

**Week 2 – The Nature of and Equipping Church**

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16

I Corinthians 12

What is the church? Most of us are familiar with the notion that the church is the building, not the people.

The Greek work *ecclesia* which is translated “church” in English literally means a gathering of appointed representatives. Who do we represent? Jesus Christ. He is the Head of the Church – it’s ultimate leader and its source of life.

In the ancient world, *ecclesia* was not limited to Christians. That is, it was a common word used in the common language to describe things such as town councils and assemblies of legal officials. These were the *ecclesia* of a town. Jesus declared that He would have His own *ecclesia* - an assembly of those who would carry out not a civic agenda but His Kingdom agenda. This *ecclesia* is also referred to in Scripture as the Body of Christ.

Every believer is a member of this *ecclesia* – this assembly, this body – His Church. This *ecclesia* has three missions – to be witnesses and disciple-makers (Matthew 28:18-20) , to be each other’s support (I Corinthians 12) and to be worshippers (I Peter 2:9).

In His wisdom, God recognized that part of the Church’s mission was to build one another up so that we can, in fact, have the wisdom and strength and support to live our ministry.



Equipping All Believers for Ministry  
A Discipleship and Equipping Leadership Model  
For Plymouth Church

Group Study Guide  
August/September 2017



If you are not active in one or more of these calls to service, why not? What keeps God's people – and you in particular -- from answering this call? Some possible answers are here. Circle all that might apply and add any additional ones you may think of.

I didn't realize I was called                      I don't feel prepared or equipped

I don't know what my ministry/service should be

I know I'm called but other things always get in the way

I'm afraid                      I'm shy                      I'm not convinced it's for me

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

How do we encourage one another to take up active lives of service?

In addition to being ministers/servants, Scripture says that all believers are priests. Read I Peter 2:4-5, 9. What is a priest? It is a form of service to the Lord – it is a service of sacrifice, mediation between God and others who need to know Him and declaring who He is and His gift to us – calling us from darkness to light – to the world. Scripture teaches one High Priest – Jesus himself, and the rest of us as equal priests in his Kingdom. How does it sit with you to be called a priest in Jesus' Kingdom?

What is the main addition to your knowledge of the nature of ministry that has been the result of discussing this

**Thank you for joining in this discussion about a vision for Plymouth Church. As we explore God's call to us collectively, we believe it is important to be together in His Word as an entire body, to hear together from the Spirit and to discuss together in ways to build unity.**

**Please enter the discussion prayerfully and consistently with your group.**

*Ephesians 4 - As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His 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.*

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>1</sup>From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

**Week 1: All Believers Are Called to Ministry**

Key Scripture:

Matthew 28:18-20

II Corinthians 5:17-21

Ephesians 4: 11-13, 16

I Peter 2:4-5, 9

When was the last time you described yourself as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or do you think the ministers are the ones who preach and do weddings and funerals? What do you think of when you hear the word minister?

Have you thought of yourself as a servant of Jesus Christ?

The biblical word translated “minister” or “ministry” simply means servant or service. All believers are servants of King Jesus and are called into service in His Kingdom.

Read the following Scriptures. For each one, write what type of ministry or service is described. Note that each are a call to all believers.

Matthew 28:18-20

II Corinthians 5:17-21

Matthew 25:33-40

Romans 12:1

Each of these texts describe a different type of ministry or service. If you were to put them all together, what do you believe constitutes a life of ministry/service:

If all believers are called to each of these acts of service in the Kingdom, to what extent is your own life characterized by each of these dimensions of ministry/service?

**Week 4 – The Results of an Equipped Church: Replication**

In week one, we focused on the reality that all believers are called to ministry/service and that this service included the call to “make disciples” – which Jesus defines for us, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 : “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

So all believers who follow their call to ministry will be disciples and they will be disciplers – they will know and obey Christ and they will be capable of leading others to know Christ and teach them to obey Him. And we have learned that it is the work of the Church and the Church’s shepherds to equip all believers for these ministries.’

