

Sermon Series: Priceless: Finding Your Value in God
To be used with: Session Five: Equipped with God's Gifts
Sermon Title Possibilities: The Work of the Holy Spirit
Scripture: 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 4:11-13; Acts 1:8

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Priceless: Finding Your Value in God* these sermon outlines will use similar Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes as the study regarding the equipping of God's people.

Introduction: My son-in-law works for the Water and Sewer Authority of Douglas County, Ga. He's the guy that puts in new water and sewer lines and repairs those that have broken. He often has to be on-call which means that he might get called at any time of day or night to deal with some type of emergency situation. You've seen the kind of situations I'm talking about either on the news or in person – water spewing everywhere, or worse, sewage collecting in the street. What if when he got to that job sight, there was no backhoe there or on its way or even available? What if it was in the middle of the night, and they had none of those really bright lights? What if he had to do the work by himself? You know that there are some jobs that you just *cannot* do on your own. My son-in-law is a worker, but he can't accomplish anything without a job to do and the right equipment to use.

As Christians, we are workers in a much larger task. We need three resources in order to be able to be used by God. We need quality equipment that will enable us to do a job. We need overseers to direct us in the job and to give us training. And we need an assignment in which we can put to use the resources that we have been given. God has provided each of these for His church.

1. **Equipped by God's message.** (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

In whatever job you're going to do, the first step is to gather the equipment that you need for that job. When mowing the lawn, you've got to get the lawn mower, the gas can, the weed eater, the edger and the leaf blower. When brushing your teeth, you need a tooth brush, the tooth paste, the floss and the mouthwash. To fix a meal, you pull out the frying pan, the spatula, the whisk, the pots, the non-stick spray and all the ingredients that the recipe requires. Often, you get ready to do a job and realize that you are missing one of the items that you need. But God has given us all the equipment that we need for the task He has called us to. The gifts of the Spirit are the internal portion of that equipment. You have at least one maybe more to enable you to be the part of the Body that God wants you to be. The external portion of the equipment is His Word. God says of His Word that it thoroughly equips us for every good work (v. 17). It is true (inspired). It helps us in the areas of teaching (correct doctrine), reproof (conviction), correction (getting us back on track) and training in righteousness (showing us the pathway that we need to follow to stay out of trouble) (v. 16).

Besides all that, think about the other ways that the different writers of Scripture have described the Bible. It is described as a sword (Eph. 6:17). You use it to attack

the enemy and to defend yourself against his attacks. It is described as a scalpel (Heb. 4:12). God uses it to expose those things in us that are harmful to us and others and then to cut them out. The Psalmist says that the Bible gives light in dark situations and safety in dangerous ones (Ps. 119:105). The person who continues to be healthy spiritually and productive during dry times has spent a great deal of time in God's Word according to Psalm 1. To Joshua and to us, God promised that those who meditate in His Word and obey it will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8). Which of you would do a task with tools that weren't designed to do that task? Yes, you can get a nail into the wall with a screw driver, but it's not recommended. The Bible truly is that universal tool that will enable the Christian to be fully equipped for every good work.

2. Equipped by God's messengers. (Eph. 4:11-13)

The second requirement for any job to be completed is one or more individuals to train the workers in their task and supervise them as they do it. God has provided this for His church as well. These trainers / supervisors are known as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The people who serve in these roles are put in their place to equip the church to do what it was designed to do.

They help the church serve *"building up the body of Christ"* (v. 12)

The difficulty of any foreman overseeing his crew is to keep them on task. It's easy for them to forget why exactly they are there. They are not there to earn a paycheck or to get a promotion. They are there to serve the interests of whoever their employer is. The employer or Master of the church is Jesus Christ. It's His body. And He wants that body strengthened as each part of the body fulfills its function. The leadership of the church helps to organize each part such that everyone serves in the place where he/she can be of the greatest benefit for the whole body.

They help the church grow *"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (v. 13)

Every building has a blueprint. Every project has a plan. The designers have a direction for the project to go in and an outcome that they want to reach. Jesus has a blueprint for His church as well. He wants each member to look like Him when the project is complete. It's a tough assignment...one that will not actually be finished until heaven. But it is one that pastors make their aim to continue from one generation to the next.

They help the church stand *"no longer...tossed to and fro...by every wind of doctrine"* (v. 14)

It doesn't benefit to build a structure if it is only going to fall when pressure is applied. From its beginning, the church has been under pressure from those who would seek to destroy it. Satan used the Pharisees at first for this task, but even they recognized that they might very well be fighting a losing battle (Acts 5:38-39). So Satan tried a different tactic – destroy them from within with false teaching. So John the Apostle warned the church against the threat of these false teachers (1 Jn. 4:1-6), and Paul the Apostle counseled young Timothy, a pastor himself, to be

faithful to preach the Word and give his people exactly what they needed in order to stand firm (2 Tim. 4:2).

They help the church stay together “*whole body joined and held together*” (v. 16)

The natural inclination of parts is to separate unless they have someone or something to hold them together. For the church, we have both – a someone and a something. The “something” that holds the church together is mentioned at the end of verse 16. It’s love. An old song though not Christian in its message has some biblical truth. It says, “Love...love will keep us together.” The “someone” once again is that leadership structure headed up by the pastor. Personal agendas and personality conflicts are part of the makeup of any church. The pastor helps the members of the church look past these to see their common purpose and goal. And that gets us to the final requirement – a job to do.

3. Equipped for God’s mission. (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:18-20)

Let me present to you a sad situation. A backhoe sits at the headquarters of the construction company. It’s gassed up, ready to go. There are workers there. They’ve been hired, trained and certified. The supervisory staff has the respect and admiration of the crew. Everything is in place for a thriving business and a productive day. There’s only one problem. No one has called with any orders for any work to be done. There are no holes to dig, no buildings to build, no jobs to be done.

That would definitely be a sad situation, but it is not our situation. Jesus did not equip us in order for us to sit back and play solitaire at the home office. Jesus spent three years training 12 men so that they then would be the messengers that carried the message in such a way that the mission would be accomplished. The mission that He gave them is recorded multiple times in Scripture. One of them is in Matthew 28 and another is in Acts 1:8. Together these words of Jesus make clear that the mission He called those original disciples to is to be witnesses of what they had seen and heard everywhere they went and to train those who responded to their message so that they could become effective followers of Jesus Christ. That mission is our mission too. It’s a big mission. We can do it because God has given us all the resources that we need.

Conclusion: See if you recognize these words: “Your mission, Mr. Hunt, should you choose to accept it...” Those are the words that begin every Mission Impossible episode. They’re great stories about missions that are too big to accomplish. But somehow, what seems impossible is accomplished by the time two hours have elapsed. How? They have the right equipment – all these neat gadgets from gloves that allow you to climb up the outside of the tallest building in the world to a machine that will quickly craft a head piece that can make you look like anyone in the world. They have the right team – daredevils, mechanical people, people skilled in electronics and people skilled in people-skills. All the right people using their unique abilities at the right time and the right place often with just a millisecond to spare. They have the right job assigned to them by those who sometimes remain faceless. It might be easy to believe that our job is an impossible mission – take the Gospel to the whole world. But we have something that Ethan Hunt never had. Each of those messages that offered a mission would finish with these words: “As always, should you or any member of your I.M. Force be caught or killed, the Secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions.” In other words, if you get in trouble, you’re on your own.

Contrast that with the way that Jesus finished His assignment to us: “And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). We can take on this mission because we have a Savior who will never leave us or forsake us.

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