

EXTENDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD...ONE PERSON AT A TIME

ONE-TO-ONE

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GATLINBURG17
MAY 9-11, 2017



AUTUMN 2016



The *Gideon* QUESTION

Save the Date! **GATLINBURG17**



ONE-TO-ONE®

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From the Editor

God is asking a relational question today

WHERE ARE YOU?

BY STEPHEN SIMPSON



Sometimes, in order to get to the Good News, we have to recognize the bad news. The bad news is that sin separates; the Good News is that repentance reconciles and restores. It is the profound will of God that there be reconciliation between Himself and His people, as well as among His people with one another. When that happens, new life is released in our lives!

One of the saddest and most devastating stories in all of human history happened near the beginning of human history, in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve had perfect fellowship with God and each other. They walked with Him every day in a lush, beautiful Garden.

But one day, they “stood up” God; they missed their walking appointment with Him. In fact, they hadn’t forgotten about it, but they were hiding from Him. So, He called to them, “Where are you?” His question was not because He didn’t know where they were; it’s because they didn’t know where they were.

They were hiding from God because they had just deliberately ignored and rebelled against His instructions. As their Creator and Father, He had designed everything perfectly for their enjoyment and blessing. When they rejected Him,

it immediately brought shame and fear into their minds. It made them run from God, their “Life Source”. Their sin separated them from God’s presence, and introduced sin and death into the human gene pool.

Much of the remainder of the Bible tells the extraordinary story of the supernatural lengths that God went to destroy sin and death, and to restore His fellowship with humanity. The Bible is, at its core, a love story. It’s a gigantic neon sign that points the way home through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Father is asking us again: “Where are you?” He knows where we are. Do we? He cares for you and for me, more than we realize. Sometimes we think He is so far away, but if we would only turn around and look, we would see that He is right there, right with us, calling for us, seeking us, desiring still to have fellowship with us.

Let’s get rid of those things that have separated us from Him; our old ways that lead to death and destruction. We were made for so much more than that. Our spiritual enemy, Satan, wants to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to separate us from God and from God-ordained relationships; he wants to trap us in ungodly and deceptive

relationships. Jesus came that we might have light, life, and reconciliation with Him and with life-giving people of integrity and grace.

Each one of us was made in such a way that we are not fulfilled in ourselves alone. We are completed in relationship with God and with His people. If you feel isolated, lonely, or exiled, I pray you will be encouraged to ask, “Where am I?” And please know, He is right there with you, ready to take you into a deeper and greater relationship than you have ever known.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (see Romans 8). My prayers are with you. Please let us know how we can pray with you in days ahead. If you are looking for godly people with whom you can connect, let us know; we’d love to serve you in this way (see pages 8-9 for more information). Visit us at csm publishing.org or “like” our Charles Simpson Ministries Facebook Page. You can also follow us on Twitter @CSMinPublishing.

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Keynote

In Times of Testing and
Decision, Will We Rely
on Our Own Power or
on the Power of God?

The Gideon QUESTION

Recently, I wrote a Pastoral Letter on the subject, “*The Power of Small*”. This article will be another example of God’s use of a small number of people to overcome a multitude so that the Lord would receive the glory. It is the story of Gideon in Judges 6-8. I will not attempt to tell the entire story but will focus on the question that Gideon asked the angel of the Lord.

BY CHARLES SIMPSON

Judges chapter 6 begins, “Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Idolatry was prevalent. God saw their activity and condition. The result of their moral weakness was that they came under the domination of the Midianites for seven years. Many of the Israelites were hiding in fear; when it came time to harvest the crops, their enemies would come and steal the fruit of their labors. The nation was impoverished, defeated, and living under terror.

The lesson that we can take from those seven years is this: moral weakness leads to political, military, and economic weakness. Our secular culture has both marginalized morality and ignored the consequence of immorality. “Morality” was whatever anyone wanted it to be; there was no absolute standard. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes (see Judges 17:6).

THE CALL

It was the low condition of Israel that caused people to begin to cry out to God. Sometimes it takes trouble to cause people to seek God. As a result of their serious prayers, the Lord sent a prophet who reminded them of their history of deliverance from Egypt and told them to not fear but to obey the Lord. We must not forget or ignore our history.

