

Each Believer's Place in the Church - introduction a study for the
college and career class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church by Steve Thomas 11/2/25

Introduction

From Leaders to Pew Sitters, from Workers to Frequent Attenders, from the Pastor to the Custodian - all believers have a vital place in the Church. For too long the conventional wisdom among believers is that the Pastor is the head, and the people fill in the spaces below the Pastor. For the Church to function biblically, Christ must be the head, the true center of all that happens at the Church. Good intentioned pastors often try to do everything, making themselves the center of the ministry. Sometimes this even looks like success, but ultimately it is failure. When a person is saved, they become something new In Christ, something that is wonderful and glorious and full of potential. The things that we learn in the scriptures must form the way that we think about ourselves and others in the Church. The Bible must form the foundation for our relationships with God, but also with each other. Believers need to be both functioning and unifying, they need to understand that their approach to Church should not be based on their preferences and desires but based on a Christ-like attitude to serve and to give themselves to God and to others. Believers need to work in their families to grow them in a healthy way, and then to bring that health into the community of believers, demonstrating the value of the Body of Christ. This is a responsibility for all believers, not just the Church leadership.

Our Mission (what we are seeking to do)

Loving God and Others, Growing Daily to Be More Like Christ, and Seeking to Bring the Lost to Christ. This is the mission of GCBC. How is this done? Through each believer having a close relationship with Christ, and then using their spiritual gift to direct profit towards the Body to do God's desired will for their lives. As each believer battles their spiritual enemies, they will give the Spirit access to make them more like Christ. This will result in each believer seeking and performing God's desired will for each of them. This will in turn result in Pastors teaching and shepherding, Administrators administrating and organizing, those with the Ministry gift ministering, Evangelists evangelizing, those with the gift of Helps and Mercy directing those gifts towards one another, Givers giving, Teachers teaching, and so on and so on. When believers are directing God's gifts to one another,

What is the Measure of Success?

If your child is getting taller and heavier, does this mean that you are doing a good job as a parent? Well, partly, but health, well-being, mental and social progress, and we would add spiritual growth all would factor into a child that is making the right kind of progress. So it is with a church. More people coming to church is not the only factor that relates to a healthy or successful church. Those that come should be wanting to pour into that church as much as they take from it. A healthy church is a church that asks something of its members. This is not a popular message. It can lead to folks leaving the church. Those looking for something that will make them feel comfortable will not hang around when the pressure levels increase.

A measure of success is when God's will is being carried out. God's will for the believer is Christ-likeness. Paul in Col 1:28 states his goal is seeking the maturity of each believer.

When a church is spiritual, following the leading of the Spirit, and becoming a vessel for God's desired will, that church is successful. This can be a moving target, because you might have a group of believers moving in this direction, and then another group of believers not wanting to go through this process. The growth process is difficult. We have no ability on our own to achieve ministry growth or success. (*Lead* by Paul Tripp pg 39)

Spiritual Growth can be Messy

Paul gave some good advice to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2. The key to multiplying ministry is to teach others the message, committing it to faithful men. This is not an easy process. Pouring into others is difficult work. "But difficult things are meant by God to be redemptive things. What often beats us down is meant by the Savior to be a tool to build us up. What would make us want to quit is meant by him to strengthen us for the battles to come." (*Lead* by Paul Tripp pg 53)

Following the Biblical Model

God has a blueprint for the Church. He would not expect something out of His people and not give them instructions on how to meet those expectations. God gives His people instructions on qualifications for servant-leaders, and for the work of the ministry, as well as for discipline and for what should go on in the church. In order for a church to be healthy and biblically successful, the Bible must be the final word on the Church.