

Week One Sermon Series: Gifted Together - Unleashing Heaven's Team

September 20, 2025

Opening Monologue

Welcome, new downloaders of the AVC App, and greetings to everyone already familiar with this wonderful tool! I pray that each of you will grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

This week, we are launching a new series: “Gifted Together, Unleashing Heaven’s Team”

This series will focus on the church’s responsibilities, both within its walls and beyond. It will help us understand that everyone has gifts, as the Holy Spirit distributes them (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). We will see how we are “gifted together” to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Yes, we are part of Heaven’s team!

The church is not a human invention; it is God’s establishment. Jesus declared, “...you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). This means the church has a purpose, a plan, and a mission that no one can ever stop, because God has ordained it. As Christians, we are called to get involved in the Great Commission of our Lord. We should be actively engaged in the local church God has called us to. This is not about religion—it’s about doing Kingdom work.

This week, we will explore why the Christian church is so vital. As the Scripture says: “Let us 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—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Come and be equipped and encouraged by God’s Word. Blessings to you and your families!

In Christ,

Rev. Brad Standfest

Key Sermon Texts

Matthew 16:18

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016%3A18%20&version=NIV>

Ephesians 3:10

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%203%3A10&version=NIV>

Hebrews 10: 24-25

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2010%3A%2024-25%20%20&version=NIV>

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 & 27

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012%3A12-20%20&version=NIV>

(v.27) <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012%3A27&version=NIV>

The Biblical Importance of the Church and Its People

The church is not a human institution but a divine establishment, rooted in the plan and purpose of Jesus Christ. As Jesus declared in Matthew 16:18, "...you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." This statement reveals that the church is Christ's idea, designed to fulfill His mission and withstand all opposition. The church is not merely a building or an organization but the living body of believers, called to reflect God's kingdom on earth. Its importance lies in its divine origin, its spiritual purpose, and the vital role its people play in God's redemptive plan.

1. The Church's Divine Purpose

The church exists to reveal God's glory and wisdom to the world. In

Ephesians 3:10, the Apostle Paul writes, “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.” This verse underscores that the church is God’s chosen instrument to display His multifaceted wisdom, not only to humanity but also to spiritual powers. Through the unity, love, and good works of its members, the church demonstrates the transformative power of the gospel, showing the world what it means to live under Christ’s lordship. The church is a living testimony to God’s grace, uniting diverse people into one body for His glory (Ephesians 2:14-16).

2. The Church as a Source of Encouragement and Support

The church is designed to be a spiritual family that helps individuals and families navigate the challenges of life. The church provides a community where believers can find encouragement, accountability, and strength. Hebrews 10:24-25 emphasizes this: “Let us 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—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” This passage warns against neglecting communal gatherings, as some early Christians were doing, likely due to persecution or spiritual apathy. Regular fellowship in the church fosters mutual encouragement, inspires acts of love, and equips believers to live out their faith in a hostile world.

The call to “not give up meeting together” carries heavy spiritual weight because isolation can weaken faith and leave believers vulnerable. The church is a place where God’s people are built up, equipped, and empowered to face life’s difficulties. It’s where families find guidance, individuals discover purpose, and everyone is reminded of their role in God’s kingdom.

3. The Role of the Church’s People

Every member of the church is gifted by the Holy Spirit to contribute to its mission. The church is “gifted together” to carry out the Great Commission, which Jesus outlined in Matthew 28:19-20: to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey His commands. This collective calling means that every believer has a role to play, whether through teaching, serving, encouraging, or showing hospitality, etc. (Much more gifts). The church is not a spectator event

but a team effort, where each person's contribution strengthens the whole body (Ephesians 4:16).

The church's people are called to be active participants, not passive attendees. By engaging in the local church, believers fulfill their purpose as part of "Heaven's team," working together to advance God's kingdom. This is not about religion but about doing Kingdom work—living out the love, truth, and mission of Christ in practical ways.

4. The Urgency of Gathering

The urgency of Hebrews 10:25—"and all the more as you see the Day approaching"—reminds believers that the church's mission is tied to the return of Christ. As the world grows increasingly challenging, the need for regular fellowship becomes even more critical. The church equips believers to stand firm, resist the pull of the world, and prepare for Christ's return. Neglecting to gather, as some had made a habit of doing, risks spiritual drift and disconnection from God's purposes. By prioritizing church attendance and participation, believers align themselves with God's plan and find strength to persevere.

