

Empower Believers for Ministry

By GCMF President, Eugene Weaver

“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus asked Peter one day. Without hesitation he responded, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in heaven. “I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:16-17) There are a variety of terms we use for the church: His body, His bride, the ecclesia, the New Jerusalem, they all speak of people set apart in relationship with Him. The individuals of that group are vastly different, coming from every possible background, culture, tribe, and nation. Each person is uniquely gifted and positioned by God to change their part of the world.

How is this diverse group enabled and empowered? Paul tells the church at Ephesus that He (Jesus) gave some to be apostles, prophet, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints to do the ministry. The action word in this passage is equipping. These gifted ministers hold the key that unlocks the door to the churches appointed role in our world.

There is a story of a young man who envisioned himself to be the manager of the family business when his father retired. After graduating from High School he searched for the best university to earn a degree in business; he then went on to post-graduate studies. He became so involved in the preparation process; there was no time set aside for mentoring by his father.

The day finally arrived with great anticipation and excitement -- the reality of being in business was a dream come true. But with the first weeks of leadership, he realized that all the information and business wisdom accumulated at school was not enough for success. He would need to gain insight into the finer points of the business he was leading. He was not adequately prepared.

Often the church is viewed only as a place of ministry. Jesus’ intent was for the church to be an environment where believers are equipped for ministry. Many leaders see their “appointment to full-time ministry” as the highlight of the ministry journey; with a sense of accomplishment, they go about their role of teaching and preaching, overlooking their divine call to launch others into unique orbits of ministry. We are to prepare believers to reach their potential for service in the Kingdom of God.

Just as the university professor prepares students to successfully achieve their life goals and dreams, Jesus instructed and equipped his disciples. He clearly understood what needed to be done: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38) Jesus did not call disciples to keep him company. He prepared them to teach his Father’s Kingdom and equipped them to go out. Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. (Matthew 10:1-6) To meet that overwhelming need, He didn’t commit to longer days or a more hectic ministry schedule; He focused on preparing others. He empowered and enabled His disciples, sending them to those lost and hurting sheep.

Ministry must be rooted in the needs of the people in our community, not from our personal ambitions or goals in ministry. The local church is a place to gather the army of the Lord together to teach, train, and equip the Body of Christ to infiltrate every aspect of our community. Our service to the Lord is not fulfilled with our church attendance. The time of gathering together is for building one another up, encouragement, and strengthening, so the church can fulfill her purpose in service to Him.

I believe every person in our church is called to ministry. That ministry may not be within the four walls of the building, but to the people of your community. For example in any given week, one of the youth from your youth group could be leading a Bible study in the public school, or ministering to seniors at a Senior Center. The possibilities are as varied as there are people. Strategically, we can prepare people for

service in every facet of community activity, such as coaching, heading up boy scouts and girl scouts, become band parents in our high school bands, just to name a few. We as the body of Christ should have influence in our local government, schools, and civic organizations. The only way darkness can prosper is for God's people to be silent. Our actions will speak much louder than our words.

Jesus trained his disciples and then sent them out to do what He was doing. His ministry took place on the Sea of Galilee, on the mountain side, at a relative's wedding, and by a community well. He went to where the people gathered and when he touched their lives, they often decided to follow him. Primarily, we focus our ministry effort on Sunday morning service – if they don't come to us, we overlook them. A seeker's journey to Sunday service often begins in the market place, when a seasoned word is spoken by an attentive believer.

In most cases, para-church ministries are the church active in ministry. Every outreach ministry should be connected to a local church for guidance, counseling, and financial stability. The five-fold ministry is all about equipping individuals to walk out the ministry to which God has called them. Prison outreach, youth ministry, counseling, hospital visitation, evangelism, all should come from individuals raised up in our local churches and sent out to do the work of the church. Their effectiveness will in large part be the measure of our success in preparing them for works of service.

Far too many people attending church are spectators, not participants. Often, pastors spend the majority of their time "developing the perfect service" instead of "equipping the saints for acts of service." In Ephesians 4:16, Paul instructs us: "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Eugene Weaver travels extensively fulfilling his call as pastor and apostle. Along with his senior pastor responsibilities in Pennsylvania, in 2006 Eugene founded Harvest Blessing Centre in Kenya, Africa, an orphanage and training center. He also travels internationally building up and encouraging GCMF members.