

The Fullness Dispensary

The Mission of the Church Part 01
Selected Passages 5-11-2014

Summary: The church is the people, not the building. However it is when we come together for worship, that we are functioning as a church (enough people to carry out the Mt. 18 process, led by qualified elders, and based on the essentials of the gospel). We are Christ’s body in that we do His work, which is dispensing a lot of what is good about God. We do that when we reach maturity by carrying out the one anothers.

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The Gathering

Good morning, Church. I can’t say that to just any group of people. Have you ever wondered why I can say it to you? What is it that makes you a real church?

1 Corinthians 11:18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you

Have you ever noticed that phrase **when you come together as a church**? What does that mean? A more literal translation would be **when you come together in church**. We all understand that the word “church” in the Bible never refers to a building, right? We refer to this building as the church building just because it is a little clumsy to always say, “the building where the church meets” every time. So we abbreviate that and just say, “I drove by the church” or “I left my glasses at the church,” but we all understand that as shorthand. It is fine to talk that way, but we all understand that the building is not the church. The church is the people. I think we all get that – but what not as many get is what makes a group of Christians a church. Sometimes the Bible uses the word “church” to refer to all true believers. But other times you have language like here in 1 Corinthians 11:18 where Paul makes it clear that even though you are always a Christian, you are not always *in church*. At what point are you in church? Is it any time you have two or three gathered in His name? Is that a church? Is it when you get 501c3 status from the IRS? Is it any time you sing songs and listen to a sermon? What are the essential components that make a church a church, so that if those components are missing, it is not really a church? We need to know the answer to that question. Every person in this room needs to know the answer to that question, so that they can answer this question: “What is the church supposed to do?” We need to know what the church is so that we can know what God is expecting us to do – and how He is expecting us to do it. In other words, what is the mission of the church?

That is not a biblical term, so if you prefer some other term that's fine with me. Just so you know that when I say that word – the *mission* of the church, I am talking about those three things – what we are, what we do, and how we do it.

I hope we all understand that we do have a mission. When we gather here, it is not like an audience gathering in a theater to observe something. We are like a team gathered for the purpose of accomplishing a task. And just like the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, Agape Bible Church is being evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to how well we are doing at our mandate.

I hope you understand that we have a mandate from God to do something. And I hope you don't think of the church as "they." I hear people talk about the church like it's someone else ("The church ought to do this or that" or people come to me and say, "You guys should do this"). When you talk about the church I hope you use the word "we." God has given a mandate to His church, and the only way it will happen is if all the individuals that make up the church understand that mandate and are faithful to carry it out.

The next major study I have planned is to go verse by verse through the gospel of Mark. And everything we study will help us understand our mandate more. But once in a while I think it is good to step back and make sure we have a very clear, solid understanding of the basics of what a church is, what a church is supposed to do, and how God wants that done. We need that clear in our minds so we can avoid mission creep – drifting into areas outside the bounds of our God-given job description. So the beginning point is knowing what the church is. Knowing what you are is the most fundamental part of understanding your job description. A plumber needs to know he is a plumber and not an electrician. So these titles God has given us – "church," "body of Christ," "household of God" – all the various titles for the church that we see in Scripture, it is crucial that we understand what those mean so that when we look at the passages that describe our task, we will have the right context to understand them.

What We Are

Each one of these questions we have studied in depth in the past. But for our purposes in this study I would like to make this as concise as I possibly can. So instead of going into detail on each of these points, I will be referring you to other studies we have done along the way so you will know where to go if you want to look into something in a deeper way. On this first question – what the church is - the very first sermon series we did starting the first day we became a church was a series titled "What is a Church?" That was 11 sermons, so if you want to go deeper on this subject I would refer you to that study. In this series I am going to try to briefly summarize what we learned in that study, as well as give you some new things I have learned since then.