5. The Church's Enduring Mission

The church's importance lies in its divine establishment and its role as a community of faith, hope, and love. It is a place where God's wisdom is displayed, where believers are equipped for the Great Commission, and where mutual encouragement sustains faith in a fallen world. As Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18, the church will prevail against all opposition because it is built on His unshakable foundation. Every believer is called to be part of this mission, using their God-given gifts to build up the body and reach the world for Christ.

(1, Rev. Brad Standfest)

Commentary on Main Scriptures

Matthew 16:18 The Gates of Hell cannot overpower the church

16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church." The name Peter had already been given to Simon when Jesus first met him (John 1:42). Here Jesus gave the name new meaning. Jesus said, "You are Peter [petros], and on

this rock [petra] I will build my church.” While the wordplay is evident, what did this rock refer to? The “rock” on which Jesus would build his church has been identified in four main ways:

1. The “rock” refers to Jesus himself (his work of salvation by dying for us on the cross). This would mean that Jesus is the divine architect of our faith and that he himself is the chief cornerstone. But this truth does not seem to be what the language conveys here. The focus was on Peter and on Jesus’ response to him.

2. The “rock” refers to Peter as the supreme leader or first “bishop” of the church. This view is promoted by Roman Catholic scholars. It gives authority to the hierarchy of their church and regards Peter and each of his successors as the supreme pontiff of the church. There is no mention of succession in these verses, however, and while the early church expressed high regard for Peter, there is no evidence that they regarded him as final authority. Also, this creates a great problem because such a view excludes the churches who do not trace their origin to Peter.

3. The “rock” refers to the confession of faith that Peter gave and that all subsequent true believers give. This view was promoted by Luther and the reformers as a reaction to view number two. To regard Peter’s confession and discount his leadership makes the situation unnecessarily abstract. Peter was looked to as a leader in the church. In the phrase, “You are Peter,” you is emphatic, emphasizing Peter’s role.

4. The “rock” refers to Peter as the leader and spokesman (foundation stone) of the disciples. Just as Peter had revealed the true identity of Christ, so Jesus revealed Peter’s identity and role. While apostolic succession cannot be found in this context or in any of the epistles, Peter’s role as a leader and spokesman of the church must not be discounted. This view has an element from number two in that Peter is the forerunner because he is the one who received the revelation of insight and faith concerning Christ’s identity, and Peter is the first one who confessed Christ.

The word “church” (ekklesia) is found in the Gospels only in Matthew, but the concept is found throughout all four Gospels. Jesus’ words reveal that there would be a definite interim period between his death

and second coming—the “church age.” “Church” means “the called-out people of God.” Peter’s individual authority became clear in the book of Acts as he became the spokesman for the disciples and for the Christian community. Peter, as the spokesman, became the foundation stone of all believers who would “build” Christ’s church.

Later, Peter reminded Christians that they were the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4–8; see also 1 Corinthians 3:11). All believers are joined into this church by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, the same faith that Peter expressed here (see also Ephesians 2:20–21; Revelation 21:14). True believers like Peter regard their faith as a revelation from God and are willing to confess him publicly. Jesus praised Peter for his confession of faith. Faith like Peter’s is the foundation of Christ’s kingdom.

“And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The “gates of Hades” represents Satan and all his minions. These words may be interpreted, in light of other passages on the power of Satan, as Satan’s domain in the offensive against the church. Christ promises that Satan will not defeat the church; instead, his sphere of operation (death) will be defeated. In these words Jesus gave the promise of the indestructibility of the church and protection for all who believe in him and become part of his church.

One of the purposes of the church

Ephesians 3:10 The big picture of God’s “manifold wisdom” of the church

The purpose of the mystery (10–12)

That now the manifold wisdom of God might be made

known: God is a being of infinite wisdom and glory, and He wants His creatures to know His great and **manifold wisdom**. One purpose in His great plan of the ages is to reveal this wisdom.

Understanding the character of God, we can say that this is not for a selfish or self-glorying motive, in the way we think of the proud man showing his brains and accomplishments to everyone. God does this

for the glory of His creatures, because the glory of the creature is directly connected to the glory of the Creator.