The root of the word disciple is discipline – the discipline of being a follower of Jesus and obeying all that He has commanded.

Do you see yourself as a disciple of Jesus Christ? What about you displays your discipleship? Where do you feel you lack in being a disciplined disciple? How can your group help you grow in your own discipleship?

Read Ephesians 4:11-16 and I Corinthians 12. Read it in more than one translation if you can (biblegateway.com. Try NLT and NEV). Make some notes about the content that stands out to you.

How did God design the Church to be equipped?

How did God design the Church to be edified/built up/supported?

Paul Stevens is a writer whose work has focused on churches that release its members into active ministry. He notes several characteristics of equipping churches:

- The church is a place of relationship and learning
- the work of the church is to engage each person in his or her calling/ministry
- we cannot be our own ministers – equipping churches’ members minister to one another
- an advance/rest pattern is necessary, as is a giving/receiving pattern
- the church has servant leaders not leading servants
- structure is built around ministries not visa versa
- every Christian has the same call (life in the Kingdom under authority of the King) and each has a specific, unique call that they are aware of and live out
- The point of equipping is *diaspora* or being dispersed into the world as Kingdom building and disciple-making. The internal ministry of the church is equipping is for each individual’s external ministry in the kingdom

As a group, discuss Plymouth’s characteristics compared to the list above. Where do we match up?

Where do we need to improve?

5. Fasting and prayers of intercession for and consecration of the body<sup>18</sup>.
6. Confession of sin and personal accountability to one another<sup>19</sup>.
7. Sharing in one another’s lives, burdens, and joys<sup>20</sup>.
8. Meeting regularly, with frequent attention to prayer and the needs of the body.
9. Retreating together at least 3 times a year.
10. Creating a culture of commitment to discipleship within our group for the sake of modeling it to the full body<sup>21</sup>.

What are your initial thoughts after reading through this document?

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What questions come to mind about this model?

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Does it seem like a big change to you? Or not so much?

What would you expect to be the result of establishing such a model at Plymouth?

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 6:4, and see note 4

<sup>19</sup> Gal 2:11, 6:1; Jam 5:16

<sup>20</sup> Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2

<sup>21</sup> See note 16

9. Exercising spiritual authority for the sake of church discipline and the protection of the whole body<sup>9</sup>.
  10. Attending to the body's faithfulness to our statement of faith and core values<sup>10</sup>.
- The persons comprising this group should be limited to those who:
    1. Evidence maturity in Christ through obedience to the word, servant leadership, and holy living<sup>11</sup>.
    2. Are recognized by all for their seasoned commitment to, capacity for, and fruitfulness in training disciples<sup>12</sup>.
    3. Are exercising their gifts and particular calling for the sake of the body.
    4. Are able to teach the word of God<sup>13</sup>.
    5. Have a good reputation inside and outside the body, particularly with regard to relationships with others, including their family<sup>14</sup>.
    6. Are gentle, wise, fair, hospitable, peacemakers, humble, joyful, trustworthy with money, and not a substance abuser<sup>15</sup>.
    7. Are able to commit to this group with respect to everything outlined in this or any final document.
  
  - This group should maintain a life together with a commitment to:
    1. Unity within the group.
    2. Understanding of this document.
    3. Understanding of and commitment to discipleship and spiritual replication<sup>16</sup>.
    4. Regular and shared meditation on Scripture<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Mt 18:15-20; Jn 10:11; Tit 2:11-15

<sup>10</sup> See note 8

<sup>11</sup> Gal 5:16-26; Phi 3:17; 1Th 2:10-12; 1Ti 3:1-7; 2 Ti 2:24-26; Tit 1:6-9

<sup>12</sup> Mt 28:18-20; 1Co 4:14-16, 11:1; Phi 3:17

<sup>13</sup> 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9

<sup>14</sup> See note 13

<sup>15</sup> See note 13

<sup>16</sup> Mt 28:18-20; Jn 21:15-18; 1Th 2:19-20; 1Pe 5:1-4

<sup>17</sup> Acts 6:4

### Week 3 – Leadership and the Equipping of God’s People

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13

Last week we explored the character of an equipping church – that is a church that equips God’s people for the work of the ministry/service.

