



Apostolic Notes

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Building A Fruitful Ministry



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Contrary to my present appearance, as a young person I was quite athletic. I enjoyed baseball, fastpitch softball, football (American style) and track. One season our fastpitch team needed more players. I invited a co-worker of mine, who always spoke of his love of racquetball and seemed athletic, to try out. I was totally embarrassed. This individual could not catch, hit or run.

At a later date, this same person invited me to play racquetball. I gladly accepted, after all I had seen him play softball, NO PROBLEM! While preparing to play, I watched him putting on knee pads and a nylon jacket. I thought to myself: "What next, a helmet?" Well, I found out the equipment was not for protection – but performance. I was amazed as he would slide on his knees for shots along the wall, flip on his back and be upright before I could return his volley. He "smoked" me (our term of the late 70's). What was the difference? He was gifted at one sport, the other he obviously was not.

How well this illustration fits many churches of today. We assemble ministry teams based on the needs of our programs. We ask individuals to participate in areas that may not allow them to excel in their gifting. Unfortunately, this results in a lack of fruitfulness, which produces frustration and a high turnover of individuals.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul compares the body of Christ (the church) to the human body. He tells us we are many members (parts) each being different, yet we are all one body. Since we are each different, we have different gifting. For our human body to function correctly, each part must perform the purpose it was created for. If we have a part not performing its job, we call it disease or sickness.

When the church structures its ministries according to the giftings God has placed in the body (not a program because we feel in it is necessary) we find that the members will be fruitful in their ministries and if fruitful they will be fulfilled.

Years ago, in the first church I pastored, I sought the Lord to see how we were to impact our city. His response was children's and youth ministry. We spent a large amount of our resources and people on developing these ministries. When the Lord moved me 2 ½ yrs ago, over 50% of the church was under the age of 18. I have spoken to the current pastor; on their midweek service they consistently have over 70 children in attendance – midweek. This in a small town of 10,000 people, with at least 23 other churches.

During my time as pastor, in my ignorance, I used to get frustrated about not having other ministries. There was a prison in town – yet we did not have a prison ministry. We had a small women's ministry and no real men's ministry. Just recently I listened to a tape of a service when we were honoring those working in our children's and youth ministry. As I noted the names being called off, I suddenly realized the large the percentage of adult involvement. Then I began to think about those involved, they were gifted to operate in children's ministry. God had placed in the body, those gifts to fulfill the purpose of children's ministry.

This is what I am attempting to bring out. God has placed in each assembly gifts that He desires to operate. We should not establish ministries because other churches have them or we think they are necessary. We should structure the ministries around the gifting God has placed in the body. This will allow the individuals to be fruitful and fulfilled, making the body of Christ healthy.

Food for thought – if you have a program that is not successful, could it be those working it are not operating in their gifting. This will directly affect the fruit.

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