Then another thing happened: God chose an unlikely leader named Gideon. But Gideon was afraid also. The angel of the Lord positioned himself under a tree and waited for Gideon to show up. Soon Gideon came to grind a small amount of wheat which he was hiding from the Midianites.

The angel revealed himself to Gideon and said, “Hail, you mighty man of valor, the Lord is with you.” Was the angel being sarcastic, or had he seen something in Gideon that Gideon had not seen in himself? A mighty man of valor?

“If The Lord is with us, where are the miracles that were done in the days of our fathers?”

Then Gideon asked this important and honest question, “If the Lord is with us, where are the miracles that were done in the days of our fathers?”

The angel responded, “Go in your might and you will save Israel. Have I not sent you?” Gideon protested that he was the least son of his father and part of the weakest tribe. But the angel said, “I will be with you, and you shall strike Midian as one man.”

There are four important issues here:

- **Sent by God**
- **Obey**
- **Unity**
- **God’s power – miracles.**

THE ACTION

Gideon acted on the Word of the Lord. He did not merely “believe”, memorize, or study; he acted. Gideon went home and pulled down all of the idols and altars to Baal, the “god” that was in fact no god. The idolatry deception had led to disaster. (This happens in our day as well; the idolizing of man and the marginalizing of God. It produces the same tragic results.)

Gideon’s action upset his neighbors. They wanted to kill Gideon, but his father intervened by saying, “If Baal is a god, let him kill Gideon.” The neighbors were put into a quandary. If they tried to kill Gideon it would be an admission that Baal was not a god. If they did not kill Gideon then Baal could not. Gideon escaped their wrath.

Word of Gideon’s feat spread quickly, and he was seen by many as a leader and answer to prayer. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew the trumpet. Many thousands came to stand with him. But Gideon remained uncertain so he asked for a sign. He put a fleece of wool before the Lord and said, “If you will save Israel

by my hand as you have said, I will place the fleece on the threshing floor; if there is a dew on the fleece only and the ground is dry, then I'll know. So it was.

Gideon was still uncertain and pressed God's patience asking that the sign be reversed, "Let the fleece be dry and the ground be wet." So it was. Gideon no longer had excuse or doubt.

What happened next however would challenge him. God said, "You have too many men in your army. If I give the Midianites into their hands, Israel will claim glory for itself." So God gave Gideon a plan to bring the number way down. "Tell the fearful to go home," and 22,000 did! But there was still too many.

*"It is not by
might, nor by
power, but by My
Spirit, says the
Lord Almighty".*

ZECHARIAH 4:6

Then the Lord told Gideon to take the men down to the water and watch them drink. Those who got down on their knees to drink were sent home. Those who lapped the water with their hands stayed. After that, only 300 remained.

So why did the Lord reduce

the size of Gideon's army so drastically? He wanted Israel to know that HE had saved them and not the size of their army. As Zechariah would later say, "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty" (Zechariah 4:6). **The size of our group is not the key to victory; the Lord is.**

The conclusion of the story is in Judges Chapters 7 and 8. Israel defeated Midian with 300 men! God's ways are not ours, but He is looking for those, even a small group, who will simply do what He says, even if it seems strange and dangerous. Look again at the original question that Gideon asked the angel: **"If the Lord is with us, where are the miracles that were done in the days of our fathers?"**

Gideon may have been afraid, a member of a weak tribe, and least in his father's house, but he did know history. He knew about Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the wilderness miracles, and victories that had been given by God. He knew that God's presence meant that special acts would occur and bring victory. He was seeing none of that in his neighborhood, tribe, or nation. What he was seeing was foreign domination, idolatry, poverty, and immorality. Israel was living like a pagan nation with pagan gods. His was an honest question, **"Where are the miracles?"** Apparently God does not reject honest questions.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I found myself asking that very question in 1963-1964. I was studying, pastoring, and preaching, but as I read our history in the Bible, I wasn't seeing the miracles that were done in the days of our fathers. Was the Lord with me? I wanted to believe that He was but as

*I had to be willing
to count the cost,
to be challenged
and to challenge
what I said I
believed.*

I read and preached from the book of Acts, I wasn't seeing it. It wasn't enough for me to **celebrate** what I saw in the Word of God; I needed to experience it.

In order to experience what the Lord had called me to be and do, I had to recognize the truth about God, about me, and about our church. I had to be willing to count the cost, to be challenged and to challenge what I said I believed. I had to be willing to blow the trumpet, yet watch a lot of people leave "the army". And they did. I had to be willing to endure the opposition of my own people before I could even begin to fight the enemy. Most of all, I had to believe and trust God.

