

PRACTICING OUR UNITY IN THE CHURCH: “EACH ONE” MINISTRY

Ephesians 4:7

Pastor Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church

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If you are born-again, YOU are in the crosshairs of this verse! Like a skilled craftsman, God has a large inventory of tools with which He accomplishes ministry in a local church. These tools are “each one of us”! This morning we will explore the notion of dynamic “each one” ministry by asking five questions of Ephesians 4:7.

Big Idea: Christian: Christ has graced you with a service gift. Use it for the good of His church and the glory of God!

1. How is “each one” ministry identified in v. 7?

Answer: the word “but” and the phrase “each one.”

The preposition “but” (δὲ) signals a transition. The transition is from unity in consistency (both practice and doctrine) to unity in diversity (cf. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 286).

“Each one” (ἐκάστῳ) refers to every believer (cf. Luke 14:40; Acts 17:27). Literally, the verse begins like this “one but each one” (Ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ). “One” is first in the verse highlighting the emphasis. It assumes that no one has all the gifts (cf. Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 114). It teaches us that everyone has at least one (1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:6).

2. How does “each one” ministry promote unity in the body?

Answer: “Each one” ministry promotes unity in the body through dependence.

“No member of the body of Christ is endowed with such perfection as to be able, without the assistance of others, to supply his own necessities” (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:271).

3. Who determines “each one’s” ministry?

Answer: Christ, through the Spirit, determines your giftedness and thus ministry.

Notice the passive verb: “was given” (cf. v. 7, 8, 11). Christ providentially has given you a gift to serve Him in the body of Christ. This leaves no room for boasting. This is about a demonstration of grace (unmerited favor) in the life of the believer.

A Word About Spiritual Gifts

Four brief observations:

- *The Passages.* There are three lists of spiritual gifts found in the NT: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4:7, 11. The gifts in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7 have to do with activity. The gifts in Ephesians 4:11 are people.
- *Their Existence.* All have at least one; no one has all of them. Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Peter 4:10, “As each has received a gift.” It may be that Paul has not listed every gift that may be given (Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, 100).
- *Their Exercise.* Exercise it faithfully. However, do not be obsessed with discovering one. Serve and chase the things that get you excited! Romans 12:6, “Having gifts . . . let us use them!”
- *Their Purpose.* To serve others and glorify God! 1 Peter 4:10, “As each has received a gift, use it to *serve one another*,” 1 Peter 4:11, “in order that in everything *God may be glorified*.”

4. Where does “each one” ministry take place?

Answer: “each one” ministry takes place wherever service opportunities present themselves.

These gifts are employed where the body of Christ may be found. It’s not spatially limited. A simple historical observation establishes this: there were no church buildings when Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians.

5. What is the impact of “each one” ministry?

Answer: there are potentially both negative and positive impacts of “each one” ministry.

Negatively, if “each one” ministry does not occur, it inhibits the growth of the body. When gifts are not employed both the individual with a particular giftedness and the congregation suffers.

In fact there is something even more sinister that happens. The church becomes an event center where you can take in concerts and conventions. The church becomes like an arena where our offerings fund the professionals to put on a show for us. The worship service is no longer liturgy, that is, the work of the people; rather it is the work of an elite inner circle or a flailing few who do it because it has to get done.

Positively, if dynamic “each one” ministry is happening, it causes growth in the body. This is what v. 16 says, it “causes growth.” It’s exhilarating to think of the growth this body can experience when “each one” ministry is happening!

Conclusion

During our VBS, one of the themes highlighted during the week was that “God thought of everything.” One day we talked about vestigial organs. Scientists once said that 180 parts of our body weren’t useful, such as our tonsils or our appendix. Turns out each part in our body serves a purpose (cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, 170). It is the same way in the body of Christ. There are no vestigial organs in the body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:21-22). A healthy body is comprised of each part doing its thing. A healthy BBC will be measured in part by the extent to which we are an “each one” ministry.