

# The Lens of Responsibility Regulates Results

# Ephesians 4:11-12

## Scripture Reading: Matthew 9:35-38

### Introduction

Back when I worked in manufacturing I was employed at various companies that were unionized and I was a member of both the United Auto Workers and the International Association of Machinists at one time or another

If you have ever worked in a union shop you know they tend to have a lot of different job classifications and each job classification has specific duties assigned to it which are typically very narrowly defined

And a common phrase that is heard in a union shop is, "That's not my job" whenever someone is asked to do something that isn't a part of their job description

Come to think of it, I heard that statement a lot when I worked at Walmart too and Walmart doesn't have a union so maybe it has more to do with how people view job descriptions than whether they are a part of a union

Another characteristic of our society that has become prevalent is "the creation of complex systems that have given rise to specialization by experts in many areas of knowledge and enterprise" as one source I read on the subject put it

No one would think of walking into a court of law without a lawyer by his or her side to navigate the maze of the legal system

When our bodies malfunction we turn to doctors and if our condition is severe enough we will often find ourselves in the office of another doctor who is a specialist with even more training in a very specific area

Most of us can't even work on our own cars anymore because they have become so complex it takes a mechanic with expert knowledge and training on advanced equipment to even know what's wrong let alone how to go about fixing it

And we have become conditioned to trust and rely on professionals and to benefit from their specialized expertise as they labor on our behalf never much concerning ourselves with rather large areas of knowledge that we assume we would likely never understand anyway even if we had the desire and the time to study them

This morning we are going to consider the work of the church, or ministry, and who is responsible for doing that work

Because how we view our responsibility to ministry largely determines how successful our ministry will be

We will be looking at two different ways ministry is viewed in the church and the first is a direct reflection of the attitudes we just considered

Because, unfortunately, those ways of thinking have found their way into the church and many believers are content to let the "professionals" handle the work of the ministry because they don't believe themselves to be up to the task and besides, their job title isn't "minister" and ministry would obviously be the first thing listed on the job description of a minister so they aren't responsible for it getting done

And so they are able to say with all sincerity, "It's not my job" and then just sit back and expect the professionals to get the job done –

"After all", they reason, "isn't that what they're being paid to do?"

And the **common view** that exists in the minds of many church members and church structures is: the **pastor ministers and the members watch**

## **I. Common View – Pastor ministers; members watch**

One of the most debilitating ideas to infect the church over the centuries since Pentecost is that there is a special class of Christians called “clergy” who do the majority of the work of the ministry while the rest of the church sits back and watches them do it

### **In our society we have largely become accustomed to paying people to do work for us**

As I stated earlier we often pay others to do things for us because we don’t know how to do those things

But we also pay others to do work for us as a matter of convenience; because we don’t want to spend the time it would take to do a task ourselves

I don’t know a whole lot about cars and I don’t have the knowledge, training, or equipment to tackle major car maintenance and repairs – but I do have the ability and the know-how to change my own oil

The reason I take my car to the shop and pay for an **oil change** is largely because I don’t want to spend my time doing it and because I find it to be an awkward, messy, and distasteful chore – so I’m happy to pay someone else to do it for me

Most of us also **go out to eat** largely as a matter of convenience even though it costs more than eating at home

We have the ability to cook but we go out to a restaurant because it’s nice to sit down to a meal that we didn’t have to prepare or clean up after – let’s face it, it’s just nice to have someone else do those things for us

There are some who view the work of the church through these same lenses and they think of the pastor as the one the members are paying to do the work of ministry for them

Because ministry can be messy at times and many believers fear they aren’t qualified and besides; it’s always easier to let someone else do it for us

### **Regrettably, many pastors have served to support and perpetuate this perception through their attitudes and actions**

It’s common for pastors to work very long hours as they labor for the flock that God has entrusted to their care and for them to be on call for any reason 24 hours a day 7 days a week 365 days a year

And they do so willingly and even eagerly as they desire to serve in whatever way they can whenever they can

It’s very rare that anyone enters vocational ministry as a pastor with the expectation that they would be working a 40-hour week

In fact, most men become pastors having closely watched and often having been mentored by another pastor so they do so with their eyes wide-open and they genuinely aspire to the work and all that it entails

And since there isn’t much if any time during their formal education spent on what the biblical role of a pastor is

They tend to minister in the way ministry was modeled to them and the definition of faithfulness for a pastor becomes to work diligently and tirelessly doing all that the church needs, wants, or expects them to do without complaining

And without really being aware of what they are doing, the pastor reinforces the spectator view of church, stunts the growth of the flock, and causes their church to operate far below its potential in completing their mission

Bud Wilkinson served as the head coach of the University of Oklahoma Sooners football team from 1947-1963

During an interview a young reporter asked, “Coach, how has the game of football contributed to the health and fitness of America?”

