

MORE THAN PUMPKINS
WE ARE THE HANDS OF CHRIST
1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-28; EPHESIANS 4:11-12
OCTOBER 21, 2012

Have you ever done your research, bought something,
 and later had buyer's remorse?

“Why did I spend all that money on this?

If only I had known.

Why did I do this?”

This month we're trying to keep you from feeling that way about the offering plate.

I've been skeptical, and I'm sure you have too, of some charitable organizations.

What does the money really go to?

We're looking at the various ministries of NWH,

to see what our giving pays for,

to see how lives are touched by God through what we're doing here.

Personally, I can tell you we give at least a tithe, 10% of our income,

to the work of God.

And I feel pretty good about what our giving has done in the lives of others.

One of the important areas of NWH ministry is our Service area,

where we try to get each one of you involved in serving, doing hands-on ministry.

This idea of every member in ministry is still surprising to some people.

But the idea has a solid foundation in Scripture.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-28

You are the body of Christ.

He's saying that you are the place and the way that God wants to get his work done in this world.

Not just me, not just the paid staff, not just the elected leaders.

YOU, all of you who have given your lives to Christ, make up the body of Christ.

When you trust Christ,

his Spirit comes into you,

empowering each of you to do some form of ministry.

Those abilities are called spiritual gifts.

In the Bible we find the spiritual gifts of

teaching, preaching, prophesying, administration, leadership,

speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, healing,

faith, helps, evangelism, craftsmanship, intercessory prayer, mercy, and more.

If you have put your trust in Christ,

the Holy Spirit has given you one or more abilities

that are to be used in hands-on ministry.

That surprises many people.

They've grown accustomed to the traditional idea that

“We pay the preacher to do ministry.”

He's the “minister.”

But that's not the way God set up the church.

No, I am A minister, one among many, with particular roles I am called by God to fulfill.

But my job, and the job of the paid staff, is not to do all the ministry.

The apostle Paul describes our role in this way:

EPHESIANS 4:11-12

These particular gifts might be called “leadership gifts.”

They are supposed to be used primarily in mobilizing other Christ-followers to engage in ministry.

The pastor and paid staff is hired not to do the ministry,

but to equip the saints

(Surprise, that’s YOU!)

To equip you to do ministry.

The American Express credit card commercial says “Membership has its privileges.”

But membership in the kingdom of God,

and membership in the church,

works differently.

In the kingdom, membership has its *responsibilities*.

Membership means doing ministry.

Every one of us was designed by God in the beginning to work, to serve,

to be his representatives in his creation.

Sadly, some people think they have little or nothing to offer the kingdom.

I’m not gifted enough, I’m not educated enough, I’m not good enough,

I don’t have a seminary degree, I’m not ordained, I’m not smart enough, or whatever.

There was a man named Moses who was called by God to serve.

And he had all sorts of reasons and excuses why he was not fit for the job.

But God’s answer each time was,

“It’s not about you, Moses.

It’s about ME.

I will be with you to empower you, to guide you.

Just obey me.”

And God used him in extraordinary ways.

(Ex.3-4)

God called a man named Gideon to lead the Israelites in battle against their oppressors.

Gideon insisted that he was just a farmer,

from lowest person in his family and the weakest tribe.

But God said, “I am sending you. I will be with you.

And I am all you need.”

And Gideon led them into victory.

(Ju.6)

There was a man named Isaiah who was called by God to speak as God’s prophet.

Isaiah insisted he was “a man of unclean lips,” a sinner unfit to speak God’s word.

But God extended grace to forgive him and cleanse him,

and Isaiah’s prophecies went forth and are today treasured Scripture.

(Is.6)

When I realized God was calling me to pastoral ministry,

I told him he had a wrong number.

“I’m in architecture school, God.

It’s not working very well for me,

but that’s where I am.”

I thought the pastor was someone who descended from heaven with a sermon from God,

and after the sermon ascended back to heaven with the offering plates.

I knew I was not spiritual enough.

I was scared to death at the very idea of preaching.

And God wanted ME to PREACH???

Wrong number!

I told God in no uncertain terms, “Wrong number!”

You can see where that got me.

God also puts into our hearts a passion for certain areas of ministry.

This can be a bit harder to dig out than spiritual gifts.

You find your passion by paying attention to

what really grabs your attention,

what makes your heart beat a little faster.

When you see the lights go on for someone during Sunday school or Bible study,

when you see someone baptized into Christ,

when you see young people who actually want to be involved in the church,

when an accessibility ramp gets built and the homeowner is overwhelmed,

when you see the photos of those children our mission team served in Malawi,

or the kids in Uganda who got new shoes,

when you see someone swept up in the Spirit during worship,

when you see those sorts of things and you feel a sense of joy...

that might be your ministry passion.

Your ministry passion shows you *where* you ought to serve in ministry.

Your spiritual gifts suggest *how* you ought to serve.

So a passion for children and a gift for teaching

might put you in a Sunday school classroom.

A passion for people getting connected in relationships and the gift of helps

might suggest you should set up dinner for Wednesday night pizza dinner.

