spectators, but as contributors and servants in the body of Christ. In the words of Paul, the saints are equipped to do the work of the ministry. The Bible presents us with a simple and profound model for building up the church. The pastors and leaders are to teach God's Word faithfully. God's Word accompanied by prayer will equip the believers to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another and carry out the gospel mission of the church (1 Cor. 15:58).

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