This wisdom is **manifold**. The ancient Greek word *polupoikilos* has the ideas of intricacy, complexity, and great beauty. “That hath abundance of curious variety in it, such as is seen in the best pictures or textures.” (Trapp)

It also must **be made known**. Dean Alford points out that the words might be made known are emphatic, strongly contrasting the idea of hidden in Ephesians 3:9.

Might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers: This explains how God will reveal His wisdom, and to whom He reveals it. He will reveal it by His work in the church, and He will reveal it to angelic beings (principalities and powers).

Of course, God also wants to reveal this wisdom to the church. Yet in the big picture, God doesn’t use the angels to reveal His wisdom to the saints, but He does use the saints to reveal His wisdom to the angelic beings, both faithful and fallen angels. This reminds us that we are called for something far greater than our own individual salvation and sanctification. We are called to be the means by which God teaches the universe a lesson, and a beautiful lesson.

We are surrounded by invisible spiritual beings, and they intently look upon us. Here, Paul draws back the invisible curtain that hides these beings just as Elisha prayed at Dothan, LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see (2 Kings 6:17). These angelic beings see us perfectly and know us far better than we know them.

“What then have they to learn from us? Ah, they have to learn something which makes them watch us with wonder and with awe. They see in us indeed all our weakness, and all our sin. But they see a nature which, wrecked by itself, was yet made in the image of their God and ours. And they see this God at work upon that wreck to produce results not only wonderful in themselves but doubly wonderful because of the conditions.” (Moule)

“In his immortality, never touched by one drop of our cold river, it is instructive to him beyond all our thought to see his God triumphing

over pain and death in some sufferer in the fire of martyrdom, or in the torture of cancer, or in the shipwreck, or just in the silent awe of any form of our departure from the body ... They see these fallen and mortal beings, this Community of the lost and saved, not only bearing and doing for God here on earth, but spiritually present with Him in the Holy of Holies above." (Moule)

Sometimes Christians get the crazy idea that God saved them and works in their life because they are somehow such great people. The angels see right through this. We might believe that it is because of us; the angels know better. We may think our lives are small and insignificant; the angels know better. We may doubt our high standing, seating in heavenly places; the angels see this spiritual reality with eyes wide open.

"It is as if a great drama is being enacted. History is the theatre, the world is the stage, and the church members in every land are the actors. God himself has written the play, and he directs and produces it. Act by act, scene by scene, the story continues to unfold. But who are the audience? They are the cosmic intelligences, the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." (Stott)

"The Angels are instructed in God's wisdom ... by the fact of the great spiritual body, constituted in Christ, which they contemplate, and which is to them the theatre of the glory of God." (Alford) "The history of the Christian church becomes a graduate school for angels." (Stott, quoting Mackay)

To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places: This means that angelic beings are interested and instructed by the lives of Christians. This is why the conduct of the church is so important: because angelic and demonic beings are looking on, and God's intent is to teach them through us. Several passages refer to this:

- For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10).
- The things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1:12).
- I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect

angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality (1 Timothy 5:21).

We should take this responsibility seriously, for angels are given the responsibility to carry souls to heaven at death (Luke 16:22) and are the reapers of the final harvest (Matthew 13:39–43).

“And, lastly, what think some of you, would angels say of your walk and conversation? Well, I suppose you don’t care much about them, and yet you should. For who but angels will be the reapers at the last, and who but they shall be the convoy to our spirits across the last dark stream? Who but they shall carry our spirit like that of Lazarus into the Father’s bosom? Surely we should not despise them.” (Spurgeon)

“O be not, ye converts, ignorant of the word of God; be not oblivious of the operations of God in your own souls! The angels desire to look into these things. Do you look into them?” (Spurgeon)

A popular interpretation today sees the **principalities and powers** as modern political states and economic structures. The idea is that the church primarily is a witness to them, and should redeem governments and social structures through its witness. But Paul specifically wrote that these **principalities and powers** are in the heavenly places, not in earthly places.

According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished:

The mystery reveals and furthers God’s eternal purpose in Jesus, previously described in Ephesians 1:10—that in the fullness of the times, God will gather together (essentially, to sum up or resolve) all things in Jesus.

The mystery of the unified body of Christ is according to that purpose. It is a preview of what Jesus will ultimately do in the fulfillment of summing up all things in Himself.

