



“BIRTHDAY BASH: PARTY FAVORS”

When leaving a birthday party, the host of the party will give you party favors. It is a bag of trinkets that express a “thank you” for coming to celebrate. The staff of church has some party favors as well. We invite you to come each week to celebrate our God. But we never want you to leave the service empty handed. Our job is to make sure of that!

DAY 1

Today's Scripture:

Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-26

The Word

There is no hierarchy in a church. Often we look up as pastors as “better than” us. This simply is not true. However, there are different functions of the people who make up the church. These roles first and foremost should be based upon unity.

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Verse 4-6: In the Lord, we are one. We may have different gifts, talents, personalities, or experiences. But these differences are brought together in Christ. Often our differences lead to division. But in the Lord, our differences actually should bond us.

1 Corinthians 12:4-14

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one

body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Verse 4-14: Our differences are unifying. Collectively, we are the body of Christ. I alone do not make up the body of Christ. Instead, I am one small part of the whole. I need the other parts, or people, in order to see the totality of Christ on earth. Thus, I have an incomplete picture of the body without others. I need other believers in my life.

1 Corinthians 12:21-26

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Verse 21-26: We need one another. We need the differences in one another. All the parts make up the body of Christ. Just as we would not cut off our hand because we dislike it, we cannot cut out other members of the body of Christ. We are one in Christ.

The understanding of unity is vital before discussing the roles of the body. The different functions of people in the body of Christ are not to be lorded over one another. Instead their purpose is to serve one another.

Mark 10:42-45

⁴²Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Verse 42-45: There is no hierarchy in church, only service. The way we serve one another may be different, but that is the way Jesus arranged the body. As we discuss the role the church staff plays in the body, remember, we are all united in Christ. Our role of service may just look different from yours. But we all need one another.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an

eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

Verse 14-19: We are all part of the body. We will be discussing the staff's role in the body and how we should be serving you.

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for the body of Christ. Thank Him for allowing you to be a part of it.

How does the analogy of a "body" help you to understand the church?

Why should differences actually unite us instead of divide us?

What is the danger of placing people in a hierarchy?



Today's Scripture:

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12; 2:10; 1 Corinthians 14:3

The Word

The body of Christ has many parts. These parts are arranged by Jesus Himself.

Ephesians 4:7-8

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says:
"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."

Verse 7-8: Jesus has given everyone a gift. However, there is a difference in the gifts. He decides who will get what gift or gifts. We need to understand that God chooses,

not us. To long for a gift that is not ours, will lead to us not living out our purpose on earth. But to understand our giftedness, frees us to live out God's will for our lives.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Verse 10: Each of us was made to perform certain good works through the use of our gifts. In the book of Ephesians a few of the gifts are specified. These gifts are designed by God to build up the church in a unique way.

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,

Verse 11: I stated yesterday that there is no hierarchy in the church. However, there are different responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities have authority attached to them. But this authority is specified.

Ephesians 4:12

¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Verse 12: Those responsible in leading a church should be preparing "God's people for works of service." In other words, their good works are to lead the rest of the body to perform the good works that God prepared for them to do.

But how do they motivate people toward these good works? The overriding responsibility of church leadership is to build up the body toward unity in faith and knowledge. This leads to maturity.

One of the ways that they lead the church to growth is through the proclamation of the Word.

1 Corinthians 14:3

³But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

Verse 3: Often people think "prophesy" means telling the future. In previous days, some of the words of the Lord involved telling people what would take place in the future. But prophesy as a whole involves speaking the words of the Lord. When the Word of God is taught, prophesy is taking place. A responsibility of the church staff is to ensure that the Word of God is being proclaimed.

When the body of Christ gathers together, the Word of God should be presented. The people presenting the Word should do so in a manner that will edify the body, encouraging them to grow in Christ. The Word should never be presented in a left-over fashion. I knew a minister who would rehash sermons that he had used at previous churches. He was not taking time to give the people a fresh Word. He was failing to share the Word that this specific group of people needed to hear. The needs of one congregation are not the same as another. I knew another minister who would throw something together at the last minute because he was too busy the rest of the week. He was failing to understand the importance of his role in presenting the Word of God. For as a church staff, we are called to “prepare God’s people for works of service.” If the minister is not prepared to share the Word of God, how can the people be prepared to live the Word of God?

It is important for you to understand the calling of those who proclaim the Word. If you are at a church that does not value the Word, get out of it. That means that the church staff is failing in their calling, which is a sin against God. You cannot be led by someone who is not being led of God. Do not be afraid to evaluate the leaders of your church. They are not going to be perfect. However, they must be striving toward living out their calling. Only then you can grow from their teaching.

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the staff of your church. Ask the Lord to help them to complete the good works that He has set before them to do.

How have some church leaders ignored the calling of God to preach the Word?

Why is it important to evaluate if the church leaders are living out their calling?

Why should the Word of God be a central part of a weekly service?

DAY 3

Ministers cannot make you grow. They are responsible for maturing you, but you must be willing to learn.

Today's Scripture:

Ephesians 4:11-16

The Word

Often people are content with a weekly sermon that has three points all beginning with the same letter. They congratulate themselves for coming to the service and believe they have done their part in the kingdom of God. This is a far cry from the spiritual reality of growth in the Lord. We are to be learning more and more about God so that we become full in Christ!

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until 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.

Verse 11-13: The church staff is responsible in encouraging you to grow. But you must be growing. Think back on this past year. Has your faith increased? Has your knowledge of Jesus grown? Are you maturing spiritually? If not, then you are missing out on the life that the church staff should be encouraging you to live!