In your bulletin I've given you some resources to help you discover your spiritual gifts and ministry passion.

If you're not already serving in the right place,

I hope you'll take the time to pursue this

and get involved in doing ministry.

Additionally all of the church staff are involved in leading and equipping volunteers in ministry.

But we have one key staff member whose total focus is on these things.

Kelly Voorhies is our Volunteer Coordinator.

You can find her most Sunday mornings at the Connections Center.

Next semester she's planning to teach a Sunday school class

that will help you discover what ministry God might have in mind for you.

But you don't have to wait for the class to get going.

Kelly will be more than happy to visit with you about it.

VIDEO: SERVICE, KELLY VOORHIES

There is a place where you, every one of you, can serve and make a difference in the life of another person.

Sometimes our service is inside the church family,

teaching a Sunday school class,

helping count the offering,

making sure every pew has an attendance pad, pencils, hymnals and Bibles,

or visiting a member in the hospital.

Sometimes it is out in the community,

our children taking a meal to the residents at the Ronald McDonald House,

buying and taking Christmas gifts to children who have a parent in prison,

cleaning the facilities of the Agape Pregnancy Center,

building an accessibility ramp for someone in a wheelchair,

or doing ministry in area prisons.

VIDEO: TEXAS RAMP, RON GLOYD

TEXAS RAMP, MARY JANE ELDRED

TEXAS RAMP, DALE KUENHOFF

And sometimes our service is out in the global community.

Like when the senior high youth went to work on homes in Appalachia this summer,

or some adults went to Malawi, Africa,
 or our children raised money to put shoes on the feet of children in Uganda.
 Wherever and however it may be, God has a place for you to serve.

One day you'll stand before him,
 and he'll ask you to give an account of what you did with
 the gifts and passion and everything else he gave you.
 You do not want to have to say, "Nothing."
 You want to tell him about doing ministry and then hear him say to you,
 "Well done, good and faithful servant.
 You've been faithful with this much.
 I'll put you in charge over much more.
 Enter into the joy of your master." (Mt.25:14-30)

There is real joy to be found TODAY in serving God,
 especially when you're serving him the way he wired you up to serve.
 Years ago, when we were first considering adding a third worship service,
 I was warned by many pastors,
 "Don't do it. Preach three and you'll burn out in 6 months."
 But we didn't really have an option.
 We were in the old sanctuary, now the fellowship hall,
 we were out of space,
 we were not ready to build something bigger,
 and I could not make peace with saying,
 "Sorry, there's no more room at the inn."

So we went to three services.
 That was about 15 or so years ago.
 What I later figured out was,
 those pastors who warned me off three services
 find preaching exhausting.
 They get charged up over hospital calls and counseling.
 I, on the other hand, get fed by every step of the sermon process,
 from the study and prayer to the delivery and feedback.
 I love it.
 Give me teaching and preaching opportunities,
 and get out of the way!

Mike Turner, our worship leader and choir director, has said for years,
 "I love to play guitar and tell people about Jesus."
 And it shows!

Bill Henry has served as the Chair of our Finance Committee for too many years.
 Many people would see that as penance that would keep them out of purgatory.
 But Bill is a numbers freak.
 While everybody else is punching numbers into a calculator,
 Bill eyeballs the numbers and just knows.
 He has served there willingly and effectively,
 and has helped us steer a fiscally responsible course
 with what God has given us.

David Castillo used to be our Children's Minister.
 He resigned to serve with a mission agency for a while.
 But he went into preschool kid withdrawal.
 Now he does chapel time in Mother's Day Out.

When you find the right place to serve,
 the place and way of serving for which God shaped you,
 you get fed by it.
 You have fun with it.
 You get excited about it.
 You can't imagine not having your hand on the wheel.

Many of you have jobs that are just jobs,
 things you endure just for the paycheck.
 That's the reality of our world.

But you could have things to do that don't pay money,
 things to do for the kingdom,
 that feed your soul.

Have you found the place and way of service that God has in mind for you?

If you haven't found it,
 what steps will you take to find it?
 There are some tools in the bulletin.
 Kelly will be teaching the SHAPE class starting in January.
 So what will you do?

SERMON NOTES:

Every Christ-follower has spiritual gifts / abilities to serve. (1Cor.12:27-28)

Some are gifted and called as leader to mobilize others into ministry. (Ep.4:11-12)

Some may think they have nothing to offer the kingdom.
 God says otherwise. (Ex.3-4; Ju.6; Is.6)

We'll be held accountable for what we did with our gifts. (Mt.25:14-30)

To help you determine your spiritual gifts, a free online gifts inventory:

http://elmertowns.com/spiritual_gifts_test/

<http://www.kodachrome.org/spiritgift/>

Questions to help determine your ministry passion:

At the end of my life, I'd love to look back and know I'd done something about _____

What would my friends say I'm interested in or passionate about?

If I could do anything and know I'd not fail, what would I do?

What conversation would keep me going late into the night?

What group of people would I most like to help?

What issues or causes do I feel strongly about?

What have been my most meaningful experiences in serving others?