“The church thus appears to be God’s pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, the mystery of God’s will to be administered in the fullness of the times when the things in heaven and the things on earth are brought together in Christ.” (Bruce)

Which He accomplished: There is a sense in which Paul can say that this eternal purpose is already accomplished. Its fulfillment is a

certainty (as shown by the initial work of bringing Jew and Gentile together in Jesus), so he can speak of it as already finished.

Through faith in Him: The fact of this unity is shown by the truth that we (Jew and Gentile collectively) have the identical boldness, access, and confidence before God—because it has nothing to do with national or ethnic identity, only with faith in Him (Jesus).

The word for **boldness** has the idea of “freedom of speech.” We have the freedom to express ourselves before God, without fear or shame. “The Greek word ‘parresia’ translated by ‘boldness’ means really ‘free speech’—that is, the speaking of all. It is the blessed privilege of prayer.” (Gaebelein)

Divisions in the church have not always been between Jew and Gentile. The Reformers spoke out against the division between “clergy” and “laity” and the teaching of the priesthood of all believers insisted that all had the same access to God.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Avoid missing Church on a regular basis

10:24-25 And let us 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—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. The third, fourth, and fifth let us statements appear in these two verses. Believers ought to consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. This word “spur” (paroxysm) means to “stimulate strongly,” “arouse,” or “incite to riot.” Christians need to spur or stimulate each other in two areas: (1) Love: not an emotion but a choice to act regardless of our feelings. We are to act lovingly toward other believers. (2) Good deeds: works done for the good of others, and which attract others to Christ. (For more on good deeds, see notes on 6:10; 13:16, 20–21.)

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between staying strong in the faith or collapsing along the way. Believers ought to be

sensitive to one another's needs for encouragement, ready to offer supportive words or actions. The Bible gives several examples of encouragement and commands for believers to encourage each other (verses quoted from NRSV, italics ours):

Deuteronomy 3:28 "But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him. because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of the land that you will see."

Acts 4:36 "There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement')."

Acts 15:32 "Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers."

Romans 12:6, 8 "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is ... encouraging, let him encourage" (NIV).

Romans 15:4-5 "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 6:22 "I am sending [Tychicus] to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts."

1 Thessalonians 3:2 "We sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith."

1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11, 14 "Therefore encourage one another with these words ... encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing ... encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them."

2 Timothy 4:2 "Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable: convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching."

Philemon 1:7 “I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.”

Hebrews 3:13 “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (NIV).

1 Peter 5:12 “Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.”

Believers also must not give up meeting together. Some Christians (then as well as today) were in the habit of not going to the church meetings. For whatever reason, these believers were trying to survive on their own. This individualistic attitude is prevalent today, as well. God did not design Christians to be completely independent of each other, however; he designed believers to need and encourage each other. To withdraw from corporate strength is to invite disaster, like a soldier in battle who lags behind the rest of his platoon and becomes an easy target.

Finally, believers must encourage one another. These words reveal that Christians are responsible for each other (a similar theme is found elsewhere, see 3:13). Christians cannot be concerned just for their own spiritual well-being; they must also encourage others to keep fervent in their love and active in their service to God. This encouragement should happen all the more as you see the Day approaching. This “day” (Christ’s return) is guaranteed; Christ will return. Through the centuries, many Christians have been discouraged because they believed that Christ should have already returned. But Christ has not forgotten, and he has not changed his plans. Christians must live as if the Lord will come back at any moment. Christ must not find us lax in our devotion and preparation.

CHURCHGOING

To neglect Christian meetings is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We gather together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord. As we get closer to the day when Christ will return, we will face many spiritual struggles, and even times of persecution. Anti-Christian forces will grow in strength. Difficulties

should never be excuses for missing church services. Rather, as difficulties arise, we should make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance.

TOGETHER

In a former era, no one tried to compete with church for the Sunday morning time slot, a slot now regarded as open time to be filled by almost any recreational attraction. Yet gathering for worship is both an essential witness to Christ and a valuable time for spiritual nourishment. Want to grow as a Christian?

- Don't go it alone. You have been called to participate in a wonderful "body," the church, a large group of brothers and sisters.
- Don't try to squeeze it in. Worship should be a top priority.
- Don't rationalize when you skip church. Worshiping God with the body of believers cannot be substituted with personal study or watching a church service on television. Of course, physical limitations could keep you from attending a worship service. If so, ask some believers to come to your home for personal fellowship.

