

Discovering, Achieving, and Implementing
Spiritual Balance in the Life of the Christian and the Church.
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Part I:
Discovering the Biblical Relationship Balance in the Church:
Spiritual Gifts and Christian Character

Synopsis of this Article:

- 1. Love, with its biblical meaning of “loyalty”, is the foundation and basis for spiritual balance in all relationships.**
- 2. The spiritual relational balance of the Christian in the world can be summed up in the following acrostic: UIO. (It’s *YOU* I owe!)
U=Upreach
I=Inreach
O=Outreach
If all three of these are expressed in the Christian’s life with the priority in the order of Upreach, Inreach and Outreach, there is a biblical spiritual relational balance in his/her life.**
- 3. Every balanced and successful relationship has the three necessary components of structure, expectations, and accountability. All relationships should seek to discover and embrace these in a biblical manner so that those relationships can grow and thrive.**
- 4. Achieving the biblical relational balance in one’s Christian life involves everyone expressing *both* the character indicated in the one another passages *and* his/her specific spiritual gift. Without both there is disunity and relational *imbalance* in the Body.**
- 5. We as leaders have the responsibility to work together to prepare our people for works of ministry in *both* the areas of character expression as indicated by the one another passages and the discovery, development, and implementation of one’s spiritual gift(s). Leaders need to guide the development and expression of the Christian’s character and gift(s) in service to the body in such a way that they build up the body in a unifying and loving manner.**

Spiritual Relational Balance

“Spiritual relational balance” is a concept I define as how we as disciples fit together and function together in God’s Church. Relationally, the Scripture sums up our obligations to each other in several passages. Romans 13:9 states, “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law” (ESV). This is a confirmation of Jesus statements that loving God and one’s neighbor is the greatest and the second greatest commandment. They are also the way the Law is fulfilled (Matt. 22:36-40). Love is the obligation we have (i.e. what we owe) toward God and our fellow human beings. The term “love” means “affective loyalty”. That is, its

primary meaning is loyalty with feelings a secondary connotation. Loyalty to one another leads the relationship, not feelings.¹ From these passages (Rom. 13:9; Matt. 22:36-40), I have isolated three components of relationship which every Christian “owes” to others. It is summed up in the letters UIO (It’s *YOU* I owe!). The three relationships God wants us to be involved in are:

U=Upreach. This is cultivating and deepening our relationship with God

I=Inreach. This is reaching inside the church to care for one another and help one another grow to become like Christ²

O=Outreach. This is reaching out to be a blessing to the lost to help them come to a saving relationship with God as well as for them to become relationally bonded to those already in the church

Biblically there is a clear order of priority for these relationships. Upreach is first, Inreach is second, and Outreach is third.³ Our relationship with God needs to be balanced with, yet have a higher priority over our relationship with other Christians. Our relationship with other Christians needs to be balanced with and yet be a priority over our relationships with non-Christians. This is not an “either” “or” situation, however, as *all three* relationships must take place if we are to have a balanced spiritual life and be loyal to God.

In a recent leadership retreat, Gordon Ferguson shared that in any successful human relationship three ingredients are necessary: structure, expectations and accountability⁴. Biblically these are based on trust/love/loyalty. We depend on each other, expect things of each other, help correct each other, encourage each other, make time for each other, etc. These things are necessary to having *any* loyal relationship. This seems also to be true in what the Bible teaches through the example of Christ. Note how Jesus had time structure for his disciples when he chose them to “be with him” (Mk. 3:14). He also had expectations that he laid out. Note, for example, his requirements for discipleship (Luke 9:23; 14:25-33). In addition, Jesus held his disciples accountable as can be seen in his interaction with Peter in John 21. Using these three essentials Jesus built relational loyalty between himself and the disciples, between the disciples themselves, and between the disciples and the lost. To *effectively* have a balanced Christian life of Inreach, Outreach, and Upreach, each of these relationships will be built around these three elements of time structure, accountability, and expectations.