Of course, my story was the story of the many who were asking that same question in those days. But now, the question seems to be, how can we get a bigger army? “We need more people in order to defeat the enemy!” It is great when the Gospel trumpet is blown in the power of the Spirit and multitudes respond. It does not seem so great when the Lord says, “that is too many!” The Lord will test those who show up. It is better to know *before* the battle who will stand and who will risk it all to obey the Lord.

This is not a statement in opposition to large groups; it is meant to encourage us in small groups to trust and obey.

TAKEAWAYS FROM GIDEON

First, I would encourage you to study Gideon and make your own summary of what

happened. It is not enough to know about Gideon. We must become “Gideons” in the current culture. Many of us “know the Bible” but fail to embody it or bring the story into our own experience. Don’t be satisfied to be a “religious expert.” That is never enough and it doesn’t impress God or the enemy. Here are some lessons I take away from Gideon’s model:

The question for us is simple: Will we really *apply* the lessons that Gideon gives to us? To learn but not apply is as ineffective as ignorance. In fact, if we know but do not act, we are all the more responsible. To mistake knowledge for obedience is perhaps our greatest error. Our predecessors acted.

The book of Acts is not the book of “Beliefs”; it is what the apostles did to obey. Beyond that, it is the “Acts of the Holy Spirit” as the apostles obeyed.

The leaders of Israel in Jesus’

day “knew” the Scriptures yet they did not know the One of whom the Scriptures spoke. Jesus said to those who thought they knew, “Search the Scriptures.” They had learned the words, but missed the point, missed the Holy Spirit, and they knew not the supernatural power of God (see Mark 12:24).

So, will we exchange the power of God for what *we* know or what *we* can do? That is a serious question. Will we be dishonest enough to say, “God is with us” when there is scant evidence of His supernatural power? Gideon refused to say that.

To think that human wisdom and effort can overcome evil is to deny the Word of God and the evidence of history. Human wisdom can accomplish a lot but it cannot overcome a supernaturally-driven evil, and that is what we face. But through Christ and His power, we are more than conquerors through Him because He loves us.

I pray that we will get serious before God and that He will raise up “Gideons” from among us. We need those who will dare to obey God; those who will see God’s amazing power. Those kinds of people will defeat the evil that we face. I pray that we will be among them.

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CHARLES SIMPSON is Editor-in-Chief of *One-to-One* Magazine. He ministers extensively throughout the United States and among the nations. In 2015, he celebrated 60 years of ministry.



Lessons from Gideon's Model

- God sees and hears what we do and what is going on in the culture.
- God listens when we become serious and “cry out” to Him.
- God’s response is to raise up leaders committed to His will.
- God chooses leaders from unexpected places.
- God requires courage in those that He calls and sends into the battle.
- God’s ways are higher, different than ours, and require faith.
- God can use a few as effectively or more effectively than many so that He gets all the glory.
- God’s favor is evidenced by the events that are beyond human abilities and lead to victory.





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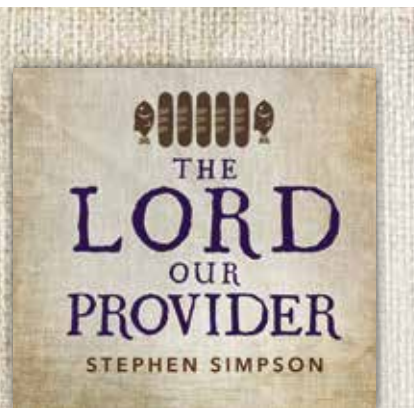
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RETURN TO FATHER'S HOUSE

God is calling
a whole new
generation back
to Himself

by Stephen Simpson



I often tell my dog, "When you were brought into our home, you won the jackpot, buddy!" He never argues. We brought him into our family when he was just a tiny puppy, born in the sugar cane fields of south Louisiana. Our daughter, seeing something great in this little tiny ball of yellow fur, named him Spartacus Maximus.

"Sparty Max" has grown into quite a magnificent, strong, large dog, with a playful, mischievous spirit, and an uncanny ability to explore precisely the places where he should not go. Though he is very well-fed, including special breakfast treats from my Dad, and he has lots of toys, chew bones, and stuffed animals, Sparty enjoys the taste of forbidden fruits, such as thorn bushes, lizards, and paper towels.