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 & 27 We need everybody working together

BELIEVERS ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST / 12:12-31

Using the analogy of the body, Paul emphasized the importance of each church member. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. Thinking that one's gift is more important than someone else's is an expression of spiritual pride. Devaluing the gift offends the Giver. We should not look down on those who seem unimportant, and we should not be jealous of others who have impressive gifts. Instead, we should use the gifts we have been given and encourage others to use theirs. If we don't, the body of believers will be less effective.

12:12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Paul followed his section describing the diversity of gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the church by providing an analogy of a body (see also 10:17). Some take this following section to

be an argument for unity despite diversity (and so it could be), but the context reveals Paul's more pressing concern in the Corinthian church—that they accept diversity in their one body. Just as a body is made up of many parts, so the church is made up of many people with different gifts. It seems that the Corinthians all wanted to speak in tongues or desired more spectacular manifestations of the Spirit's power. Paul explained, however, that while not everyone has the same gift, they still form one body—the body of Christ.

BODY LANGUAGE

Paul compares the body of Christ to a human body. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The parts are different for a purpose, and in their differences they must work together. Diversity can maintain unity as long as all submit to one Lord. Christians must avoid two common errors: (1) being too proud of their abilities; and (2) thinking they have nothing to give to the body of believers. Instead of comparing ourselves to one another, we should use our different gifts, together, to spread the Good News of salvation. We speak Christ's "body language" when we practice our unique gifts under his sole authority.

12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. What gives believers their unity is the one Spirit—the very same Spirit who also gives their diversity through the many and varied gifts. As believers live out their diversity through the gifts, they must never forget the basic fact that unites them—they were all baptized by one Spirit into one body. All believers receive the same Holy Spirit at the time of their conversion. This distinguishes them from nonbelievers and unites them with one another. This "receiving" of the Spirit is here called being "baptized by" the Spirit. The metaphor pictures baptism and compares believers' experience of water baptism (see 1:13–16) to being set apart by the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit also lives within believers (6:19). The phrase "we were all given the one Spirit to drink" means that the same Holy Spirit completely fills all believers' innermost beings (Ephesians 5:18–20). The indwelling Holy Spirit unites all believers who might otherwise be as different as Jews from

Greeks (Gentiles) or as a slave from a free person (see also Galatians 3:23; Colossians 3:11).

BASIS FOR UNITY

The church is composed of many types of people from a variety of backgrounds with a multitude of gifts and abilities. It is easy for these differences to divide people, as was the case in Corinth. Despite the differences, however, all believers have one thing in common—faith in Christ. On this essential truth the church finds unity. All believers are baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body of believers, the church. We don't lose our individual identities, but we have an overriding oneness in Christ. When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence, and that person is born into God's family. As members of God's family, we may have different interests and gifts, but let us pursue a common goal—deep unity in Christ.

12:14-15 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. Having established that the church, the worldwide community of believers, is indeed one body—the body of Christ—Paul went on to show the necessary diversity in that body. A human body does not consist of one member but of many. For a body to function, such diversity is essential. Individual members cannot separate themselves without harming the body. Just as a foot cannot decide to leave the body because it is not a hand, so a believer who does not have a particular gift cannot decide that he or she is not a part of the church. Not having a particular gift would not make [that person] any less a part of the body. Apparently, some believers in Corinth were discouraged that they did not have a particular gift—probably one of the more spectacular gifts, such as the gift of tongues—so they believed that they could not truly be a part of the body unless they experienced that particular gift. But Paul explains, through this metaphor, that all the different gifts given by the Spirit to believers must be utilized in order for the church to function well. Likewise, the gifts are interdependent. Like the body, they cannot function without each other.

12:16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I

do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. As with the foot and the hand (12:15), so it is with the ear and the eye. The parts of the body should desire to perform only the functions for which they were made, not seeking other parts. The ear may prefer to be able to see, like the eye, but that does not mean that the ear is any less a part of the body. The ear will no more be changed into an eye or given the ability to see than a believer will be able to exchange one gift for another. Instead, each believer should discover his or her spiritual gift and then use it to its fullest capacity for the Lord.

12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? Every spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit is vital to the functioning of the body. Thus, the gifts are not given at whim and will not be changed according to people’s preferences. If everyone wanted to be an eye, then the body might see very well, but it would not be able to hear. If the whole body were an ear, there would be no sense of smell.