In this article I will not be addressing specifically the U (Upreach) dimensional relationship (except in so far as it is involved in one another relationships) or the O (Outreach) relationship. Rather, I will be focusing on the I (Inreach) relationship, the

¹ See my audiovisual presentation on this Biblical truth and my article “Love in the Greatest Commandment” at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13

² Compare Matt. 28:20 where it says we are to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded them”.

³ This priority is indicated in the Bible in the two greatest commandments which put God as first and neighbors second *and* Gal. 5:10 which states, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” The term “especially” (*malista*) seems to denote that believers are a priority over the lost.

⁴ This retreat took place in Estes Park, Colorado, September 2, 2006. My thanks to Gordon Ferguson, for pointing out these three ingredients.

relationship between Christians and each other in the church⁵. The questions addressed will be “How is everything to be balanced? What is universally applicable to everyone and what is individually applicable? What does God say is my part and what are his expectations for me in the church?”

The answers to these questions I believe lies in understanding the interrelationship between “one another” character traits and “spiritual gift” manifestations in the Body. There are many “one another” passages in the New Testament referring to godly relationships between disciples.⁶ These passages seem to be detailing *each* Christian’s relational responsibility toward the other. They embrace much of what the Christian character is supposed to be and how it is to be relationally extended to one another from the heart so that we might really know (experience)⁷ one another in a good and loving manner. This *universal* expectation depicted by the one another passages for each Christian is set in contrast to one’s spiritual gifts which are said *not* to be universal or given to every person. Note the Roman’s 12 (4-6a) passage:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members *do not all have the same function*, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have *different gifts*, according to the grace given us . . . (emphases mine)⁸

Again in I Cor. 12:4-6, 12:

There are *different* kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are *different* kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are *different* kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 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 (emphases mine).

While *not all* have every spiritual gift, still many spiritual gift abilities overlap in the one another passages with character *expectations for everyone*. How can this be? How can it be reconciled? How is it to be put together biblically? If certain character traits are said to be a special spiritual gift unique to certain individuals how can they be commanded of

⁵Although my focus here is Inreach, I want to insist that the first and foremost priority in the UIO relationships is one’s relationship with God, i.e., Upreach. This relationship, like the other two, also needs to have the three elements of structure, accountability, and expectations. There needs to be a time structure for our quiet times set aside for God to deepen our relationship with him, to talk with him and let him talk with us. There also is accountability in that God is the judge and we can suffer consequences of what we do here and now as well as his judgment in the last day. There are also expectations as God gives us commands to be followed in our relationship with him. By the same token, to accomplish outreach relationships one must also have these three elements. To really get to know and help a lost person one must plan to spend time with them, be accountable, and have expectations in that relationship also.

⁶These one another passages are summarized in Gordon Ferguson’s book *Discipling: God’s Plan to Train and Transform His People* (Woburn: DPI, 1997), 31-47

⁷ The Christian life is to be one in which one knows (i.e., “experiences”, in contrast to mere intellectual knowledge) the life of God and fellow Christians in a wholesome blessing manner. One of the essential aspects of true Christianity is this “experiential knowledge” of God and one-another. On this important Biblical relational truth see my article “One of the Unique Elements of True Christianity” at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13.

⁸ All Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the NIV.

everyone? You have, for instance, from the one another passages the command for every one to be kind and compassionate (i.e., merciful) (Eph. 4:32), for everyone to serve (Gal. 5:13), for everyone to encourage (I Thess. 4:18), for everyone to give (2 Cor. 9:7), for everyone to build up the other (I Thess 5:11), and for each one to instruct or teach the other (Rom. 15:14). *Yet on the other hand* there are those with the gift of mercy (Rom. 12:8), serving (Rom. 12:7), encouraging (Rom. 12:8), those who have the gift of giving (Rom. 12:8), apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd/teachers with the special gifts of building up the body (Eph. 4:11-12), and teachers with the gift of teaching (Rom. 12:9). All these are said to have talents that others do not. How can this be? How can Rom. 12:6 (“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us”) be true and yet have *each* one be expected by God to express those *individual* attributes?