To the reporter’s shock, Wilkinson replied, “It has not contributed at all!”

“What do you mean” stammered the reporter

Wilkinson said, “I define football as 22 men on the field, desperately needing rest, and 22,000 fans in the stadium, desperately needing exercise!”

Far too many churches operate just like a sporting event where a few work and many watch

## **Consumerism is rampant in the church**

When a church is filled with people who are concerned more about what the church does for them; about their comfort and their personal preferences than they are about the mission of reaching the lost and making disciples; that church is in trouble

And **professionalism** of ministry leads to **consumerism** which leads to a **culture of comfort** which leads to a **maintenance mentality** where the church exists to satisfy the members

Let's face it; we're trained to be consumers in just about every other area of our lives

We decide where we eat, where we shop, what entertainment we enjoy, what clothes we wear, what news we listen to, and many other things too numerous to mention all on the basis of whether they meet our expectations

So it's hard not to allow our thinking about the church be affected by a consumer mentality

But we should be doing everything we can to recognize and fight against consumerism in the church because when a consumer mentality is allowed to take root a church will quickly lose its effectiveness

## **Every church and every member in the church would do well to assess how they view ministry**

I want to put a few questions out there for you to answer in the quiet of your own heart and your answers to these questions may well reveal whether you currently view God's work in the church through the lenses of professionalism and consumerism

Do you believe the title "minister" describes people hired to do the work of the church, i.e. the pastor and other staff?

What do you expect from the pastor?

What is the role of a church member?

If you were in the hospital and a church leader or other church member visited and prayed with you but your pastor did not, would you feel slighted?

Would you question whether your pastor even cared?

Would you suggest he wasn't earning his pay?

Perhaps your answers to those questions have revealed attitudes you weren't aware you had and you are less than pleased

Let me encourage you not to be too dismayed if that's the case because we have been looking at the common view of church and ministry after all and you likely aren't alone

And we can give thanks to God for showing us his plan for ministry in his Word

And we can allow his Word to act as a corrective for any wrong attitudes we may currently have

Please join me in Ephesians 4 where we will be looking specifically at verses 11-12 but follow along as I read from verse 1-16 so that we can see those verses within their context ([Ephesians 4:1-16](#))

Paul writes:

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.** Therefore it says,*

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”*

*(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) **And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry,** for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

The main theme of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the believer's responsibility to walk in accordance with his heavenly calling in Jesus Christ as we see in [4:1](#)

It's within this context that we need to understand our verses today which show us the **biblical view** of ministry where the **pastor equips** the members and the **members serve**

We are going to see that God gives gifts to every believer and that some of those gifts are gifts of spiritual leadership that benefit the church because of how God designed those gifts to function in the church

## II. Biblical View – Pastor equips; members serve

### *Every believer is gifted*

Before we turn our attention to verses 11-12 I want us to take a moment to look at **verse 7** in more detail

*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

This verse tells us that every believer has been given a spiritual gift according to God's grace – "each of us"

There are no ungifted members in the Body of Christ – everyone has a purpose and it's God who determines that purpose and then gives to each the gift or gifts necessary to fulfill that purpose

No one earned their gift; no one deserves their gift; we don't get to choose our gift; and no gift is more or less important than another because all are uniquely suited to God's purposes and measured to each by God according to his grace

**Romans 12:6-8** tells us virtually the same thing along with the clear exhortation to use our gifts –

*Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

And Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts and being members of the Body of Christ in **1 Corinthians 12** affirms the value of all gifts and their recipients

We have all been given different gifts through the grace of God, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we might use them in fulfilling his purposes on this earth

