

What is Expected of a Congregation

Purpose: To lay before a congregation the possibility of exploring a new frontier as a way of involving all its lay members more fully in the dynamic rhythms of the congregation's life. The early church finally came to look at what it was all the members were faced with in their lives. This showed them the need to be training and equipping them. Such training would help show those lay members how they fit into the body of Christ. They would now come to see with clarity, what God was providing them and what they were responsible for. This in turn would empower them to be prepared to fulfill what God was expecting of them and their exciting personal role in building up the body of Christ.

What is the mission or vision statement of your congregation?

It is the habit of most congregations to develop a mission statement or a vision statement which gives some direction as to what a congregation is seeking to be and to accomplish. In some congregations this statement is named often enough for the members to know what it is. In other congregations, what it says is not actually known by most of the members. (Here the facilitator or member of a congregation should state clearly what this mission or vision statement is in their congregation. If there are class members from several congregations, each statement of each of the congregations with members present should be stated, if possible. Or someone might say, "I don't know what it is for our congregation. They could find out and report next time).

Discussion Questions: Without being told, do you know what your congregation's mission statement is? Has it been revised? Is it known by members? Is it bringing focus, clarity and energy to your congregation?

What does the New Testament say a congregation should be about?

The questions that need to be asked is of Scripture itself. What is it that is to be happening in a congregation and to what end? Then comes the question, is it happening? We know from the New Testament that leadership had to be developed in new congregations—pastors, teachers, elders all needed to be trained. But once that happened, what then? What trained people do you have now giving leadership in your congregation? Whatever your situation, do you see the necessary work of preparing people is now completed or still needs more work?

According to Ephesians 4:11-16 there was more to do. **(Someone read this)**. It became recognized that those trained leaders still had a job to do. If they were on the playing field, what about those people who were still on the bench watching the game from the sidelines? Did they need to be equipped and trained as well? If so, who was going to equip them and why?

In the early church apostles like Paul and Peter worked to get congregations started. They trained leaders. But then they saw those leaders were gifted people whom Christ now empowered to train the rest of the congregation so everyone had an important part to play in building up the congregation, the body of Christ. There was to be nobody sitting on the bench watching. The whole congregation was mobilized. Every person had a piece of the action and this built up the whole group, the very body of Christ of which Christ is the head.

Discussion Questions: In what ways is our congregation equipping its people? Do we have people sitting on the bench, believing they have no particular calling for which they need to be trained? What would it take for them to see they are a vital part of the congregation, all building up the body of Christ?

How is a congregation to operate in order to reach its full potential, building up the body of Christ?



Adults Saving Kids

How is this supposed to work? If we think of a relay race, we know that one runner runs a certain distance and then passes a baton off to the next runner. That second runner does the same thing. He or she runs a certain distance and then passes the baton to another runner. Usually there are four runners involved. The last runner receives the baton and races not to a next runner but instead to the finish line. This means the last runner is crucially important. Their run becomes the most important of all because they have to get to the finish line. If that doesn't happen any possibility of winning the race will simply not happen.

How is the church similar to this? The design is linear. What the congregation has been given is equipped or trained leadership with many good skills. But does it need to stop there? Consider the possibility that the leaders, the pastors and teachers are to equip (pass on the baton) to six different groups of people so they can carry the baton to the finish line. When this happens the whole body of Christ, the whole congregation now finds itself in action, building up one another. If we picture this as in a tug of war, everyone in the congregation is now pulling on the same end of the rope. Picture this: How many church staff members are going to win a tug of war all by themselves?

Discussion Questions: Is our congregation operating on all cylinders? Are we relying on a certain few to carry the load being okay with that so we are satisfied that this is what life in our congregation is going to be?

What people among us have ministries that could well be further equipped?

The Bible names six roles or ministries people have that the church can equip. When we look in Ephesians, chapters 5 and 6, we find that they are named. Their importance is elevated and seen as vital. They are all people who have been adopted into the family of God through God's lavish love expressed in Christ Jesus. (See Ephesians 1) Now they must be prepared and readied to carry the baton they have received to the finish line. They are the ones to carry the baton to the finish line.

In chapter 5:21-33 we are told of two, wives are one and husbands another and they each have a ministry. It is to each other. It is so crucial that it is compared to the ministry between Christ and the church.