This week we will focus on Scripture’s view of and call to those who would lead a church and be these equippers.

In the next few pages, you will see a document that has been prepared by a group that has gathered for about two years to pray about and reflect on Plymouth’s leadership model. What has come forward to is a call to assemble a group of Shepherds – those who will devote themselves to equipping and to the spiritual health of the church.

***Please read the document in its entirety. Also read as many of the Scriptures as you can, as each line item is supported by a specific Scriptural reference.***

### Call to a Shepherding Ministry Model at Plymouth Church

It is our shared conviction that the Holy Spirit is calling the English-speaking congregation at Plymouth Church into a model of pastoral care and spiritual leadership that reflects all of the following characteristics:

- That there be a group of men and women from our body who faithfully execute their evident calling to shepherd the body of Christ at Plymouth.
- This group (to be known as the “Shepherds Team”) should be devoted to:
  1. Prayerful attentiveness to the movement of the Spirit in our body and a commitment to communicate their sense of the Spirit’s guidance to our body<sup>1</sup>.
  2. The unity of the body<sup>2</sup>.
  3. Teaching the word of God to the body<sup>3</sup>.
  4. Intercession for the body<sup>4</sup>.
  5. Discerning the needs of the body<sup>5</sup>.
  6. Discerning the gifts of the members of the body and encouraging, exhorting, and equipping those members to exercise their gifts<sup>6</sup>.
  7. Spiritual replication through the training of all members of the body to be disciples of Christ who are themselves then equipped to disciple others and be sent into their particular calling<sup>7</sup>.
  8. Protecting the body from harmful or erroneous teachings and teachers<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Act 6:1-4; 13:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Jn 17:20-23; Rom 15:5; Eph 4:3-6

<sup>3</sup> 1Ti 3:2; 2Ti 2:24; Tit 1:9

<sup>4</sup> Eph 1:15-23, 3:14-21; Phi 1:9-11; Col 1:9-14; 1Th 3:11-13; 1Th 5:23-24; 2Th 1:11-12; Heb 13:20-21

<sup>5</sup> See note 1

<sup>6</sup> Rom 12:4-8; 1Co 12:4-31; Eph 4:6-16; 1Pe 4:10-11

<sup>7</sup> 1Co 4:14-16, 11:1; Phi 3:17, and see note 6

<sup>8</sup> Tit 1:9



Do you see yourself as a discipler? Look back to your notes in week one regarding the reasons why we don't engage in ministry as believers. What, specifically, do you believe you need to be equipped in to become a person that disciples others – shows Jesus to others and teaches them to obey all He has commanded?

Imagine that each person at Plymouth Church is both a disciple and a discipler. What do you expect Plymouth would look like?

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A clear measure of discipleship is growth – growth in numbers of those coming to Christ and personal growth in the lives of those living as disciples. An expected result of an equipped body of believers at Plymouth is an increase in numbers. To be clear, we don't desire growth simply because we want a big church. Rather, we desire growth as it is a reflection of the fact that more people are coming to know Christ as we fulfill His call to our life of ministry.

Commit to a time of prayer individually and as a group that God would grow us as disciples and grow us as disciplers for the sake of the growth of His Kingdom and for the sake those outside of His Kingdom – outside of a relationship with God – for whom Jesus died to invite them in.

**For More Information and Discussion, please join the following meetings:**

September 1 – First monthly Friday Night of Worship

7pm      Sanctuary

September 30 – Congregational Morning of Prayer and Listening

9am to 12p      Fellowship Lounge

October 8 - Open Dialogue Lunch

12:30 pm      High School Room

October 15 - Open Dialogue Lunch

12:30 pm      High School Room