

## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

THE RIGHT SOURCE FOR SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3, 2015



### MAIN POINT

Every member of the church is called by God to ministry—to devote their lives to serving God and building His church.

### THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. If you were hiring someone for an important job in your workplace, what kinds of qualities would you look for? What level of expertise would you expect?
2. What are some of the most important ministries at OEFC? What skills are needed to serve in these ministries? What skills are needed to minister outside of OEFC in your neighborhood, school, or workplace?

**Leader:** The word ministry comes from the Greek word *diakonos* which means “to serve” and it usually refers to the Lord inspiring His servants to carry out His plan for His people. For us, ministry is using whatever God has given us to serve him and the needs of others. You don’t have to be an expert in theology or possess a special skill set to engage in ministry. While certain people may be more gifted in certain areas of ministry than others, there is only one requirement to engage in the work of ministry—to trust Christ. If you have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior you have been called and equipped by God to minister to the Lord, to other believers, and to the lost. Every member of the church is called by God to ministry—to devote their lives to serving God and building His church.

### DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

#### >WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MINISTRY.

3. Have separate volunteers read the following verses: Rom. 12:1, Hebrews 6:10, and Matthew 5:13. God calls us to minister in three directions, according to these passages what are those three directions? Why is each crucial to the growth and health of our church?

**Leader:** God calls us to minister to Him (Rom. 12:1), to other believers (Heb. 6:10), and to nonbelievers (Mt. 5:13). If we neglect to focus our ministry efforts on serving and glorifying God, the focus of our ministries will quickly turn selfish and we will become more concerned about our reputation than the name and renown of God (Isaiah 26:8). The second two directions we are called to minister, to other believers and to nonbelievers, are integrally connected—“by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Furthermore, disciples are the lights of the world (Matt. 5:14-16). They are called and commissioned by Christ to make disciples.

4. We are called by God to minister to 3 areas of need: people's physical (Matt. 25:35-40), emotional (1 Thess. 5:14), and spiritual needs (2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:28-29). How is OEFC already seeking to meet these needs in our church? Outside our church?

### > THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY ( 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6; 1 PETER 4:10-11).

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5. Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. While there are different kinds of service, gifts, and work that needs to be done in the church, why do you think Paul says there is only one Spirit, one Lord, and one God? What does emphasis does that put on our service here at OEFC?
6. Have a volunteer read 1 Peter 4:10-11. What is the purpose of our spiritual gifts? How can we be sure we are using our spiritual gifts appropriately?

**Leader:** The church at Corinth was a deeply divided church. In fact, it was in danger of splintering due to factions based on various spiritual leaders (1 Cor. 1:10-17), on how much money people had (1 Cor. 11:17-22), and on the various gifts people had and how they used them (1 Cor. 14). Thus Paul wrote to them to remind them that the all Spiritual gifts are distributed by the same Spirit and empowered by the same God. If we are exercising our gifts in such a manner that they draw attention to ourselves or cause division, we are not being very spiritual—the point of spiritual gifts is to serve the Lord and build up the body of Christ. We should constantly be asking ourselves how we might serve in the church in such a way that glorifies God and encourages others in their pursuit of Christ.

### > THE PRIORITY OF MINISTRY (EPHESIANS 4:11-16).

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7. What role do pastors and teachers play in the ministries of the church? Who has been given the task of doing the actual ministry of the church? What are some examples of this “work of ministry” the saints have been given?
8. According to Paul, what should our ultimate goal be in equipping people in the church for ministry (see v. 13, 15)? Considering all that we have studied today, why is every member essential in fulfilling this ultimate goal?

**Leader:** It's not that the leaders do all the ministry; rather the ministry is to be done by all believers working together. Paul believed in “every-member ministry.” The leaders in a local church are like player-coaches. What happens when all the believers work together? They build up the body of Christ—the ultimate purpose of using spiritual gifts.

