

## Script for “What is Equipping?”

### 1. “Together in His Service”

The Body of Christ helping each other serve Jesus

2. The church has members. The church relies on members for the work of the church – everything from ushering to teaching Sunday School to stuffing bulletins to working on boards and committees. So the church recruits volunteers. But all too often, the same few people do most of the work. Burnout is common. Pleas for help go unanswered. Leaders are frustrated.

3. It shouldn't be this way, but how does the church get its work done if people don't respond? Is there a better way?

4. A different way, a better way, involves a change in focus. Rather than recruiting volunteers, the church focuses on equipping volunteers.

5. When a young man or woman joins the army, they aren't immediately sent out to fight. Boot camp introduces military life, and specialized training follows. In training and in service, the soldier is supplied with everything they need – battle equipment, clothing, medical care, haircuts, meals. In fact, many military people spend their careers supporting those who fight, by keeping the vehicles running, procuring supplies, providing transportation, and so on. If the military did not equip their soldiers, they could not achieve their purpose.

6. Thankfully, joining the church is not like joining the army. But the church also has a purpose: proclaiming Jesus Christ. Any organization relying on people to achieve its purpose must consider how they equip and support those people. And, in truth, the idea of equipping fits the Biblical model of the church.

7. “You are the body of Christ and each of you is a part of it.” In Romans and I Corinthians, Paul compares the church to a human body. Our bodies have many different parts, each designed for its purpose, and each part must do that purpose if we're to be completely healthy. So also each person in the church was designed by God with a unique combination of spiritual gifts, natural talents, education, experiences and personality, for specific work. As we believers gather, we can either help or hinder each other's service.

8 Some churches teach their members about spiritual gifts, and urge them to volunteer based on those gifts. Isn't that enough? It's a good start, but there's more to be done.

9. If you listen to volunteers talking about their experiences, you'll hear heart-warming stories of joy and satisfaction in ministry, and, if the people feel it's safe to tell the truth, you'll also likely hear comments like these:

“I thought I was agreeing to help out; but I ended up running the event.”

“The long-timers didn't really want someone new around.”

“I had nowhere to go for help.”

“I didn't have the supplies I needed.”

And if you talked to people who use to volunteer but do so no longer, you might hear worse.

10. Unless churches intentionally help their people serve, they often unintentionally discourage them. Most church people aren't complainers. But if they have a bad experience, they're likely to get

out of their commitment as soon as they can, and resolve to never volunteer again. And no one knows why.

11. How important is it to help each other serve? Serving goes to the core purpose of the church. Those of us blessed to know Christ are commanded to love and serve each other and, especially, those who don't yet know Him. Serving together, and helping each other serve, multiplies our ability to share Jesus Christ to a broken and hurting world.

12. Serving brings additional blessings. It builds relationships, an antidote to the loneliness epidemic today. People today crave significance. They want to make a difference. They will not waste their time, but willingly give both time and money to that which captures their heart. Serving meets the needs of both the served and those serving.

13. What's the difference between a church that recruits and a church that equips? Recruitment focuses on the position that needs to be filled. When that opening is filled, recruitment is done.

Equipping centers on the person, not the position. Equipping churches encourage serving as a natural response to God's love. They carry out their mission through each person doing what God has gifted them for and called them to do.

Equipping churches offer their members personal help in selecting a ministry. When someone joins a ministry, they make sure the person is warmly welcomed and thoroughly trained. Someone checks in with each volunteer periodically, to see how things are going, and to discover and deal with problems. Equipping churches make sure no one falls through the cracks. They affirm the importance of each contribution and express appreciation frequently and genuinely.

14. That's a lot of work for a busy pastor and a few staff. Yes, it is. Equipping is only possible when we again remember that the church is the body of Christ. When "the church" equips its volunteers, members do these things for fellow members. Whenever God wants something done, he always provides people with the ability to do it.

15. But it won't be easy. Although equipping is better than recruiting, it takes more time and is more difficult. It takes time and effort and sometimes money to get to know people and their gifts, to help them find an opportunity just right for them, to provide training, create support systems and express appreciation. Equipping is not just another church program, but a different way of doing all programs. Leaders must not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk, modeling equipping in all they do.

16. The Church is believers who come together to worship and serve God, people "**together in His service.**" Helping each other serve, we accomplish more than the sum of our individual efforts. 1 plus 1 becomes 3.

17. In Ephesians, Paul reminds us, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." It is a privilege and a joy to do those works, and in so doing to invite others to share in the great love we've received from God. His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age," rings in our ears as we join each other, together in His service.