"Church"

So let's start with the word "church." The Greek word is *ekklesia*. Prior to the writing of the New Testament, *ekklesia* was just a very generic term for any kind of a gathering. It could refer to a formal, government body conducting official business (Acts 19:39), or it could refer to an unruly mob (Acts 19:41). The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines it as any assembly of people gathered for any reason.¹ The church of God is a unique thing, unlike any other assembly in the world so instead of using one of the terms that were more commonly used to refer to religious gatherings, God picks out a word that didn't have other associations so He could be the one to give it definition.²

That is not to say it had no connotations at all. The word church was used over 100 times in the Old Testament. (We don't notice that because the translations use the word "assembly" instead of church, but

¹ ISBE, "Assembly"

² God did a similar thing with the term *agape*. That was a very general word for love that was not really used very often and did not have much meaning in people's minds, and God chose that as the main word He would use in the New Testament to describe Christian love – because Christian love is so different from the world's love.

in the Greek translation of the Old Testament it is this same word *ekklesia*.) It was used of various different kinds of assemblies – including the gathering of God’s people at the Temple for formal worship events. In Deuteronomy 23 there is a list of people who were not permitted to enter the church. They were allowed to be in Israel, and to be a part of the covenant community, but they were not allowed to enter the church. So even in Moses’ time the word was used to refer not just to the people in general, but specifically to the people gathered for formal worship, and we see that same meaning in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 11:18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together in church, there are divisions among you

Were they still Christians when they were scattered in their own homes? Yes. But were they a church? No – not in this sense. They were not the church until they gathered together for worship. In fact, a couple verses later Paul rebukes them for behaving the same way in church that they behave at home.

1 Corinthians 11:22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

There are some things that are fine to do at home but not in church.

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. ... 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in church and speak to himself and God.³

At home with your family you might be surrounded by believers, but that does not mean you are in church.

And I am making a point about this because sometimes when people hear that the church is the people, not the building, they make the mistake of thinking the people are always the church – even when they are not gathered together. And again – there is a limited sense in which that is true. The Bible sometimes speaks that way. It is kind of like an orchestra. If you take the list of names of all the musicians in the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, you could say, “That is the orchestra.” In one sense that would be a true statement, but strictly speaking they are not really functioning as an orchestra until they all come together in the same room and start playing music together. I realize there are some points where that analogy breaks down, but the basic idea is there – when Paul talks about those times when the saints in Corinth would come together as a church, or are in church, the point is that the church functions as a church when we assemble together for worship.

How Many?

So for a group to be a church they have to gather together – what else? Is any group of Christians that gathers for worship automatically a church? Some people point to Matthew 18:20 where it says **where there are two or three gathered together in my name, I am there among them.** So they say, “All you need is two or three believers and you’ve got yourself a church.”

The problem with that is that passage teaches the exact opposite of what they are saying. If you back up a few verses, listen to what verse 17 says:

Matthew 18:17 If he pays no attention to [the 2 or 3 witnesses], tell the church.

³ Another example –One of the tasks of the men in the church was to evaluate prophets to determine if they were true prophets or false prophets. It was fine for the women to voice their opinion or enter into the discussion about those prophets outside of church, but not in church. **1 Corinthians 14:35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church.** We know that does not forbid all speaking in church for women because back in chapter 11 it was fine for women to pray and prophesy in church. But there were some contexts where what was fitting outside of church was not fitting in church.

There is a clear distinction between the two or three who are gathered in Jesus' name and the church. Clearly, the two or three are not a church. They report to the church, which means they are not the same thing as the church. The church is the larger gathering.

How many do you have to have for it to be a church? The Bible doesn't say. But we know it has to be enough so that in the Matthew 18 restoration process, the two or three has a larger body to report to.

Another requirement for a church is that they have pastor/elders who are qualified according to the lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Acts 14:23 they had appointed elders in every church

Another obvious requirement is that they teach the true Gospel and worship the true God.

Ephesians 2:19 you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

If your group departs from the foundation of Christ and the Apostles (the New Testament), it is not a church.

So that is the bare minimum of what makes a group of Christians a church- it is a community of worshippers that worships the true God, carries out the restoration process, preaches the true gospel, and is led by qualified pastor elders. But our question is not what is the minimum? Our question is what is the ideal? What does God expect a church to be?