### *The church is gifted with various offices of spiritual leadership*

Now let's turn our attention to **verses 11-12** –

*And he [Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry*

In verse 7 we saw that all believers have been gifted with a variety of gifts now we see that the church has been gifted by Christ with people who have been given specific gifts that have to do with offices of leadership

Again, all gifts are equally valuable and Paul is only focusing on these specific gifts to show how they function in the Body of Christ – not to show them as being superior gifts in any way

**And we see that these gifts, these people, were given for a specific purpose** – "to equip the saints" which is just another way of saying to serve by equipping the other believers

### *Apostles and prophets*

While in a general sense the term "**apostle**" could refer to any person sent out as a representative of the church to fulfill some purpose even today, it seems best to consider that what Paul means here are those men who met the very specific conditions of having seen the risen Christ and being commissioned as an apostle directly by him

We know just how instrumental the apostles were in the founding of the church and how they still inform us today by their inspired writings that comprise the bulk of the New Testament

And while we also talk about modern-day **prophets** in the sense of telling-forth the words of God, the prophets Paul mentions here are probably best understood in the sense of those who exercised the God-given gift of foretelling future events

These prophets were also foundational to the establishment of the church and along with the apostles were the recipients of direct revelation from God for the purposes of informing the church and providing the New Testament

So, while the church today doesn't have the offices of apostle and prophet actively functioning in the church, we still benefit from the work of the apostles and prophets through the written Word

## ***Evangelists***

The gift of evangelist is different from the first two in that an evangelist proclaims the Word of God provided to us by the apostles and prophets specifically as it relates to salvation

We know that all believers are expected to share the gospel in the process of making disciples but there are still people today who God has specially graced with the gift of evangelism and the church is edified and blessed by them not only as their efforts lead to the salvation of many but also as they show us how to more effectively share the gospel message

## ***Shepherds and teachers***

That brings us to the “shepherds and teachers”

There is scholarly disagreement over whether “shepherds and teachers” means two offices with overlapping functions or whether it means a single gift of shepherd-teacher

It seems best to me to consider them as separate but closely related offices with some overlap of function where all pastors are teachers but not all teachers are pastors

Either way, the term shepherd means the office of pastor and like the other gifts of offices given to the church by God, apostle, prophet, and evangelist, the pastor’s function is meant to center on the Word of God

It’s been said, “If a pastor does not concentrate on preaching and teaching the Word, he may be a nice man and even a godly man, but he is not doing the main work of a shepherd”

## **Because the purpose of the gifts of these offices of leadership in the church is equipping the saints for the work of ministry**

### ***Equip believers for ministry***

The word “**equip**” has the idea of **making someone or something adequate for a purpose**

Equipping then involves repairing that which is broken, adjusting that which is amiss, and supplying whatever is lacking to ensure the best chance of success in fulfilling a purpose

To return to our football analogy, equipping is what coaches do during practice, what trainers do in the locker room, what equipment managers do with the gear and uniforms to make sure the team is fully prepared to play the game

Then “**saints**” is just another way of say “believers” or “Christ-followers” since all those who believe are saints

And the purpose for which believers are to be made adequate is “**the work of ministry**” which means to carry out the work of ministry showing us that it is the responsibility of the members to minister – not just the pastor

### ***The Pastor***

That’s not to say that the pastor isn’t responsible to do ministry also – he is a fellow believer after all

But it *is* to say that equipping others for ministry is the pastor’s **primary** job for the benefit of the church

## **Pastors are primarily to be equipper-releasers who provide what is needed to others and then turn them loose to do the work of the church**

In his book, [Building a Contagious Church](#), Mark Mittelberg writes, “Often the reality is that there is one person who is both pastor and minister, and there are many helpers. These helpers are assigned to limited and often menial roles, while the pastor is dying while trying to keep up with all the real ministry functions. This approach...will limit the quality and quantity of the ministry happening around the church.”

