

**Teachers** (Acts 13:1; James 3:1) – one who instructs, grounds

Local churches often make the error of focusing only around the ministry gift of the pastor. According to Ephesians 4:11, we need all of these gifts to be fully equipped and to become the mature Bride Jesus is preparing for Himself.

Too many times Christianity is seen as a spectator sport. The church in various periods in history has failed to recognize that God gave these occupational ministers not just to minister, but also to equip the rest of the church to do ministry. Ministry is active and involves all members of the church, ministering in the church and in the marketplace, being equipped by the leaders God has given them. While there are some whom God has called to occupational ministry, all Christians are in truth “full-time ministers.”

## Review:

1. What is the Lord’s ultimate goal for the Church?
2. What is the method that God uses to bring us into spiritual maturity?
3. What are some of the benefits of being a part of the Church?
4. What are the equipping ministers in the Church?

*When we consider commitment to the Church, do we think of military boot camp or being connected to some of the greatest people in the world?*

**-Ron Lewis**

# Church Commitment

Study #27



# Church Commitment: Love and Unity

Love really is the main issue in the family. Love in the Bible is not just a gushy and ephemeral feeling, but a commitment to treat others as you would be treated. The “love chapter” in 1 Corinthians 13 challenges us:

“Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have. Love doesn’t strut, doesn’t have a swelled head, doesn’t force itself on others. Isn’t always me first, doesn’t fly off the handle, doesn’t keep score of the sins of others, doesn’t revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.” (The Message paraphrase of the Bible)

The ultimate issue is simple. We must love one another. By loving one another, we present a powerful testimony to the world (John 13:35). Too often we are guilty of fighting each other and holding grudges and unforgiveness. The Lord has a higher walk for us, the way of love. He demonstrated this life and has called us to do the same. Jesus prayed for us before His crucifixion:

“...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:21)

When we think about God’s ultimate intention of the Church, we must consider that He designed it to be the most loving, considerate and unified people in the City. That’s the foundation of our commitment.

## The Church as a Place of Accountability

The Bible instructs us that we need to be accountable and reprovably by our brothers and sisters in Christ, church leaders and family members to keep sin out of our lives (Hebrew 13:17; James 5:16). When others confront us, we should always be humble enough to listen to their concerns and change our lives accordingly. As Proverbs says, “Open rebuke is better than concealed love” (Proverbs 27:5). And “faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6).

Correction from others is one of the tools God uses to mature us and grow us into our destiny. If we remove its influence from our life by not listening or responding to admonition, we stunt our growth in Him, and reduce the breadth of God’s destiny for our lives. Likewise, when we neglect to lovingly correct or rebuke those in sin, we are falling short of God’s best. Thus, we

need to have the same attitude as King David, a man after God’s own heart: “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it...” (Psalm 141:5). When’s the last time you asked for an old fashioned “smiting”?

Although rebuke doesn’t always come in a right spirit or in a pleasant method, we almost always can gain something from it. It is always better to get the sin out of our lives through our conscience’s promptings or through the correction from a brother than to wait until God judges our actions.

In addition to heeding the correction of brothers and sisters in general, we have a special responsibility to God to listen carefully to the spiritual leaders God has appointed in our lives:

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

These leaders who rebuke us and correct us are our friends, helping us to prepare for our final exam.

## The Church as a Place of Equipping

Ephesians 4:11 mentions the equippers whom Christ has ordained to help bring the church into maturity.

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

These five gifts, often called the five-fold ministry, will be instrumental in our lives until the body of Christ is mature in every respect. The roles of these equipping ministers are as follows:

**Apostles** (Ephesians 4:11) – Greek “sent one” – provides oversight

**Prophets** (Acts 15:32) – one who preaches, declaring God’s word

**Evangelists** (Acts 8:12-13, 21:8) – one who reaches the lost, gathers

**Pastors** (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14) – one who cares, leads, and guards