The purpose of the church leadership is not to let you know how much they know. It is not to teach you interesting facts or statistics. Their role is to encourage you to strive in Christ. Growing in God takes effort. You do not grow by letting someone else do all the work for you. If you think spiritual maturity is attained by just listening to a preacher speak each Sunday then you are missing out on growth. Your growth is dependent upon outside action. Three categories of actions:

1. Works of service- you are called to serve. You need to be serving in some way that builds the body of Christ. If you are not serving, then you are not growing.
2. Faith Together- you must be growing in unity in faith. To be unified in faith with others means there must be others to be unified with! You should be an active part of a body of believers. In your relationships with believers, the name of Christ should be edified above your own. In other words, your desire to be unified with other Christians takes priority over your "rights" or "thoughts". You should focus on what you can agree on than the things you disagree about. You are thinking more about eternal matters than about present difficulties with other believers.
3. Knowledge-your knowledge of Jesus should increase. This is only possible by getting into the Word. It is beyond listening to the Word on a weekly basis. Instead, it is taking time on your own to read, study, meditate, and memorize the Word.

By serving, believing, and learning you will mature in the Lord. This maturity will protect you from harm.

Ephesians 4:14

¹⁴Then 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 men in their deceitful scheming.

Verse 14: Some of you have grown up in the church and yet you are still infants. You have not applied what you have learned. Infants are helpless. They constantly need someone else to do everything for them. The church staff is not meant to carry you for the rest of your life. They are to help you grow in the Lord. Are you an infant in Christ? It is time to grow up! You are missing out on the blessing of maturity.

Ephesians 4:15-16

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From 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.

Verse 15-16: The heart of maturity is love. Works of service are meaningless without love. Faith is nothing without love. Knowledge is harsh without love. Together, we grow up in Christ in a loving environment. Our growth helps others grow and their growth matures us. We are a support system that constantly builds and expands upon the heart of one another.

You can choose to be a part of the system that is building others up. When you choose to grow and mature in Christ, you will be helping the rest of the body grow as well. But if you decide to ignore opportunities for growth that are presented in the Word, you actually harm the body of Christ. Maturity or decline: the choice is yours.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to grow in Him. Confess anything that keeps you from becoming mature in the Lord.

What responsibility is the church staff's in helping you grow in the Lord?

What is your responsibility in growing in the Lord?

In what area of growth do you need to grow: service, faith or knowledge?
What changes need to be made in your life to promote growth?

In what ways can an immature believer be “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men...?”

DAY 4

Today's Scripture:

1 Peter 5:2-3; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Timothy 4:15-16

The Word

The heart of the church staff should be for you. It should never be “just a job” or a paycheck. Instead, their lives should reflect their love towards God and you.

1 Peter 5:2-3

²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Verse 2-3: The church staff, who are the leaders, are also the servants. They should be serving each member of the body of Christ. They understand that the purpose of their job is to care for you. When you care for someone, you want what is best for them. As an overseer, they watch over your life. This does not mean that they stalk you. It just refers to the fact that they are willing to congratulate you on areas of your life that are going well and are also willing to rebuke you for failures. It is like a parent with children. They love their children enough to remark on both the good and the bad. The focus on the good is to encourage progress. The focus on the bad is to encourage change. The church leaders should love you enough to do this. They desire for your growth in Christ.

Colossians 1:28-29

²⁸We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Verse 28-29: The purpose of every sermon, every lesson, and every thing else the church staff does is to lead you closer to Christ. Our heart should be of one that would go to any lengths to see our congregation grow in the Lord. We should not settle for mediocrity in the lives of fellow believers. Instead, we want to encourage you to grow toward perfection!

Of course, for us to encourage you toward maturity, we must be growing ourselves. Read the passage from 1 Peter again. We are to be examples to you. If our lives leave much to be questioned or desired, then we are failing you. Please be willing to evaluate us and share any concerns you may have. For we never want anyone to fall away from God because of the lives we live. Instead, we want to spurn you on in growth in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

¹Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Verse 1: We are not perfect. Yet, we are to present a life that shows others how to mature in Christ. If your church leadership does not do this, get out of the church. How can you learn maturity from those who refuse to mature? Our lives are to be an example for others to follow. This is a frightening calling, accepted with fear and reverence. We would never want to lead anyone astray. We must daily watch our lives so that we have the authority to watch over yours.

1 Timothy 4:15-16

¹⁵Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Verse 15-16: We know that you are watching our lives. We hope you see our progress. We desire to see your progress as well.

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the church staff's continued growth in the Lord.

In what ways have you witnessed the destructiveness of a minister who did not watch over his own personal life and doctrine?

How does a church staff oversee the body of Christ?

When is it acceptable for someone to say “follow me as I follow the example of Christ?”

DAY 5

Today's Scripture:

Ephesians 1:15-21, 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11,
Colossians 1:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

The Word

One of the most important duties of a church staff is to pray for the body of Christ. We need to pray for you on a variety of levels: spiritually, emotionally, and physically. We may not always know the details of your life, but we are still called to pray.

Paul is an example of praying over believers. He cared for his people went to the Lord in prayer for them. The following verses highlight his prayers for the believers.

Ephesians 1:15-21

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 3:14-19

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless

until the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-12

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

2Thessalonians 1:11-12

¹¹With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. ¹²We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your church staff should be people of prayer. This is the greatest way they take care of you.

Up Close and Personal

Pray for the protection of the church staff's time in prayer.

Why would prayer be a vital part of a church staff's responsibilities?

How are you able to discern if the church leaders are people of prayer?

Why should you be concerned over the time your church leaders spend in prayer?

What other "good distractions" can keep a minister from devoted times in prayer?

How can you help your church staff increase their time in prayer?