In the past within our churches there have been two extremes in living this out in the church. The first extreme was the mentality of “everyone does everything” *with the same ability of one who has that gift*. One’s spirituality was judged by his or her ability to perform in *all* areas of the Christian life with the same ability and productivity of one who had those gifts. This extreme basically expected *everyone* to express all the gifts in a mighty way. This might be called the “superman” philosophy of ministry. The idea of becoming all things to all people was certainly part of this ministry philosophy but to such an extent that one felt like a failure unless he/she could always do all things excellently no matter if he/she was gifted in that area or not. This was the expectation many Bible Talk leaders felt in the past. They were expected to be the best givers, the best marriage/family counselors, the best disciplers, the best evangelists, the best shepherds, the best teachers, the best preachers, etc. To complicate this there was also a reductionist form of this extreme. In addition to being able to do all the things as if they were one’s gift, there was an even higher expectation that everyone should be able to perform as an evangelist (not just be evangelistic) and be able to produce fruit (defined as making and baptizing disciples) in a mighty way. It was so extreme that one’s worth was tied up in his/her *ability* to do what an evangelist could do well. One’s spirituality was tied up with his “fruitfulness” in a numbers and performance manner. This was the “all or nothing superman” ministry mentality in which one’s relationship with God and yes even worth before God and the church was determined by his ability to perform in an incredibly dynamic and dazzling way. The outcome of this ministry philosophy was that many of those who had multiple gifts (especially those with the gift of evangelism) felt they were at the height of their glory and felt totally accepted and worthy before God and the church. They could not understand why everyone else could not perform as they did. On the other hand, those without multiple gifts and without the gift of evangelism felt like the scum of the earth, never able to measure up. This was the dichotomy produced with its resultant *disunifying* fruit. It produced skewed encouragement and discouragement, honor and dishonor, dispensability and indispensability, worthiness and unworthiness, grace and guilt polarity in so many people. One was either a perfect super disciple or not a “good” one at all based on his performance and ability to manifest *all* the gifts in an incredible way. This unbiblical model of ministry does not truly allow for spiritual gifts to be fully manifested. It, in reality, suppresses the *individuality* of those gifts, glorifies those with many gifts, and devalues those with few or the “unimportant” gifts. It is an imbalance in the unity and diversity of the body. This philosophy, in many cases, produced churches of prideful disciples who expressed certain gifts well and who

would look down on all others as “weak”. It also produced those whose egos were fed more and more as they continued to perform “well” in their glorified gifted areas. The performers⁹ tended to be sure of their salvation and to have feelings of security in God.

This scenario, on the other hand, *also* produced a church of many guilt-laden individuals who did not have certain gifts (or multiple gifts) and who could not ever seem to measure up to the expectations of a being true disciple. They were the *under-*performers who continuously doubted their salvation and had deep feelings of insecurity before God. They felt like second-class citizens in his kingdom, if indeed they were children of God at all.

Incredibly this produced a self-focus for *both* groups. Although there was self-denial especially in the case of those who have few gifts to attempt to express the gifts they did not have, it created a self-focus expressed in questions such as “How am I doing?” “Am I right with God?” “Will I ever make it to Heaven?” On the other hand, those with many gifts tended to feel good about themselves as having “arrived” in that they perceived from fruit produced that God was really blessing them. Pride (internally and sometimes externally) came into hearts and was expressed by comparing themselves with others through “stats” and praise given them by other leaders (compare what happened in Gal. 4:4 and II Cor. 10:12). Hence this ministry model, while attempting to achieve self-denial and selflessness many times ended up in creating a life of pride and self-focus, a selfishness not a selflessness.

