

The Local Church: A Spirit-Empowered Community, Part 2

Editor's Note: This is the second part of a two-part article. Read the first part on [here](#).

Each person has a vital part to play in the life of the local church. It is in the local church where we are most effective in discipling newer believers and a younger generation. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul mentions four levels of discipleship. Paul to Timothy, Timothy to the faithful, and the faithful believers to others who will follow. Our individual calling and assignments in the body of Christ are best realized as we serve and disciple others in local congregations.

God gives us individual assignments and ministries. He gives us abilities, talents and gifts by the Holy Spirit. You thrive and come alive as you learn to operate in the spiritual, motivational and ministry gifts God has given you. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7).

If you are a leader and find you are overwhelmed by responsibilities, determine your God-given abilities and priorities, and then reach out to others for help (Acts 6:4). Invite; don't coerce! If you are not in leadership, you have gifts and abilities that can be used by God in various areas of the church's ministry. Offer these gifts in service to the Lord!

Principle No. 3. Future leaders need to have a good reputation, to be full of the Spirit and to have wisdom.

"Brothers, look among yourselves for seven men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this duty" (Acts 6:3).

The administrative task of distributing food was not taken lightly. Having a good reputation, both in the church and outside, means to live a life of godly character reflecting Jesus and kingdom values. Examples of this include being full of God's love, gentleness, kindness, humility and the ability to work with others. The basis of what we do should be a heart of love for others.

Jesus said, "Whoever would be great among you, let him serve you" (Matt. 20:26b).

Don't aspire to be great, rather aspire to be a great person—begin with loving and serving others!

Notice that Stephen, Philip and the others were submitted to the authority of the apostles and the church. We don't need "lone ranger" Christians! We need to be mutually accountable. Peter commands us to be humble, submissive and accountable to each other:

"Likewise you younger ones, submit yourselves to the elders. Yes, all of you be submissive one to another and clothe yourselves with humility, because 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Pet. 5:5).

We need older and younger believers working together in harmony to mentor a new generation of believers to carry on the mission of Christ and expand His kingdom. The local church is a family on a mission together!

To be full of the Spirit is to be led by and empowered by the Spirit. The most important prerequisite for any kind of Christian service is to be filled with faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit's power, Stephen was a wise servant (Acts 6:3) and evangelist (Acts 6:10). By yielding to the Holy Spirit and relying on His power, you can operate in the gifts of the Spirit and abilities He has given you.

Principle No. 4. Leaders, and all believers, should expect to

move in the supernatural.

Acts 6:8 says, "Now Stephen, full of faith [grace] and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Stephen was close to Jesus and learned how to commune with Him and the Holy Spirit.

Intimacy with God is the simple means by which we access living in the miraculous. Spending time in God's presence is the discipline we must develop to access all that God has for us. The cumulative effect is a greater anointing to function in healing or the supernatural. Abiding in Christ is the key:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

God releases power through us as we dwell in intimacy with Him. The natural outworking of His presence is godly character, wisdom and spiritual gifts.

Stephen and Philip represent a forerunner anointing. Once again, God is raising up an apostolic company in the 21st century. This company is not determined or restricted by age but is dependent upon hunger. God is doing amazing things in our day. We need to be ready for and expect His power and supernatural visitation. Faith is required; remember, Stephen and the others were "full of faith."

"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).

Jesus first told the disciples in Mark 11:22b, "Have faith in God." Faith is from the Greek word *pistis* and means persuasion, conviction, assurance, belief or trust.

He tells them in verse 24 to believe they already have it. In other words, have an expectation and anticipation. Believe is

from the Greek *pisteuo* and means to have faith in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing, credit, to entrust, trust. Again, we are to believe, to have an expectation! Oral Roberts once said of faith and expectancy:

“Expectancy opens your life to God and puts you in a position to receive salvation, joy, health, financial supply or peace of mind—everything good your heart longs for and more!”

Get ready! There are things about to happen in the church that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard” (1 Cor. 2:9b), and you and I can be a part of it.

Kathryn Kuhlman prophesied there would be a day when the church would say, “I am not sick!” and that in some meetings every single person would be healed. In addition to this, John Lake prophesied a great healing revival in the last days.

Isaiah 33:24a says, “The inhabitant shall not say, ‘I am sick.’”

Principle No. 5. The church should expect growth. Make provisions and prepare leaders.

“So the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples grew rapidly in Jerusalem, and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

After the congregation selected the seven and the apostles laid hands on them (v. 6) and prayed over them, the Good News of Jesus and the kingdom spread; people converted to Christianity; and the church in Jerusalem multiplied greatly—so much so that even Jewish priests were coming to faith in Christ!

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