

Every Member Ministry

“... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” ([Eph. 4:12-13](#)).

- [Ephesians 4:12-13](#)

Nearly every Christian tradition has, with good reason, maintained some distinction between the clergy and the laity. After all, Scripture distinguishes those qualified to be elders from those not suitably equipped to fulfill these offices ([1 Tim. 3:1-7](#)). However, although some on either side of the clergy-lay divide have thought otherwise, the clergy are not more important to God’s plan than the laity. Instead, the distinction is one of function and gifting. Some have the giftings and dispositions to be leaders and some do not, but all believers are equally important to the healthy functioning of the church.

In the final analysis, Christian ministry is “every-member ministry,” as indicated in [Ephesians 4:12–13](#). God gives evangelists, pastors, and teachers (v. 11) to the body of Christ today “to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ” (v. 12) We delete the comma between the words ministry and for intentionally in this quote to remove any hint that it is the responsibility of church officers alone both to equip church members and to build up the body of Christ. That is not the sense of the verse. On the contrary, Paul means that while church leaders must equip the saints to do ministry, this ministry of building up Christ’s body (the church) is collective. All of us have a role to play in advancing the people of God to maturity in His Son (see 1 Cor. 12).

The maturity the apostle has in mind is a corporate maturity. Of course, our individual growth in Christ is important, but our personal advancement in the grace and knowledge of Jesus is not an end in itself; rather, individual growth serves the purpose of collective growth as we work with one another. We aim to produce nothing less than a body of believers conformed to the image of the glorified Christ ([Eph. 4:13](#)). This goal is a great one indeed, and would be impossible to attain if we were not already, in some measure, filled with the

fullness of Jesus (1:22–23). Still, the church is not yet in full conformity to the perfection of Christ, and we must strive toward this end until His return. Between our Lord’s two advents, all believers build up the body of our Savior as they minister one to another, and all of us must find and fulfill our God-given role in His church.

Application for God

Do you consider yourself a minister in the church? Although you might never be ordained to a church office, your gifts are critical to the healthy functioning of Christ’s body. Determining your specific role may not be easy, but you can often figure out where God has gifted you by considering the kinds of work you find most fulfilling. Seeking the input of those who know you best is also critical to discerning the contribution you can make to the church.

Passages for Further Study

[Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#)

Nehemiah 3–4

[Acts 6:1–7](#)

[Hebrews 13:20–21](#)