On the other extreme (one which has been experienced in some of our churches lately), is the philosophy that one does not attempt to serve in any way listed in scripture *unless* he/she has that gift. This person refuses to help out for instance in serving as an usher, or teaching in Kids Kingdom, or in reaching out to invite neighbors to church because he or she does not have the gift of serving, teaching, evangelism, etc. This extreme looks only at the gifts passages and leaves out the “one another” passages of the Bible. It is another form of reductionism. In other words, the one another passages have been jettisoned as part of the Christian life, spiritual gifts become the only important obligatory issue, and one only serves in the capacities for which one is gifted. In this concept of ministry, self-denial gradually dies. This is a skewed view of Christianity as well and produces a church without self-sacrifice and self-denial, one which some label “luke-warm”. Since one normally only denies self when he or she does something he or she does not normally *like* to do or feel capable of doing, self-denial in the church evaporates. No one “stands in the gap” so to speak. This produces an individualistic self-focused church in which people feel distant from one another and have few close friends. It produces a church that is fragmented in relationships and selfish in nature. This is the “my gift or nothing” philosophy of ministry. As this mentality sets in, the commonality of Acts 2 is lost and any concept of becoming all things to all people is no longer entertained.

The Biblical Balance

What is the answer? I believe it is to be found in a “both and” view rather than an “either or” mentality of the two models of ministry mentioned above. The Bible indeed speaks both of individual spiritual gifts *and* universal one another relationships. *Everyone*

⁹ Note, I am not saying all leaders were this way. Indeed this is not the case, but I do believe many of us became performers in this manner.

is to have or develop the character depicted in the one another passages. Yet by the same token, *all* disciples are gifted in at least one incredible way to practice and serve in a dynamic manner that others simply cannot because God has not given them the ability to do so. *Each one* should be encouraged to develop and express his/her individual gift(s)¹⁰ *as well as* the characteristics of all the one another passages.

I think a good way of illustrating this might be to envision a normal hand with palm and fingers attached. Let the palm represent the Christian character as depicted by the one another passages and let the fingers be spiritual gifts. Each finger is part of the hand and cannot do its job without the hand. The core or palm is the *basic* Christian expression of Christ to the world. However God has ordained some people to express different aspects of that core in a mighty or incredible way. The core by itself expresses the “general” character of God while the fingers dynamically express each of those characteristics in a perhaps an almost supernatural way. Without the core, the finger cannot express itself in a full way and without the fingers, the core cannot express itself in a full manner. The fingers need to be part of the palm and express all those characteristics of the palm but each finger’s felt worth is not determined by what it can do without the palm nor the palm without each finger. They are one. The finger is merely an expression of one aspect of the palm. It is not meant to operate without being part of the palm. Neither is the palm intended to be expressive without the finger(s). All the core values of the palm (the one another character traits) must be expressed in *each* finger while allowing that finger to amazingly express one aspect of that hand in an incredible way.

Balanced biblical spirituality, then is a “both and” life expression not an “either or” one. It does not have a one gift or multiple gift focus but a character focus with special dynamic outward expressions of that character. Each person has at least one gift and is to express both that gift (a finger) and the many faceted universal character expression of Christ (the palm).

A Closer Look at that Expression

The Palm

The “one another” passages depict the palm’s relationship character within the church, a character which *every* disciple is to have. That character is multifaceted and comprehensive. I have attempted to categorize the “one another” character elements (with some overlap) into four expressions of relationship as follows:

1. The expression of love/loyalty toward one another. We *all* are to love and be loyal to one another¹¹. This is the category with the greatest number of one another verses and I consider it the foundation of all other aspects of the disciple’s

¹⁰ In fact, the church is most balanced and glorifies God best when everyone is positioned in the church to work and serve in conjunction with his or her spiritual gifts.

