

CHRIST GIVES PEOPLE AS GIFTS TO BUILD UP HIS BODY

Ephesians 4:7-12

Does unity mean uniformity? Are all Christians to be cut out of the same mold like from a cookie-cutter? Our profound unity in Christ includes diversity of gifts and different ways to serve Christ.

1. THE GIVER OF THE GIFTS IS THE EXALTED CHRIST – Ephesians 4:7-10

- Every Christian has received a gift from Christ – verse 7.
- Christ graciously and generously gives gifts to His people – verse 8. Christ as the Triumphant Conqueror continues to fulfill Psalm 68. Christ's captives include His enemies like death, and evil powers which are defeated, dethroned, and disarmed by His victory in the cross and resurrection – Colossians 2:15. Now His people are willing captives to His grace. As Victor, Christ gives His people gifts.
- Christ is the Exalted Lord and Giver who descended and ascended for us – verse 9. This is probably not referring to a descent of Christ into Hades, but only His humiliation in coming to earth – “the lower parts.” He came all the way down and now has gone all the way up! – Philippians 2:5-11. Christ is now at the Highest Place and is worthy of our highest praise and immediate surrender.

2. CHRIST'S GIFTS ARE PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT MINISTRIES – Ephesians 4:11-12

- Christ's gifts to His church are gifted people! Christ gives His church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. The apostles and prophets are foundational to the Church – Ephesians 2:20; 3:5. Apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection and their authority is preserved in the New Testament. Prophets probably were also a special office in the founding of the church. Prophets foretold the Word to specific situations more than foretelling events. Evangelists are those especially gifted in sharing and proclaiming Jesus to other people – Acts 21:8. Often missionaries and church planters have the gift of evangelism. This gift does not mean other Christians do not engage in evangelism. The whole Church is to be missionary and evangelistic – Colossians 4:5,6.
- Pastors and teachers are gifts of Christ for His church especially in the ministry of the Word. The ongoing teaching of the Bible is crucial. Elder/pastors are to prioritize prayer and the Bible – Acts 6:2-4. Pastors are shepherds who shepherd and protect God's people- Acts 20:28-30. We shepherd by feeding the flock through proclaiming the Truth of the Bible – Acts 20:32;.2 Timothy 4:1-4. Not all teachers are pastors, but all pastors are teachers. Each church should have a team of elders, not just one man who rules over them – 1 Peter 5:1-4. Elders are to be able to teach – 1 Timothy 3:2. Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd. We serve under His authority and for His glory.
- The gifts are given for the glory of God and the good of His Church, not for our own glory or to further our personal agendas.

3. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S GIFTS IS SERVICE AND THE BUILDING OF HIS BODY – Ephesians 4:12

- The purpose of Church leaders is to equip the saints. The saints are all believers – Ephesians 1:1, 15. Elders/pastors are not the only ministers. No, it is to be every member ministry.

- The saints do the work of ministry or service! This is part of the priesthood of all believers. We all have a work of ministry because Christ has gifted each of us – 1 Corinthians 12:7,11; 1 Peter 4:10,11; Romans 12:4-8. The other gifts are all needed in the building up of the Body of Christ.
- The ultimate purpose of the gifts is the building up of Christ's Body. That is why the gifts that edify, encourage, and help others are the greatest gifts – 1 Corinthians 14:12. *“Every member should grow up and use a towel, not wear a bib. They should not be immature consumers, but eager servants.” – Tony Merida.*
- We need each other in the church. We cannot mature and grow all by ourselves. Our fellow members of the Body are given by Christ to help grow us- Ephesians 4:16. Pastors and teachers, along with the whole church, are to be building up the Body. *“They therefore are insane, who, neglecting this means, hope to be perfect in Christ, as is the case with fanatics who pretend to secret revelations of the Spirit, and the proud, who content themselves with the private reading of Scripture, and imagine they do not need the ministry of the Church.” – John Calvin, 1500's.*

Concluding applications:

- Have you received Christ's gift of salvation?
- How has Christ gifted you and are you using His gifts to serve others?
- What is your ministry?
- In what practical ways do you build others up?
- What place does the Bible have in your life?