The Metaphors

The Bible answers that question by means of several metaphors. In some ways the Church is like a bride, in some ways it is like a body, in some ways it is like a vine or a field or a building or a temple, etc. Of all those metaphors, five of them are repeated several times and are highlighted in Scripture as especially important. The five metaphors that teach us about the Church are these: The Church is...

- The Family/Household of God (three places - 1 Pe.4:17, 1 Tim.3:15, Heb.3:6.)
- A holy Priesthood (three places - 1 Pe.2:5, 9, Rev.1:6, 5:10).
- The Temple of the Holy Spirit (four places - 1 Pe.2, Eph.2:21, 1 Co.3,6, 2 Cor.6:16)
- The Wife/Bride of Christ (six places - Eph.5, 2 Cor.11:2, Mt.9:15, Jn.3:29, Rev.19:7, 21:2)

And the one that is used the most often of all of them:

- The Body of Christ (seven places – Ro.12:5, 1 Cor.6:15, 16; 12:27, Eph.1:23, 4:12, 5:23, 30, Col.1:24)

So let's begin there - the church as the body of Christ.

The Body of Christ

When the Bible writers use the metaphor of a body to describe the church, what is the point they are making? What does that image tell us about our mission?

His Hands

When a person works, it is that person's body that carries out the work. If you drive a nail or clean your house or build something – what part of you does it? Your body. If you need to take out the trash, you can sit around all day long and focus on the trash can with your soul and spirit and mind – but until your body actually gets up and moves, that trash is not going to be taken out. And in the same way, the work of Christ is accomplished through His body – the church. So if it will help you remember this, when you think of being the body of Christ, think of us as His hands (the part of the body that we associate with doing work).

His Work: Dispensing Fullness

We are His hands because He uses us to accomplish His work in the world. And what is that work? What is it that the Lord is primarily doing in this world? The answer is in Ephesians 1:23. Christ's work is filling the world with His fullness

Ephesians 1:22 [God the Father] put everything under [Christ's] feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way.

The work Christ is doing in this world - the work that is being carried out by the Church, is the filling of all things. Filling with what? With His fullness. He uses the church to fill all things with His fullness.

“What is His fullness?”

This word translated **fullness** is used many times in the Greek Old Testament, and it always carries the idea of abundance of good things.

Ezekiel 12:19 their land will be stripped of its fullness on account of the violence of all who live in it.

It will be stripped of its abundance. It will be stripped of all the things that are good about it. So the fullness of something is whatever good that thing has to offer. The fullness of God is a whole lot of what God has to offer. It is a great or large or full experience of the attributes of God. The fullness of God is an abundant expression of the glory and power and presence of God. That is the main work Christ is doing in this world. He is glorifying Himself by filling this world with His fullness – filling it up with things that are good about Him.

There are a whole lot of things in this world that are messed up. They are messed up because they lack the fullness of God, and the main work of Christ is the filling of this world with more and more of His fullness, or grace. And He accomplishes that work the same way you accomplish your work – with His body. So much so that we are actually called His fullness. Look at the text again.

Ephesians 1:22-23 [God the Father] put everything under [Christ's] feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way.

According to verse 23, what is the fullness of Christ? The church. We are His fullness. So Jesus Christ is making His wonderful abundance available to the world through His body, the church. What is our identity? We are the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God in the world.

If you are new here and you are considering joining this church, what would you be signing on to do? If you join the Army you are signing on to defend this country in war – as one part of a huge fighting machine. If you join an orchestra you are signing on to produce music – as one part of a musical ensemble. If you join a political party you are signing on to try to elect people who will represent that party's platform. If you join this church, what would you be signing on for? You would be signing on to be one part of a fullness-dispensing machine. You would be signing on to function as a part of the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God.

You won't be all that on your own (one soldier is not an army and one musician is not a symphony orchestra and one toenail can't take out the trash), but you will be part of a larger organism that has that function. That is what God expects of us. When someone walks through the doors to attend our worship service, they should walk right into the middle of a whole lot of grace from God. As a member of this church (or any other church) your job is to do your part in making sure that the people who walk into this place on a Sunday morning get hit right between the eyes with a whole lot of the various good things Jesus Christ has to offer.