The phrase “his people” in verse 12 is literally “saint” and is related to the word sanctification. At the time of saving faith in Jesus, believers are separated in Jesus from the world. Therefore, all believers are saints. We participate with the Spirit in a life-long process of transformation into conformity to the image of Jesus Christ (v. 13, 15). If the goal of any of our ministry efforts is not to point people to Christ or to help them grow in Christlikeness that ministry needs to change or be discarded. In the church, every member matters, and the goal of our every effort must be the same—to point all people, inside and outside the church, to the ultimate freedom, joy, and purpose

that is found in Christ alone.

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 9. If service is so important for Christians, why do people chose not to serve in the church? What would need to happen for us to move past these excuses and begin serving in a way that glorifies God and builds up other believers?**
- 10. How specifically might you contribute to the needs of others at OEFC? Outside OEFC? How can we as a group minister to these areas of need?**
- 11. As we seek to minister to people inside and outside the church, why is it important that we participate faithfully in a Growth Group? What are some practical ways we can encourage one another in the work of ministry?**

### PRAYER

Thank God for loving us so much that He has chosen to equip, empower, and use us to minister to others. Ask God to bless the members of your Growth Group in their ministry efforts. Pray that God would use them to point people, both inside and outside OEFC, to Christ.

### FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **Take some time to pray for the various ministries at OEFC, pray that God would make you willing to serve in any of these ministries and ask God to help you see how you might best use your gifts to serve others inside and outside OEFC.**
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Ephesians 4:11-13.

### SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

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12:4-6. Paul spoke of gifts in association with the Spirit, service (“ministries” NASB, NKJV) in conjunction with the Lord Jesus, and working (“effects” NASB; “activities” NRSV, NKJV) in association with God the Father. Diversity and unity coexist. There are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of service, and different kinds of working. Yet each variety is associated with a person of the Trinity: the same Spirit; the same Lord; or the same God. The authorization by the triune God indicates the unity that exists within the great varieties. The three terms—gifts, service, and working—relate closely to one another, but they are not synonymous. Each item is the source of the one that follows: service comes from gifts, and working from service. The term gifts appears frequently in this epistle with reference to the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. The gifts of the Spirit empower each Christian to function in the body of Christ. Service derives from terminology that Paul used frequently to describe a variety of ministerial activities occurring within the church (*diakonia*).

#### EPHESIANS 4:11-16

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4:11 Our exalted Lord has distributed gifts as He wishes. Although each believer has at least one spiritual gift, Paul focused on the gifted leaders Jesus personally gave so that congregations will grow. Apostles refers to those Christ personally commissioned. Prophets spoke messages inspired by God (3:5). Evangelists can make the gospel especially clear and relevant to unbelievers. Every Christian is called on to be a witness for Christ, but some are especially capable in this area. Pastors and teachers provide leadership for local congregations.

4:12 To what end has the Lord given congregations gifted leaders? The goal is that they will train the saints in the work of the ministry. It’s not that the leaders do all the ministry; rather the ministry is to be done by all believers working together.

4:13 In 4:3, Paul had urged believers to be “diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit.” Now the term “unity” occurs as one goal toward which believers (with diverse gifts) are working together. This unity is both doctrinal (in the faith) and relational (in the knowledge of God’s Son).

4:14 Paul noted two illustrations of what happens when believers work together. The first is drawn from human development. Individual believers grow from infancy to adulthood. The second illustration is from nautical life. Believers who work together will not be like a storm-tossed boat, upset by the waves and blown around by every wind. To be sure, there will always be false teaching to confront. There will be human cunning with cleverness. There will be techniques of deceit to lead believers astray. But Christians who have worked together to develop a clear understanding of the faith and who know Christ intimately will survive such attacks.

4:15 The cure for immaturity and instability is speaking the truth. Yet this truth is to be expressed in love—with compassion and understanding. Truth without love can be cold and harsh; love without truth can be mushy and weak.

4:16 Paul returned to the illustration of human development, but with a twist. This time he thought of a single body. It has a Head (Jesus Christ; see 4:15 and 5:23), who directs all the operations (from Him). At the same time, the body (the local congregation) has many parts that need to work together. An individual church member is a supporting ligament or an individual part (see also 1 Cor. 12:14-21). Each part has been fitted and knit together by the Lord with all the other parts. With the proper working of each part, the body will do what it’s supposed to do.