¹¹The following passages explicitly speak of loving-one another: Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; I Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 5:15; Eph. 4:32; II Thes. 1:3; Heb. 13:1; I Pet. 1:22; 4:8; I Jn. 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; II Jn. 1:5. In addition to the *loving* one-another passages, the Bible also gives us *prohibitive* one-another passages: Do not provoke or envy one-another (Gal. 5:26), do not lie to one-another (Col. 3:9), no slander

character. The term “love” with its roots in the OT is best defined by the term “loyalty”. It is a pledge to be loyal to others, a pledge to “be there” for the other person no matter what the circumstance. It is not devoid of feelings nor controlled by feelings but leads feelings. Feelings are challenged by loyalty to change when they are not in sync with that loyalty¹². One’s life is not guided by feelings but by loyalty. One denies self when he goes *against* his feelings and natural desires to be disloyal to another and instead becomes loyal to that person. It costs something to be loyal. It is orienting yourself to focus outward on someone else. It is honoring the other person above (Rom. 12:10) and considering them better than yourself (Phil 2:3). Love/loyalty is a mark of the heart of a true disciple, an expression of Jesus living within.

- 2. The expression of a humble attitude and service to one another.** *We all* are to express the attitude of humility (Phil. 2:3) toward one another through confessing our sins to one another (I Jn. 5:16), forgiving one another ((Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13), serving one another (Gal. 5:13), being hospitable to one another (I Pet. 4:9), greeting one another (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12), bearing with one another (Eph. 4:2), submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21), waiting for one another (I Cor. 11:33), being at peace with one another (Mk. 9:50; Rom. 12:16; 15:17; I Pet. 3:8), not depriving one another (I Cor. 7:5, speaking to marrieds), having equal concern for one another (I Cor. 12:25), and honoring one another above self (Rom. 12:10). All these take humility and a desire to serve. Humility is one of the key components of being like Christ. Without it there is no grace (James 4:6).
- 3. The expression of gracing one another with our presence.** *We all* are to be a blessing in each other’s lives through our presence. We are to meet together (Heb. 10:25), serve one another (Gal. 5:13), greet one another (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20, II Cor. 13:12), speak to one another (Eph. 5:19), have fellowship with one another (I Jn 1:7), confess our sins one to another (James 5:16), and serve one another (Gal. 5:13). Without being present with each other we cannot be a blessing in each other’s life. None of these things listed can take place unless we are present with one another.
- 4. The expression of instructing and encouraging one another.** *We all* are to seek to help one another become like Christ and to express his character. This comes through being willing to encourage one another every day (Heb. 3:13; I Thes. 4:18; 5:11), to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25), to build each other up (I Thes. 5:11), to admonish one another with all wisdom (Col. 3:16), to pray for one another (James. 5:16), and teach and instruct one another (Col. 3:16; Rom. 15:14). We as disciples are all responsible to encourage one another to become more and more like Christ. We all are to instruct one another and admonish one another. These actions of the palm are not reserved only for fingers with those gifts.

(James 4:4), no grumbling against one-another (James 5:9; I Pet. 4:9) and do not judge one-another (Rom. 14:13).

¹² This is what Jesus was so intensely fighting for in the Garden when he sweat drops of blood.

The Fingers

The one another passages are for everyone. One cannot refuse to serve, instruct, love, encourage, greet, forgive, honor, accept, wait, or bear with another. Nor can one refuse to speak, submit, build the other up, spur another on, have fellowship, or be humble toward one another simply because he/she does not have that gift. That does not mean one will always be “good” at these things, but that is not the point. The point is to love/be loyal to one another. Without having a heart to be a person who expresses the one another characteristics we cannot be loyal to one another. Each of us is to express these things toward one another in whatever way and with whatever talent or lack of talent we possess. It is unbiblical to do away with the one another passages just because we don’t have that spiritual gift. On the other hand it is also unbiblical to expect our brother or sister without those spiritual gifts to be able to express these things with the same ability or effectiveness as those who possess those gifts.