One day recently, I came home and found him neck deep in the trash can, fishing for garbage. "What are you DOING?" I asked loudly. His head sprung up, and he gave me the old "Who me?" look followed by the guilty biting of the lower lip and the plaintive gaze.

Of course, I couldn't be angry, but I wanted to make this a teachable moment. Taking his big old head in my hands, I looked tenderly into his big brown eyes and said, "Sparty, I give you everything you could ever need. You are a blessed dog. Why do you want trash? Why do you choose this garbage over your nice things?" It was a teachable moment, alright. Just then, I heard the voice of Father God speaking to me, one simple word, and that word was: "Ahem...." The Lord began to give me a cosmic power point presentation of some of His blessings in my life, and some of the times I've rejected His plan and chosen my own path ... much to my own detriment and chagrin. I know I'm not alone in making poor choices. In fact, the Bible itself is the story of God's beautiful creation, man's rejection of God's way, the fall of man and creation, and God's gracious plan of redemption and restoration for man and creation.

THE SQUANDERING SON

Jesus often dealt with this theme in His teachings and parables. One of my favorites is found in Luke 15, where Jesus said:

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of

'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'
(Luke 15)

that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

"Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" (Luke 15:11-31).

A Sunday School teacher told this story to a class of young children.

At the end of the story, the teacher asked, "Who was really upset when the younger son came home?" A little boy raised his hand and said, "The fatted calf!" It's hard to argue with that!

FATHER'S HEART

There is a great contrast between the way the father receives his wayward son versus the way the elder brother receives the younger. Jesus presents this story to illustrate the heart of our Heavenly Father toward those who find themselves lost and wandering; even those who have strayed and squandered their inheritance by choice.

An even greater illustration of the Father's heart, and the great lengths He has gone to bring restoration, is in the very story of Jesus. The Old Testament is replete with prophetic promises concerning the coming Messiah and His purpose. The final verses of the Old Testament prophesy this about Jesus:

"And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6).

If the New Testament had never happened; if Jesus had never been born; then the last word of the Bible would have been "curse". Whether it's in the parable of the prodigal son or the story of Jesus, God has made it obvious to us that He will do whatever it takes to restore the relationship between His children and Himself, and also to restore human relationships.

This is one way we can discern the Spirit of Christ from the spirit of hell. Our enemy Satan seeks to deceive, manipulate, and divide families; to seduce children spiritually and

draw them away from the Kingdom of God: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to bring life and restoration. He does not inspire rebellion or witchcraft; He defeats it with grace, revelation, power, and healing. It's always a comfort to remember that this is His heartbeat, His passion, His purpose. As much as we as human parents desire for our children to have a right relationship with the Father, we know that His desire for this is even greater.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When I was 13, I was baptized at East Moss Point Baptist Church by Pastor Scott. I had accepted Jesus as my Savior at a younger age, and then when I was 12, I was unexpectedly baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. But, though I definitely believed in God, and at times felt close to Him, I stumbled often along the way.

The Lord was faithful to call me back each time, and was speaking to me about truly dedicating my life to Him. I came to a point where I wanted to make a public profession of faith. Brother Scott and my Dad talked with me about what it meant to be baptized. We prayed, and I went into the baptismal pool, was immersed, and genuinely felt God's presence and favor on me.

During these days, I began to hear God calling me into a life of ministry. I wasn't sure what that meant, but as the son of a minister and the grandson of a minister, I wasn't too sure about that calling. I loved my Dad and my Grandpa, and I respected what they did, but I didn't love some of the problems they had to wrestle with in the church world. Dad and Grandpa never complained to me,

but I wasn't stupid. (By the way, most "Preacher's Kids" are very observant.)

And so, I began to resist the Holy Spirit. Big mistake! I knew enough about church so that I could put on a good show in terms of looking nice and being polite. Sometimes, I even meant it. But I became an expert on living a double life. I became a hypocrite. The fire in my heart that I had for God began to dim.

I could praise God on Sunday, and with the same lips, cuss like the devil on Monday. I could stare someone straight in the eye, and lie to them, with a seemingly sincere smile. I snuck out of our house at night, smoked, egged neighbors' houses, shoplifted, drank beer, and schemed greater exploits. All the while, the Lord continued to pursue me, call to me, and remind me of Who He really is. Plus, I got busted often! So, so busted!

