



## Equipping...

**e-quip** *To supply with necessities such as tools or provisions; To furnish with the qualities necessary for performance.*

**Eph. 4:11-13** 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** 13 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.

### **Volunteering:**

- Most people who get involved (volunteer) do so because **they were asked**.
- 25% of American adults volunteers.
- Percentages are **higher in faith communities—averaging 40-50%**.
- For **above-average churches**—those with intentional equipping ministries and a clear plan and process for engaging people in service, the **percentage of involved adults is 71%**.

**Churches that are intentional about equipping and engagement** (inside and outside the walls of the church) **embrace the following 9 key concepts:**

1. Christ is the Head of the Body, the church. All members are part of the **Body of Christ** and part of the “priesthood of all believers”. All are called to ministry.
2. All believers are given spiritual gifts by God, empowered by His Holy Spirit. Each person is enabled to **discover, understand, and develop** their God-given spiritual gifts, passion, personal style, talents, and life experiences.
3. The role of staff is to equip the congregation for service, assisting individuals in finding meaningful places to engage, so all grow to maturity in Christ.
4. Serving is meant to worship and glorify God, strengthen the church, and love the world.
5. “Ministry” is what is done inside AND outside the church walls.
6. Effective utilization of volunteers is essential to accomplish the ministry God has called our church to do. This includes **personal invitation, training, guidance, supervision, encouragement, challenge, and appreciation**.
7. New Members, Discipleship, and Discovery class participants are key groups for equipping, invitation, challenge, and connection.

8. Service to the community is meaningful, useful, and authentic...that influences others for and attracts others to Jesus Christ.
9. Ministry involvement and giving/stewardship are intimately connected.

### **Some thoughts on equipping:**

“As important as preaching about service is, it usually doesn’t get people involved in service. As valuable as teaching about service is, it rarely moves people to actively serve. Commanding people to serve often creates little more than echoes. Begging people to serve doesn’t have much effect either. **People must be trained or**, to use Paul’s word to the Ephesians, **prepared to serve**. ... Gifts and equipping are not the same thing. **Very gifted people still need training**.” (Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives*)

“It seems to me that much of the proper work of the church and spirituality should be discerning and empowering people’s actual gifts. There doesn’t seem to be much discernment of gifts, even in seminaries, as to whether one really has a gift for Christian leadership, reconciling, healing, preaching, or counseling. (Most priests and pastors were ordained without ever having led a single person to love, to God, or to faith; and many do not seem to have a natural gift for this.) We seem to ordain people who want to be ordained! We can be educated or trained in offices and roles, but true spiritual gifts (charismata) are recognized, affirmed, and “called forth.” We do not create such people; we affirm and support what they are already doing on some level.” (Richard Rohr, *On Vocation*)

Are we building a consumer-mentality in our churches where people expect to receive a service like they do at a doctor’s office or a restaurant or a store, or are we equipping our people to be the ones to provide service to others? Instead of a “what’s in it for me” culture, church can be a place where we encourage people to step into God’s call and purpose for them as they seek to serve others and grow in the process. This does mean that staff see themselves primarily as equippers instead of the sole “doers” of ministry. (Shirley Giles Davis, *Author of God. Gifts. You. Your Unique Calling and Design*)

“As you narrow your focus from ‘what could we do?’ to ‘what should we do?’ you will begin to evaluate your church’s individual strengths and capacities. You can’t do everything, nor should you try. Your opportunities should be broad enough to engage the passions of all your church members but focused enough to be achievable.” (Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally-Focused Church*)

“...church leaders are the primary tutors God uses to lead believers personally and practically into a rich experience of the salvation that is theirs. **The spiritual wealth is already there**, set aside and waiting to be inherited. But this wealthy potential can be released congregationally only if the right tutors **produce the right culture for receiving it**. That’s the job of *church leadership*. ...These leaders know how to start with seeds. They understand there is no substitute for personal life-on-life ministry. They are able to **cultivate a culture that nourishes those believers to grow up and blossom with all the beauty and fruitfulness that God intends**.” (Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordiero, *Culture Shift*)

“Serving is a **transforming** endeavor.” (John Ortberg, et al, “Gifts: The Joy of Serving God”)

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- Who are you **equipping**? In what ways?
- What can you do differently/more effectively to see others as God sees them...and help them see themselves that way as well?
- Where can you “share ministry” rather than simply “delegating”?
- Do your people see themselves as “disciples” or as “just volunteers”?