

The Lord's Message: God's Team

Date: July 4, 2021

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 4:11-16

Raise your hand if you have ever played a team sport. Sports like basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, or field hockey. You can put your hands down. Please raise your hands if you believe Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. Would you believe me if I were to tell you, you are on God's team? Would you believe me if I were to tell you God's Holy Spirit has equipped you for ministry? Would knowing these two facts make a difference in your life and the life of someone else?

Let us pray.

Teams exist for several reasons. If the team is a professional team, then the reason for the team's existence is to make money for the owners and the players, for the players to compete together and to provide entertainment for the fans. The goal of the team is at the end of the season to be the best team in their sport. If the team is not professional, then the reason for the team's existence is to provide competition, improve skills, exercise, or just for the love of playing the sport. The reason for the existence of God's team, the church, is to bring people into an eternal relationship with God or salvation. Just as teams are organized as owners, managers, coaches and players, so God's team is organized as God the Father as the owner, Jesus the Son as the manager, the Holy Spirit as the coach and the believers as the players. Just as the players play different positions on the teams, so on God's team, the believers also have different positions. Let us look at **Ephesians 4:11-13**. Let me also make note here that there are players who play different positions. They are all still players.

The Holy Spirit "calls or "penetrates" a person's heart, so they will respond to God's offer of a relationship. In **Ephesians 4:1**, Paul tells us that our lives should reflect the calling of God. God not only calls people into relationship, but God also calls people into ministry. All believers in Christ are ministers. Some people are called into different ministries, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Some people grow from teacher to pastor to evangelist or even prophet. The Holy Spirit equips all of us for ministry.

Let us look at the gifts the Holy Spirit gives us to equip us for ministry.

First, the Holy Spirit dwells in the believers. In **1 Corinthians 3:16**, God's presence is with us. We do not need to go and try to seek out God, because God is living in us. According to scriptures, **Acts 2:38**, at the moment we confess our sins, repent and ask forgiveness from Jesus, God provides us with the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us. God is living in us.

Second, with the Holy Spirit living in us, the Holy Spirit teaches us about God. Jesus tells us about the Holy Spirit as a teacher in **John 14:26**. The Holy Spirit teaches us about what is truthful. We so need this teaching. We live in a world which is constantly bombarding us about what the world thinks is truth, but we really need to know what is God's truth. We can rely on the Holy Spirit to not only teach us about God's truth, but also to guide our lives to live by God's truth. We find this in **John 16:13-15**. By knowing and being guided by God's truth, then we have the true source of wisdom, revelation and power. This wisdom, revelation and power are what Jesus is referring to in **Acts 1:8**. You cannot be a witness for God, if you do not have knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit teaches us about God, so we can teach others about God. The Holy Spirit teaches us God's truth, so our lives can be lived following the truth of God. This we find in **Ephesians 4:1-3**.

You might be thinking to yourselves this morning, I do not know how to witness. No problem. The Holy Spirit provides us with the third gift: the words for witnessing. Jesus says in **Luke 12:11-12**. This can be a very uncomfortable situation. This requires a lot of trust in the Lord, but I guarantee when you start to witness the Holy Spirit will tell you what to say. Just be quick to listen and slow to speak. Listening for the Holy Spirit requires patience. Do not be concerned if you have said the right words. Do not be concerned if you have caused a negative reaction in the person. A negative reaction means they have heard what you have said and the Holy Spirit is working in them to bring them to the Lord. Do not be concerned if the person does not cry out to Jesus to save them. Your job is to plant seeds of the Holy Spirit. Lastly pray for the person.

Now, we often find ourselves at the point where we do not know what to pray for. This is where the Holy Spirit provides us with the fourth gift. In **Romans 8:26-27**, the Holy Spirit intercedes and speaks to God the words we need to say.

The more we allow God's Holy Spirit to direct our lives, the more people are brought the knowledge God loves them and desires to have an eternal relationship with them. This is the work of God's team, the church. We all ministers on God's team. God's Holy Spirit calls us and equips us for ministry.

If God's team is going to be successful there is also something we all need to do. I have seen some teams have some great athletes on the team, but the team does not perform to expectations. I have seen other teams who are made up of average players and the team surpasses expectations. Why the difference? The team is made up of great athletes, but if these athletes are only concerned about reaching their individual goals and not the team's goal, then the team is going to fail. The witty coach Herman Edwards, who was with the Kansas City Chiefs, said it best. "The players that play on this football team will play for the name on the side of the helmet and not the name on the back of the jersey." For a team to be successful, the players all have to work together to achieve the team's goal. Paul says this in **Ephesians 4:15-16**. As believers in Christ, we should all work together to bring people to Christ. We will all have different opinions on accomplishing this task. We do not all have the same talents. For God's team to be successful, we must strive for unity. Keep the main thing the main thing. For God's team the goal is to bring people into an eternal relationship with God. We do not have to do this on our own. God has called us and God has provided us with the Holy Spirit to equip us for ministry. Let us listen and be obedient to the direction of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God's team, the church, will then be successful. Amen.