If someone comes here and he gets a warm welcome, and he loves the music, and he learns a lot, and has a great time, but he does not experience a great measure of the fullness of God, that is a failure. Either we are not doing what we are supposed to be doing, or we are and that person just is not receptive for

whatever reason, but our goal as a church is to be the place where people can experience more of the fullness of all that God has to offer than they can anywhere else.

That is even true for angels. When the heavenly beings and powers and authorities in the heavenly realms want to learn more about the wisdom of God, do you know where they go? They go to church.

Ephesians 3:10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms

So if all that is true of the church, why is it that some churches are more effective than others? At some churches you get huge amounts of fullness from Christ and marvelous, life-transforming doses of grace, and awesome experiences of His presence; and at other churches you get barely a trickle. Why? It is because different churches are at different levels of maturity.

Arteries

Body Building

This passage shows us the key to attaining the fullness of Christ. The process is described in verses 11-13, and all we have to do is keep doing what those verses describe

Ephesians 4:13 until we all ... attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

So there is something we have to do before we as a church will get to a high level of dispensing His fullness. We have to do what is described in verses 11-13. These are critical verses for us, because a fullness dispensing machine with no fullness is worthless. It won't do any good for us to go out into the world and try to reach them, it won't do any good for us to convince them to come into our meetings by the thousands or millions – none of that will be of any value unless we attain the fullness of Christ. A pop machine is useless if it has no pop to dispense. A coffee machine with no coffee is useless. A gumball machine with no gum is useless. And a church, if it has no fullness to dispense, is useless because the purpose of the church is to be a fullness- dispensing machine. So I guess we had better read verses 11-12. What is this magical process that, if we do it, we will be filled up with the fullness of God and able to dispense that fullness? It is a chain reaction that starts with church leaders teaching and preaching the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:11 It was he who gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints...

The apostles and prophets wrote the New Testament, and the evangelists, pastors, and teachers teach and preach the New Testament to the saints in order to equip them. Equip them for what?

12 to equip the saints for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

That is how it works. We do not have the whole measure of the fullness of Christ until we reach maturity as a body. And the way to reach maturity is for teachers and preachers to teach the Word of God to you, which equips you for the work of ministry. And it is that work of ministry that brings the church to maturity, which is the key to attaining to the fullness of Christ.

“What are the works of ministry?”

13 ...From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The Trend Away From Mutual Edification

Would you notice please that phrase **builds itself up**? Who builds up the church to maturity? The church. The church builds itself up through ministry to itself. This might come as a shock to some of you who have been taught that our primary mission is to the world out there, not to one another in the church. One of the sad trends of our day is the movement away from mutual edification as a central function of the church. Many preachers are now actually preaching against that. They are saying, “We can’t become ingrown. We’ve got to get rid of the fortress mentality. We’ve got to stop emphasizing the Sunday gathering and get out of the Christian ghetto. We only come together to recharge our batteries a little bit, but the real work is out there in the world. Our main focus is outreach – not ministering to ourselves.” That is a very popular message these days. That is the idea behind what is called the missional church movement. And there are a lot of really good things that are coming from that movement. But many who are in that movement have fallen into this error. I read one of their brochures and it said this:

“In the old, institutional way the church existed for the benefit of the members. But in the new missional way the church exists to go out into the world.”

That might sound noble at first, but it is just not what the Bible says. Just read the New Testament and see how much it focuses on ministry in the church, by the church, to the church. We see it right here. The Lord gave church leaders to the church (v.11) - for what purpose? **to equip the saints** (who is that? The church!) - equip them for what? **for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** (ministry by the church in the church to the church) - What is the goal of those works of service?

13 until we all (the church) reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

15 ... we (the church) will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

So the Lord gave gifts to the Church to equip the Church to minister to the Church within the Church, so that each part of the Church could do its work in order to grow the Church to full maturity as the body of Christ. Evidently the Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit are both heavily into that old, institutional method rather than the new, missional method. And you will find the same thing in I Corinthians 12 and most of the other major passages about the purpose of the Church.