Thankfully, there were some anchors that the Lord used to keep me from sailing off the edge of the world: my family, covenant friends, and His presence during times of worship. I could not deny the glory and power of God. There were times when we would sing, and God's presence was almost breathtaking. I would get deeply convicted, repent ... and then slip back into old habits at school or with friends.

"YES, LORD!"

Finally, when I was 17 and nearing high school graduation, a series of crises in my own life and in the lives of my friends made me more open to seeking God and repenting. Once more, He reminded me of His call. I said "Yes, Lord, I will be in ministry, however You define that. But, can we have some agreements?" I still wanted to bargain with God. He

graciously said, "Sure."

I drew a breath and said, "Lord, can we just agree that this is Your idea, and not mine?" He said, "Well, of course it's My idea! Absolutely." I said, "One other thing: You're going to have to help me with this, because I'm pretty sure I'm not able to do it by myself." I almost felt as if the Lord chuckled, but He was kind enough to say, "No, You cannot do it by Yourself, but I give You My word that I will be with you and give you what you need to do My will."

That was 35 years ago. I have let Him down often, but He has never let me down. He heard the prayers and tears of my parents and grandparents and people who loved me. Whatever good I've done in my life and ministry is because of Him.

My point in saying all of this is to remind us all that God is a good, good Father. He sees and He knows. Better yet, He cares. Whatever the story looks like right now, it isn't finished. Don't lose heart, wherever you are on your journey; wherever your kids or grandkids are on their journey. Don't stop praying, don't stop seeking Him. But even if you do stop, know this: He will never stop seeking You. He will never stop pursuing your children and grandchildren.

I am praying and fasting that God will have mercy on us and our families. Let's remember this precious promise God gives us through His prophet Isaiah: *"I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save"* (Isaiah 49:25). 121

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Election 2016

How to Vote?

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).



Soon, the United States will face a General Election to determine our next President, as well as many seats in the Senate, House of Representatives, Judgeships, and other state and local races. Every major election in recent memory has been dubbed "the most important in our history", but many believe 2016 will definitely be a watershed year that could determine the next 20 or more years of national policy. It may well be that the fate of the nation will be sealed in these weeks.

According to many reliable polls, a majority of Americans are dissatisfied with the Presidential nominees of the two major parties. Other polls indicate that many voters are trying to determine the "lesser of two evils" as opposed to enthusiastically supporting and endorsing a candidate. This is why we see so much negative advertising and vicious mud-slinging. The vitriol in this election season has been the worst in decades.

There has been no clear voice from Christians in America regarding the choices this year. Many churches are experiencing significant strain among members due to politics. The fault lines seem to run in many directions; more of a fragmentation than a simple split. Some Christians have even suggested they will sit out this election. But passivity must not be an option!

In this atmosphere, what are we to do? How can we make the best possible decision in a nation where we still have the blessing of freedom to participate in the process? Here are some suggestions regarding our perspective for Election 2016

1. Remember the Sovereignty of God. Christians should fully engage with the election process and let our voices be heard in the cause of righteousness. But we cannot allow our thinking or speaking to be dictated by fear or rage. We have an anchor of hope that is not rooted in circumstances; we have a King Who is not up for election, Whose Throne is not shaking. He invites us to pray and to act according to His will, but ultimately, He will raise up or cast down rulers. Our trust is in Him.

2. Carefully study the issues. What are the most important issues facing America today? What crises could arise within the next four years? What are the foundational positions that will affect all of the other decisions? National security? Viable health care? Supreme Court appointees? Tax reform? Job creation? Abortion? Moral values? Religious freedom? Others? Everyone should study and prioritize the issues that matter most to them personally, and what will shape our nation. This may mean reading or watching a wide

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Leadership

Equipping the Believers

We love receiving gifts, but can we receive people as gifts from God?

by Gregory Mira



TO the Christians in ancient Rome, the apostle Paul wrote, *"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong"* (Romans 1:11). All church leaders were given as gifts from Christ to the Church, so that we might be equipped, and progressively mature into a fuller manifestation of the presence of Jesus in the world. Look at what Paul told the Church in Ephesus:

"He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth

in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:10-16).