Many church members, though, think of the pastor as *their* pastor who is called to meet *their* needs and handle every one of *their* concerns and even the pastor who knows he should be training others to take on ministry can find meeting the needs of the members has become a higher priority on his schedule

## **And that’s largely because it avoids the unpleasantness of being thought of as uncaring or derelict in his duties**

It’s often easier to just get along and resign oneself to being a caretaker of the expectations of the members even as it proves to be ultimately detrimental to the pastor and the church

When in reality it's more important for the pastor to be about his primary task because it's what God ordained and it has the most potential for the kingdom

I read the following statement in my studies this week that at first seems odd but it makes sense when you reflect on it

**It's actually more important for a pastor to train someone to be a soul-winner than it is for him to win a soul**

And if that's true then it's also more important for a pastor to equip others to do the other tasks of ministry than to try to do them all himself

### **Moses**

Turn in your Bibles with me to **Exodus 18** where we will look at the example of Moses and the advice his father-in-law, Jethro, gave him

Jethro had come to join Moses in the wilderness and he observed what demands the Children of Israel had placed on Moses

Look with me at verse 13-23

*The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace."*

Moses was trying to do everything he could to please the people and in the process he was neglecting his primary responsibility and heading toward collapse – and still not meeting the needs of the people even when working all day at it

Neither Moses nor the people were truly benefitting from what the people, and likely Moses himself, expected from him

Judging the disputes was necessary but it wasn't necessary that Moses be the judge of all of them and Jethro was wise enough to offer a solution that would lead to the optimal outcome that we see in **verse 23**

*"If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace."*

Moses would have time to actually **hear** from God which would allow him to **survive** and the people would be **happier** in the end than they were when Moses was literally wearing himself out trying to satisfy them

### **Results of doing things God's way**

Earlier, we looked at how the pastor as a professional minister leads to consumerism which leads to a culture of comfort which leads to a church that exists in maintenance mode

Well, the pastor who is allowed to be an equipper leads to an army of ministers which leads to a culture of ever increasing activity which leads to...what exactly?

What is the result of doing things God's way?

Look with me real quickly at **Ephesians 4:11-14** –

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,*

*to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

### **Four benefits**

I see **four benefits** of doing things God's way in **verses 12b-14**

**First, the church will be built up** which means it will grow spiritually and likely grow numerically when all its members are fully equipped and doing the work of the ministry

**Second, the church will enjoy the unity of the faith** – nothing unifies a group of people faster than working together toward a shared goal and when all the member are working together to fulfill the mission of Christ unity will be the result as a family of believers should

**Third, the church will reach spiritual maturity** as each believer grows in individual maturity, which is part of the equipping process, the church will also attain a corporate maturity and reflect Christ as his body should

**Fourth, the church will attain stability of judgment** and be able to discern between truth and falsehood

### **Conclusion**

Kathy and I once attended a really large, mega-church down in Scottsdale, AZ and I saw a statement for the first time printed in their bulletin

After a very long list that included – Senior Pastor: so and so, Assistant Pastor: what's his name, Associate Pastor: whoever, they had a line that read **"Ministers: all of our members"**

I've seen that statement now many times since but it really struck me that first time as a great way to think about ministry

But it's not just a great way to think about ministry; it's God's way to think about ministry

The work of the church never ends and there are already innumerable opportunities to serve here at Brick – in fact, I have a long list of ministry opportunities in my office that are just waiting for someone to take them on

**But as we take our mission seriously and begin to extend our ministry ever more into our community it will become increasingly obvious that we need to have all hands on deck and everyone doing some part of the ministry**

And every believer is gifted to serve in some way because we've all received gifts according to God's grace so there is no excuse for not serving – ***a church member without a ministry is truly a mystery***

If you are a member who, prior to today, thought that the pastor was the minister and thought the pastor was a hired man paid to meet your needs or if you just hadn't given the matter much thought at all and just assumed the pastor was the one who does the work of the church – now you know that God says you are responsible for the ministry of the church too

Every member needs to stop being a spectator, come down out of the stands, and get themselves on the playing field

If you need help determining your giftedness – ask for help we can figure that out together

If you need direction as to what you might do with your giftedness – ask for direction and we can go over options

If you need additional equipping – come see me and we'll get you equipped

Then get involved because as you do, you will see our church reap the benefits of growth, unity, maturity, and discernment

And the world around us will see what the Body of Christ should look like because when a church is full of people who are more concerned with the mission than their own personal comfort and preferences that church will get noticed

Let's pray