

Purpose of the Church: Promoting the Family of God
Ephesians 4:11-16
03-05-17 AM

Any organization that is going to be successful needs to have a defined purpose and goal. The church that Jesus built has a number of important purposes and works (not exactly the same thing) that are necessary to understand in order to fulfill His pleasure. In Ephesians 4:11-16 Paul describes the creation of the church and a variety of the purposes of the church. He spoke first to the purpose of organizing the church. Then he spoke to the work of the church, which is fulfilled in benevolence, evangelism and edification (Paul does not mention it here, but another important work is worship, which he alludes to in Ephesians 5:19). He spoke to the need to be mature, which is established in the discipline of the members of the church. He also looked at the importance of doctrinal purity, another purpose in the church. But it all seems to culminate in verse 16, when he states that all of this is means to create a church that edifies itself in love. This is an ultimate (not exclusive) purpose for all of the purposes of the church.

Paul's Ephesian letter is one of great importance to any Christian, as it contains "all the answers" so to speak. In Ephesians 3:3-4 Paul declares that if we were to read the preceding portions of the letter (for us, chapters 1-2), we could "*understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*". These great mysteries include answering why we are here (Ephesians 1:4-6); what did we do to enter our relationship with God (Ephesians 1:13-14); how was the church established (Ephesians 1:22-23); who are we to God (Ephesians 1:5, 2:10); and finally, what does it all mean (Ephesians 2:19-22). It is that last point that comes back to the nature of the purpose of the church.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit - Ephesians 2:19-22

This familial relationship is the core of the eternal purpose of God. It is this relationship that manifests His wisdom. Understanding just how important it is becomes vital to understanding why we do the works of the church. If we do the work but do not esteem the purpose, we fail. If we esteem the purpose, but do not do the proper works, we fail. In other words, it is not enough that we do the right things for God; we need to do the right things for the right reasons.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Perhaps it helps us to see that Paul continues in Ephesians describing the right mind we are to have to one another. These "one another" passages (used by ALL of the Apostolic writers in the

New Testament) are the key to proper mindsets in fulfilling the purpose of the church. In these passages Paul's central point is that Christians need to be "*members of one another*" (vs. 25). He goes on to say in vs. 25 to speak truth to one another, in vs. 26 that we do not be angry with one another, in vs. 28 that we give to one another, in vs. 32 that we be kind to one another, and in the same thought that we are forgiving of one another.

Jesus built a church with a distinct plan and purposes. In doing so He united all men and authority (Ephesians 1:22). The church is the means of revealing God's manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10) and His eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11). Paul told the Ephesians in Acts 20:28 that the church was purchased with His blood (Ephesians 2:13), so that it should be cherished. Consider Paul's summary point in the great work of God:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named - Ephesians 3:14-15

If the church family relationship was God's ultimate purpose (on earth and in heaven), then Esteeming one another is the most divine and godly mindset you can hope to achieve while on earth. Our family relationship is as close to being like GOD as we can accomplish in this life. More importantly, if you DON'T love the family of God, it is the case that Heaven may not be relevant to you.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love - 1 John 4:7-8