The fingers are the expression of the various talents given differently to each one of us. The fingers are not all the index finger or the little finger. Each is different and expresses itself beautifully as God has designed it. These gifts include (but are not limited to) artistic gifts (Ex. 31:3; 35:31), contentment (Eccl. 3:13; 5:19), prophecy/preaching (Rom. 12:6), serving (Rom. 12:7), teaching (Rom. 12:7), encouraging (Rom. 12:8), giving/contributing (Rom. 12:8), leadership (Rom. 12:8), showing mercy (Rom. 12:8), celibacy (I Cor. 7:7), wisdom (I Cor. 12:8), knowledge (I Cor. 12:8), faith (I Cor. 12:9), healing (I Cor. 12:9), distinguishing spirits (I Cor. 12:10), ability to speak different languages and their interpretation (I Cor. 12:10),¹³ apostleship/missionary (I Cor. 12:28), administration (I Cor. 12:28), evangelist (Eph. 4:11), shepherd/pastor (Eph. 4:11), hospitality (I Pet. 4:9), helps (I Cor. 12:28), exorcism (Acts 16:16-18; Mk. 9:29), or “whatever gift” (I Pet. 4:10).¹⁴

The fingers too can be seen as expressions of relationship just as the palm but with the ability to express one or more characteristics of the palm in a special or particular and dynamic manner. The fingers, when expressed, become special expressions of the same four expressions of the palm: Expressions (1) of love, (2) of a humble attitude toward others, (3) a special way of being a blessing to others through their presence, and (4) a special way of expressing encouragement and/or instruction to others. The fingers minister in special ways to both those in the Body of Christ as well as those outside the Body. Each finger represents specialties of the palm of the hand. They are special in that their talent capabilities exceed the capabilities of most other disciples in their particular gifted area, which allows them to have a profound influence on those they touch.

There will usually be a difference in *effect* between the actions of a person who expresses something that is not his/her gift and the actions of the one who expresses the same thing, yet from a gifted position. For example, when a person who does not have the gift of encouragement expresses encouragement it will have a different effect from

¹³ Note: I am not suggesting that supernatural “sign” gifts are available today.

¹⁴ With help in determining what your talent may be see my “Steps In Discovering and Implementing Your Spiritual Gifts” at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13

the one who is gifted in that area in the following ways:¹⁵ (1) A person without the encouraging gift will have to work more (practice more self-denial) at focusing on encouraging others than the gifted person. It will not come as naturally to him/her as it does to those with that gift. Expressing encouragement will be *more instinctive* to the one with the gift and he/she will be more immediately aware of those who need encouragement and will better know how to give it than those without the gift. The encouragement-gifted person will more readily see with his/her heart the need and be more compelled to do something to express that encouragement than the non-encouragement gifted person. (2) The person with the encouragement gift will be *more effective* in encouraging than the one without the gift. There is a natural spiritual talent given by God that allows the person to express that talent in a dynamic and special way. This does not mean that the encouragement of the non-gifted-gifted person is not encouraging. On the contrary, it helps tremendously. The one with that special gift can be, however, more effective and may have more impact on others, but not more important. Both are indispensable!

The Palm with Finger Expressions Working Together

The expression of Christ's love through the church is magnified when the palm with the fingers work together as a unit¹⁶. Each person expresses both palm and finger characteristics. *All* disciples need to express the palm (the one another characteristics) but *not every person* will express the character of each finger *with* the same dynamism of that finger. Also, each finger (i.e., each spiritual gift), as well as each character of the palm, needs to be encouraged and guided by leaders¹⁷ to develop and be able to express itself to its fullest capacity. The balanced character of each individual is determined by the one another passages and is expressed in the palm. The special enhanced characteristic of each individual is expressed by the fingers. The palm can and should do things the fingers can do but not necessarily as well as the finger. The balanced hand approach to ministry is achieved when God's expressive love comes through both the palm and the fingers with each finger expressing its *special* function. It is each person functioning as a finger that gives *particular* expression of God's love to the world and to the church. It is each person expressing the palm characteristics which gives *general* expression of God's love to the world. Without the character of self-denial (i.e. each person expressing the character of the palm) the fingers lose their effectiveness for God, disunity ensues and our corporate witness for God¹⁸ is hindered.