Today, some churches and Christians may never fully benefit from these gifts. In some cases, the gifts may not be understood, sanctioned, or accepted by denominations, local church leaders or believers in general (see 3 John 10).

Some leaders (elders/deacons) are designed to function more effectively in a local setting; others

are called and anointed by the Holy Spirit to move in a broader context. I will call them *"trans-local"* (outside the local) for the sake of this brief article.

IMPARTATION

Some churches may be so blessed as to have one or more of these gifts functioning and participating regularly among them. Others may only rarely have the privilege of sitting with these kinds of leaders, who are anointed to impart something that only they may be able to transmit successfully. It's not just about *revelation*...it's about *impartation*.

Those who function in trans-local gifts are no better, or more needed, than any of the other ministry gifts. They just serve a different purpose and play a different role. These individuals seem to function most effectively, and somewhat differently, when moving outside the context of their own local churches, where these gifts should be validated and valued before being vented.

In order for the Church to come to a real fullness of unity, intimacy and maturity, as Paul says in Ephesians, all of these gifted leaders need to be

free, focused, and functioning; and oh yes, financed! In order for that to happen, local leaders and the congregations they serve must be taught how to recognize, receive, release, and resource these gifted leaders.

RECEIVING GOD'S GIFTS

Here are several thoughts on how local church leaders might help their disciples through the process:

1. **RECOGNIZE** - Teach people in your sphere of leadership how to recognize these gifted individuals and help give some understanding about how they function. If you're not sure about them, find someone who is. There certainly are plenty of materials available to use as resources, but I prefer to involve people who are already functioning with some measure of success in these ministries. Invite them into your context and let them help impart an understanding. Make sure it's someone you know and trust.

2. **RECEIVE** - Jesus came and was not received, even by His own. Teach people how to posture themselves in a humble attitude of receiving from other leaders. Others may be quite a change from what people in our church or group are used to hearing. Teach those in your care to be open to godly impartation, and lead the way yourself. Show them how to receive different ministry gifts other than your own or your own favorite style. Don't be jealous, envious, or insecure. All of us need these gifted people. Only if you receive a 'prophet'

as a 'prophet' will you receive the reward of that prophet's ministry.

3. **RELEASE** - Build an apostolic ethos. Learn, teach, and then demonstrate how to release these anointed ministries into, and out of the local church (see 3 John; Acts 13:1-5; Acts 16:1-5). Don't hold them back, young or old. It's an apostolic Gospel that should always be focused outwardly. When you scatter seed, it will come back to you.

4. **RESOURCE** - Those that preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel. If they sow spiritual seed, they should reap a material harvest. I believe this passage is not just referring to local pastors or elders. Bring in trans-local leaders regularly. Show them hospitality and send them on their way in a manner worthy of God, so that we can all become fellow workers together for the truth (see 3 John 5-8).

For the Church to reach the whole measure of fullness in Christ, we need each part doing its work. In order for this to happen, we need open, wide, free, secure leaders, who will themselves help God's people to recognize how they function, receive their ministries, release them into the work, and find ways to resource these valid and priceless gifts given by Christ himself.

In so doing we will cause "growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16). **121**

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variety of reasonably reliable media. Too many networks and sources are now simply shilling for one candidate or the other. It should also mean spending time in prayer and Bible study to gain a spiritual and biblical worldview. As you do, ask the Lord, "What is the difference between personal behavior guidelines and national policy responsibilities?"

3. **Study the Party Platforms.** Certainly, we must study the candidates: their character, their record, their policies, their promises. But what if you don't particularly like the candidates themselves? It's very helpful to look at the Party Platforms upon which the candidates are running, because this will help to serve as a compass for the candidates. Also study the people who surround the candidate. What is their character or experience? What will be their role or influence should the candidate be elected? Which candidate or party is most likely to honor and uphold the United States Constitution and the principles upon which this nation was founded? Or, to put it another way, who is likely to do the least amount of damage to these principles and to our future?

Some have suggested that "voting your conscience" is impossible this year, or would somehow be a selfish, arrogant act. However, the sanctity of a person's conscience before God must be respected and upheld. To do otherwise would not only be un-American, but un-Christian. The real issue is simply this: are you sincerely and fervently seeking God? Are you staying clean before Him and listening to His Word? If you will, there is no doubt that God is good enough and big enough to lead you, and you will do the right thing. God bless you, and God save America! **121**



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