Then in Ephesians, chapter 6:1-3 we are told how important the third group is, which is children who are building up the congregation as they carry out their ministry by obeying and honoring their parents. They also need to be trained.

The fourth role or ministry is their parents with each role as a father and, as a mother, who have crucial ministries. They are to raise their children, not with emotional reactions but rather teaching them what it means to believe in Christ, what God has done and said in the world but also to model what discipline it takes to live the Christian life. Disciplining their children in a loving, gentle and yet firm way will also build up the body of Christ.

In Ephesians 4:14 we see that no one is to be a vulnerable child, and taken in by schemers. So, this tells all parents that they must work to give their children wise skills so they can fend off those who would take advantage of them. And in the next verse, we see continued instructions “¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”

(Also refer to Proverbs 1:1-7)

<https://adultssavingkids.org>



Adults Saving Kids

Discussion Questions: If someone asked you, what are the four ministries going on in many of our homes, what would you tell them? If each of these four people and their roles are named as ministers, what do you see as the unique challenges they will be dealing with?

What about equipping our people at their workplace?

Much of the life of the average lay person is lived in the workplace. Some roles many people have are workers or employees. (Number five). We can compare them in a way to the slaves referred to in 6:5-8. Obviously, we have a different system in our world today. Then there are the employers or bosses or owners who like masters have their own ministries to fulfill. So, a great deal of the work and service of a congregation does not take place in a church building but rather in homes and workplaces. This is where the baton is carried to the finish line, where the salt and light of the congregation is carried into people's everyday lives and through their lives. The integrity and faith by which family leaders live out their lives in their work environment will also enable their home ministries to be just that much more authentic. Christ is with them in both arenas.

Discussion Questions: What two ministries take place in a workplace setting? In your experience how is it that the workplace gives opportunities to carry out one's ministry or we can say, living out their Christian lives?

Who are the members (ministers) this particular course seeks to equip?

All of this brings us to the question: Is this the way our congregation is functioning? In this course we are targeting one group of the six different ministries named. We are seeking to equip parents and yes, grandparents for their most high callings—callings from God. We believe this course will help these family leaders see more clearly what God is asking them to do and what a difference there is for them to make.

As we have said before, the Bible tells parents and grandparents that God expects them to be accomplishing three goals. They are:

1. Passing on the faith.
2. Equipping their offspring with wise skills so as to defend themselves.
3. Praying daily for their offspring.

If congregations prepare their family leaders so they can fulfill these goals, the congregations will be stronger and their young people will grow in their faith and be safer. God is ready to provide what is needed for these family leaders to fulfill their callings. And pastors and teachers will have done the important work they have been called to do. So everyone wins.

Discussion Question: Who is this course for? What three outcomes could come out of being in this course? Is this course a good start in equipping people for their God given ministries? Having discussed this, what would you like to see happen in your congregation?

Summary: As with the first generations of the Christian church, it takes time to grasp the full potential of what a congregation has within it. The important role of what lay members are about can easily get lost. Therefore the letter to the Ephesians sheds new light on two things. First, the job of church leaders to train the lay people for their important but often overlooked ministries in the home and in the workplace. Secondly, by intentionally equipping these lay people for their specific assignments from God, the congregation will find itself having a stronger team and good work being carried out even leading to the next generation. This curriculum consisting



Adults Saving Kids

of three courses aims to provide this strength, grace and wisdom for parents and grandparents to prepare their offspring to live faithful and safe lives.

Church Trainers are Like Coaches. Some quotes

“Championships are won by teams who love one another, who enjoy and respect one another and play for and support one another.” –Tom Coughlin

“A good coach can change a game. A great coach can change a life.” - John Wooden

“Treat a person as he is, and he will remain the same. Treat him as he could be, and he will become what he should be.” - Jimmy Johnson

“A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are.” - Ara Parshegan

If there is some time remaining the class could discuss the Bible passage in the Questionnaire.

Prayer Suggestions: For God’s help, the Holy Spirit empowering our congregation to equip our different people for their ministries. For this course and the participation of each member in this course to be the trained ministers God has called us to be in our own homes and families. Bless every parent, every grandparent in congregation and every other congregation that has members attending here. Give us the wisdom and grace to carry out this equipping of parents and grandparents. Give us grace so the time spent here will bear much good fruit.