Now, do we have a big job to do out there in the world? Absolutely! The Great Commission – we need to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that Christ commanded. That is a huge task – so huge that we will never get it done unless we do it the way God said to do it– through a strong, healthy, mature church that has a lot of Christ’s fullness to dispense. We are to reach the world with the fullness of Christ, which means we have to do what it takes to attain to that fullness before we have anything to offer the world. We must constantly strive for maturity as a church. How does that happen?

Connective Tissue

Look back at verse 16 again. The work of the ministry is when each one of you functions as a **supporting ligament**. The word translated **ligament** is not a precise medical term. It refers to all kinds of connective tissue – not just ligaments, but also tendons and joints, as well as nerves and veins and arteries. They used this word to describe all of that – any kind of connective tissue in the body.

The word translated **supporting** means *supply or provision*. The people back then had enough medical knowledge to understand that things like nerves and arteries supplied the various parts of the body with what they needed. With every breath you take, and every beat of your heart, nutrition and oxygen are carried throughout the body to supply each of the trillions of cells in your body. And when they receive that nutrition and oxygen, they grow and carry out their function. If they don’t receive it, they die. So probably a better translation of the word here would be artery.

What is your job in the church? Simple – you are an artery carrying nutrition to other parts of the body. In order for the church as a whole to function as Christ’s hands in the world, each one of us must function like an artery in His body – supplying the nutrition of His grace to the other parts of the body. Does that mean you have to supply every single person here? No. Some of us have more connections than others, but for most of us, we can reasonably have influence with maybe 20 or 30 or 40 people – somewhere in that range.

The One-Anothers

I don’t know who they are for you, but I can tell you that there is a group of people here at Agape that God is holding you responsible to supply with nourishment. And if you want to know what that looks like – if you want to know what our responsibilities are toward one another in the church - all you have to do is look up the phrase “one-another” in your Bible. You will find that phrase about 60 different times just in the New Testament.

About 16 times we are commanded to love one another, so that is the biggest emphasis by far. When you walk into the big gathering on the Lord’s Day each week when we all come together as a church, and you look around, what should you see taking place? If we are fulfilling our mandate to function as a church, then what you would see is a bunch of saints loving one another. That is how you supply nourishment to the other parts so the body can reach maturity. What else?

- Colossians 3:16 says to **Teach and admonish one another.**

If you walk into a church that is functioning as a church, you will look around and see brothers and sisters in Christ giving each other instruction from the Bible about how to live. What else will you see?

- Galatians 6:2 says to **carry one another’s burdens.**

You will look around and see people finding out what burdens other people are carrying (anxieties, pressures, concerns, hardships, fears are weighing on them), and then helping them in ways that make those burdens lighter.

- James 5:16 says **Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another.**

If you walk into a real church and look around, you will see sins being confessed and individuals praying specifically for one another. We call these the “one-anothers.”

“What if I don’t see any of those things happen?”

Then I don’t know where you went, but it wasn’t church.

I realize that is a strong statement, but think about it – how many places in the New Testament give us the idea that we should sing worship songs when we come together as a church? Two or three.⁴ How many times do we see these one-another commands? About 60. So what is more essential to the functioning of a church? Everyone who comes to church expects there to be music and singing and a sermon. Preaching and teaching is important, so every church has a portion of their corporate time together devoted to that. And corporate prayer and praise is important and so every church has a portion of their service devoted to that. But if we are told to sing praises two or three times, and the one-anothers come up over 60 times, why isn’t there a traditional portion of the typical worship service devoted to the carrying out of the one-anothers?

Think for a second about which things that take place here on Sunday you think of as being essential – so that if you missed those, you missed church. Most of you, if you showed up after the worship service and just picked up a bulletin and drank a cup of coffee, and then went home without any praise or prayer or hearing a sermon – you would probably feel like you had not really been to church. You would be fudging the truth if you told someone you went to church that day. Picking up a bulletin and drinking some coffee is not what church is. You missed out on the essential elements, which means you missed out on church. What if you participate in the service and prayer groups, but you don’t get a bulletin? Then could you truthfully tell someone that you had been to church? Yes – you missed out on the bulletin part, but the bulletin is not an essential aspect of what it means to function as a church.