12:18-20 But God made our bodies with many parts, and he has put each part just where he wants it. What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. As God created human bodies to function with their many parts working together, so the body of Christ—the church—needs all the various gifts working in harmony. The picture of a body with only one part illustrates the absurdity of a church with everyone trying to have the same gift. It would not be a body at all, and it would be unable to function. While there are many parts, there is only one body, because God ordained it that way, putting each part just where he wants it. All believers—those with the spectacular gifts and those with the quieter gifts—are placed right where God wants them so that they might serve effectively together. They are one body with many parts, because God made it that way.

Resources: Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Program, Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Guzik, David, Life Application Bible Commentary, Factbook Logos bible, Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1995, Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. Barton, Bruce B. 1996. Matthew. Life Application Bible Commentary.

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Sermon Notes:

Happy Sunday, everyone! Welcome, AVC Family, in person and online!

Let me share our AVC Connections—many of you are taking advantage of these. Here they are:
YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

Today, I am launching into a sermon series titled: Gifted Together, Unleashing Heaven's Team.

The Church is not supposed to be a one-man or one-woman show.

The Church is not a religious club where you pay your dues and become a member. I'll admit, the American Church has many flaws. When COVID hit and we were all told to go on lockdown, I began receiving countless videos of some church services and their times of worship. I looked at a few, and I thought, No way... No way...

It's sad to say, but many churches have abused their power—abuses of controlling people in many ways, using unsound biblical doctrine to convince them they are right in their control.

Look, I'm just telling you, very real and raw: if you're in a controlling church that is telling you to worship the pastor or teaching unbiblical truths— get out NOW!

Here's the truth: you may know this or not, but the Church was not man's invention.

Listen to Jesus' words: Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Apostle Paul put it this way:

Ephesians 3:10 Now, through the Church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known...

Unfortunately, I hear Christians say, "I don't have to go to church!" Nope, you don't. But how's that working out for you and your family?

Here's what the Word of God says—people can argue with God about it if they want:

Hebrews 10:24-25 Let us 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—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

This is a powerful passage we must dig into. It really helps lay the foundation for where we are going. Get this—here is the biblical importance of the Church, literally for our lives:

"We may spur one another on" (v.24)

- Spur means to encourage each other.
- Spurring on means we are praying for one another.
- Spurring means we are teaching and preaching.

Put this together: the Church is here to help you navigate through life. We are here for you! Get this:

"Spur on toward love and good deeds." (v.24)

What "love"? Whose "love"? To direct us toward the love of Jesus Christ. We need the love of Jesus Christ.

The Word says the Church is to direct us (I quote) to "good

deeds” (v.24).

I hate to stomp on all of your perfect little halos this morning, but we are not always good.

Yes, you heard me say that right out loud—Christians are not always good. LOL, I was in the car the other day, stopped at a stop sign, and the bumper sticker on the person’s car said, “I Hate People.” I was shocked!

Look, when Paul says the Church is supposed to lead us to “good deeds,” this means: Good Deeds: The Church is here to help you navigate through life, to keep our mind, body, and soul in tune with Christ.

Hebrews 10:25 says, “As you see the Day approaching”

- Day of what? The day of Jesus Christ’s return.
- We are not guaranteed tomorrow.

[Story of Young & Married/How the Church Strengthened Us]

“As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). We joined a great Bible-believing church and got the love and support we so much needed.

The other very important part of our God story is that we got involved at our church. AVC Family, as we press into this series, we will discover we all have responsibilities, roles, and gifts the Lord wants us to use. Amen!

We are Gifted Together - Unleashing Heaven’s Team.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 & 27 / This will be our launching pad into next week’s sermon.

Devotional Questions

Read the following passages and answer the devotional questions:

Read Matthew 16:18

Question: Who's idea was it to establish the church?

Question: What is so important about the church?

Read Ephesians 3:10

Question: According to Apostle Paul what role does the church play in the world?

Hebrews 10:24-25 Says: "And let us 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—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Question: What is the relevance of the church; what does "spur one another on" mean?

Question: Why are we supposed to love people... and how may this impact their lives?

Question: We are to encourage as we "see the Day approaching"... what kind of day is Paul talking about and why is this so important?

Question: Should we go to church... what's said about this?