¹⁵ These differences come from what I have observed in the development and implementation of spiritual gifts in many of the disciples here in Denver.

¹⁶ We all must function as a unit. Solitary faith is heresy. See my article, "The Heresy of a Solitary Faith" at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13.

¹⁷ See also below in text. Apostles (modern day church planters), prophets (modern day preachers), evangelists (those with the evangelist gift), and shepherd/teachers (those with the shepherding and teaching gifts) are to prepare God's people for the work of ministry/service as stated in Eph. 4:11-16. This I believe involves both the palm characteristics (the one-another passages, helping each person become like Christ) and the spiritual gifts (as indicated by the phrase "as each part does its work" in verse 16). For a further development of this concept, see my article on "My Vision for the Church" at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13.

¹⁸ Throughout Biblical history, there is an intended *corporate* witness of God's people. See my article "The Intentional Corporate Witness of the People of God" at Douglas Jacoby's website at

The Leadership Needed for the Balance

We as leaders need to help both the characteristics of the palm to be expressed in all the people *and* the expression of the fingers to bloom in individual disciples. With respect to spiritual gifts, we need to see those talents as special gifts from God. One of the dangers of leadership that I have observed is that leaders tend to heighten the value of the gift they possess and enjoy over the value of other gifts¹⁹. A balanced approach would seem to be found in leaders unprejudiciously urging each gift to express itself in an unhindered and unifying way *and* helping position people in serving capacities that truly reflect their giftedness.

Eph. 4:10-12 speaks of four types of leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers, all different gifts, and yet they all work *together* to prepare God's people for works of service so that the whole body might be built up. If these four gifts are balanced, the church will be built up through apostles (church planters within or cross cultural), prophets (preachers or exhorters (perhaps visionaries) preaching God's word to his people), evangelists (those who are great at evangelizing and reaching the lost), and shepherd/teachers (those good at teaching and shepherding the flock). Basically, there are two aspects of relationship mentioned here: Outreach (the focus of church planters and evangelists) and Inreach (the focus of preachers and shepherd/teachers). This too must remain in balance if the church is truly to be built up in love as each part does its work (Eph. 4:16).

We all need each other. Every gift is important. We need the balance of the Scriptures to allow the light of Christ to shine the brightest and for his love to most effectively reach the world. We need a leadership balance expression to ensure this happens.

Structure, Expectations, and Accountability Needed

As stated above, for any relationship to grow and be all it can be, time/relational structure, expectations, and accountability are needed. We need to examine our loyalties and see if they are in the priority God would have them. Then we need to be loyal to one another in developing both the palm part of our character and the finger part. We need to have time structure and relational structure set aside to encourage and help each other implement the one another passages. We also need a time structure and relational structure to help each person discover and develop their spiritual gifts. In addition, we need to expect and hold each other accountable to have a heart to implement the one another characteristics into their lives, to be loyal to one another, to have a humble attitude toward and service to one another, to grace each other with our presence, and to encourage and instruct one another in being more like Christ. We also need to expect each other to use his/her special spiritual gifts for God and the Church. In addition we need time structure, accountability, expectations, and leadership balance among us as

<http://douglasjacoby.com/dajacoby/home.nsf/Article/D7C051D60889F3578525707C0061DFAF?OpenDocument> or http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/?page_id=13.

¹⁹ I have been challenged on this myself in attempting to make everyone express the gift of a shepherd/teacher.

leaders to facilitate this spiritual relational balance in the church. If these things are done, the relationships in the church will be unified and dynamic and God will be glorified.

Conclusion

Spiritual relational balance will be achieved in the life of the disciple and in the church when there is (1) a correct understanding of the balance of spiritual gifts and the one another passages and (2) when every Christian's life expresses a balance of Upreach, Inreach, and Outreach. All these relationships will have their best relationship expression for God when based on love/loyalty and when under girded with a time structure, expectations, and accountability.