⁴ Eph.5:19, 1 Cor.14:15-16, Heb.13:15.

So my question is this – do you think of the one-another commands as one of the essential elements? Given their prominence in the New Testament, how essential do you think they are in God’s mind? I mentioned a few of them, but those don’t even scratch the surface. We are also told to...

- Greet one another (Romans 16:16).
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
- Encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Agree with one another in the Lord (Philippians 4:2).
- Wait for one another when you come together to eat (1 Corinthians 11:33).
- Do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:14,19).
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19).
- Consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:31-32).
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10).
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Wash one another's feet (John 13:14).
- Mutually encourage one another by your faith (Romans 1:11).
- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50).
- Live in harmony with one another (1 Peter 3:8-9).
- Build one another up (1Thessalonians 5:11).
- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:31-32).
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:12-13).

...and on and on it goes. Do you think these one-anothers are important in God’s eyes?

If you come to church and learn and sing and pray, but you walk out the door without having encouraged anyone or exhorted anyone or prayed for anyone or confessed your sins to anyone or built anyone up, and you tell someone you went to church that day, are you telling the truth?

Is listening to the sermon just as important as carrying out the one-another commands? I think so. Is singing praises to Him just as important? Yes, I think it is – we will get to that later in the series. I think those things are just as important as the one-anothers. But are those things *more* important? Is learning from the sermon more important than expressing love through the one-another commands? I think you would have a really hard time making a case from Scripture that *anything* is more important in the church than the one-another commands.

I am glad traditional church service format includes a time for corporate praise and for a sermon. That’s great, but I think it is a major flaw that we don’t have any segment of our corporate gathering that is traditionally set aside for the fulfillment of the one-another commands.

“Shouldn’t we be fulfilling those commands all the time?”

Yes, but we should also be learning all the time and worshipping all the time, and yet we carve out a special time in our corporate gathering to make sure there is a time for those things, because they are so crucial. We should be generous givers all through the week, but in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul specified that on the first day of the week, when we come together as a church, we should give some amount that is proportional to our income. So we have the giving of offerings as a part of our corporate gatherings.

Why not do the same with the one-anothers? Should we do those all through the week? Yes, but why? Because they are an essential aspect of what it means to be a church. So then why would we not have a special focus on them in those times when we come together as a church? If this is the DNA of what it means to be a church, then isn’t the most crucial time to do them when we are *in church* (to borrow Paul’s phrase)?

One thing we will see next week is that the one-anothers ministry is actually more effective when it is done in church, because of the mix of spiritual gifts. This is why we have what we call the “one-anothers hour” at Agape as part of our worship service. At the north campus it is from 9:45-10:45, between the two services. South campus is still working on getting theirs figured out (since they just recently began as a church). But this is something we believe in. It is listed as one of our 12 distinctives, because we are convinced that the one-another commands are so central and so essential and so close to the core of what the church is, that a format for carrying them out should be provided in the structure of what we do on Sunday mornings, when we assemble together as a church.

Conclusion

What is the church? It is the body of Christ. What does it mean for us to be His body? Think hands and arteries. As His hands the church does His work of dispensing fullness, and that will happen only when we all supply one another with grace from Jesus Christ by carrying out the one-anothers.

“I’m just not very good at that. I try to build people up, instruct them, exhort them – all that, but instead of them getting built up, half the time they just get annoyed. How could I become more effective?”

There is a principle in God’s Word that explains how you can become supercharged with massive power from the Holy Spirit in your ministry. We don’t have time to get into it now, but that is where we will plan on picking it up next time.

Benediction: Ephesians 3:17-19 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) See how many “one-another” commands the group can list from memory.
- 2) Of those commands, which come easiest to you and which do you need to make the most progress in?
- 3) Name some of them that others have recently ministered to you.