

OAK HILLS MISSION *Part 4 - Equipping Individuals and Families*

TEXT: HEBREWS 13:20-21 (ESV)



Rev. Russ Ramsey
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Oak Hills Presbyterian Church,
Overland Park, Kansas

Oak Hills' Mission

Oak Hills' mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, **equipping individuals and families to:**

- learn to know and enjoy God;
- respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living; and
- lead others to do the same —all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

From "What & Where" to "How"

As we reach the halfway point of this study, two characteristics of this sermon series reach a turning point. First, so far we've been focused on **what** our mission is and **where** we are called to carry it out: "Oak Hills mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the world." Today we turn from the questions of **what** and **where** to the vital matter of **how** we become equipped for such a mission. Second, until now our focus has been very broad, offering epic panoramas of the Gospel and what it means to proclaim it. Today we begin to narrow our focus onto some more of the "nuts and bolts" of how we actually go about this. To get at this, we turn to an extremely insightful passage of Scripture taking up both the need to be equipped for service in God's Kingdom and the issue of **where** we find such equipping.

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

How the God of Peace Equips

When you read these verses, one of the first things you should notice is the author of Hebrews' prayer is that God would equip His people. No mortal human, nor self-help book, nor power of positive thinking will be able to equip this church for the mission to which the Lord has called her. And why?

Because our mission was conceived in the mind of God, not man. It requires Divine intervention. And this is precisely what God promises to provide. Our text shows three ways God has provided for us in our call to proclaim the whole Gospel.

FIRST, BY ACCOMPLISHING REDEMPTION: Our text begins: "May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant..." Consider what you're hearing. If the prayer of this text is that we'd be equipped for everything God has called us to, this verse tells us how that is possible. God raised from the dead our Lord Jesus and established peace between us and our Maker by the blood of Christ. Our call to serve God's people and to be a light in this world is not **in order** that He might decide to redeem us on the merits of our performance. We're called to proclaim the Gospel because we have already been redeemed by the blood of the eternal covenant in Christ. Our God has provided peace between Himself and His people.

SECOND, BY HIS HOLY WORD: Next Hebrews prays that God would "equip you with everything good..." How has God fulfilled this prayer? He has given us His Word. Compare this verse with 2 Tim 3:16-17—"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Scripture equips us for every good work because it is God's very breath, useful for our teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. Our God has provided His own infallible instruction in the form of His Word.

THIRD, BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRIT: God gave us peace with Himself and His word to guide us. But He hasn't just given us an instruction manual to follow. He has also provided the power we need to obey. God equips us, "working in us that which is pleasing in His sight." (v. ²¹) Who is the worker in this verse? God. In Christ, we have redemption and reconciliation with God, we have His living word and we have His Holy Spirit living in the hearts of those He has called to proclaim His word.

Ordinary Means, Extraordinary Ends

So God hasn't left His people to their own devices to proclaim the Gospel. He has given us tools—justification in Christ, instruction from His infallible Word and power through His Holy Spirit. The question we must ask is how God **ordinarily** uses such tools to make known His amazing grace. We believe God can and does do miracles—but we also acknowledge that the world we live in is one He Himself has designed to work in certain, ordinary ways which He is pleased to use to bring about eternally extraordinary results. The New Testament makes it plain that the Church is God's most expansive ordinary means for the advancement of the Gospel until He returns.

Oak Hills' aim in proclaiming the whole Gospel to the whole person, alongside our primary aim of glorifying and enjoying God forever, is to function as Christ intended in this world—as an equipping agency for the people of the church to do the work of the church. We pray that this church would be a place which cultivates the minds, passions and gifts of each individual here while also pooling the strengths of families joined together.

INDIVIDUALS: When we talk of individuals and families, we're not speaking of two separate, non-overlapping groups, as if we're to equip families one way and singles another. Our call is to equip every single person at Oak Hills to learn to know and enjoy God, respond to Him through worship and Godly living and lead others to do the same. But how do we grow as individuals in our knowledge and love of God without nurturing narcissism—the vanity that we are the center of the universe? Much of growing as individuals is learning what unique abilities and experiences we have to offer others. But when we look at our experiences and abilities through a narcissistic lens, we don't see them as gifts we have to offer, but as possessions which set us apart as superior. Even seeing them as gifts which make us *inferior* is narcissistic because our focus is on ourselves.

Regardless of age or position in life, you have individual gifts no one else in this church has to offer. But they aren't given so that you might know where you stand in relation to God's favor toward the masses. They are given that you might serve at His pleasure in ways uniquely designed for you. God doesn't give gifts merely for our **possession**. We are stewards called to use them for His glory. As a church, we want to see those gifts developed in you as one called to proclaim the Gospel.

FAMILIES: We recognize God has built so much in His word around the place of the family not only in the role of passing down the Gospel from one generation to the next, but also in being a haven of grace and encouragement for the hurting and dejected. The family is meant to be a pocket of strength, unity and serious refuge—acting in concert by a bond stronger than anything the world and its cares can throw at it. So we are unapologetic about having kid and family focused ministries. Whatever we can do to strengthen the home, we should.

Each of us have an enormous capacity to serve the people in our path. Having said that, there's a pretty big elephant in the room. Some of us, when called upon to serve, ask almost out of the gate if we have any margin left in our lives to serve. We're all busy. It can be very difficult to be involved in ministry when you are balancing school, work and the individual schedules of every grown-up and young person in the home. Families struggle in themselves to live in intimate community with each other. So I want to extend a commendation and a promise.

FIRST, A COMMENDATION: This church is made up of many who serve without complaining or quitting. So many in this church serve in a host of areas all for this purpose of equipping individuals and families to grow in the Gospel—those who serve on set-up teams, hospitality, Sunday school, Promiseland, in the nursery, behind the sound board, handling administration, developing and editing our website, using their gifts in rehearsal and worship leading, printing, editing, etc. So many of you still give of your time and resources—sometimes even sacrificially. Your service, no matter how unseen or small, is used of the Lord for eternal fruit. Thank you for giving yourself in His name.

SECOND, A PROMISE: We will not implement programs just to fill a calendar in order to look busy. We will seek to encourage and build one another up in our service to the Church. (*I need to grow in this. I have not done a good job with this in recent years, and by God's grace, this is an area your pastor will grow in.*) Every ministry we pour into will be for the purpose of taking the Gospel into our community and world. We won't follow trends, but we will always move forward in ministry expecting that it will be the people of the church who will do the work of the church. So we will strive to use what the Lord has given to be equipped for everything He has called us to do and to be.

Working in Us what Pleases Him

The people of the church doing the work of the church is our vision for Oak Hills. We believe this is God's design—and this flies in the face of so much in our culture today. We live in an extremely “customer service” oriented age. If you wanted, you could choose your church based on the amenities it provides—as if the Church is a business and you are a potential customer.

For a church to behave as an industry providing a services to those who come without expecting her members to serve is to undermine everything the Bible tells us about how God's people are intended to live in community. Everywhere you turn in Scripture, you see God addressing His people as groups. It's how books like Kings, Romans, Hebrews, and countless other books of the Bible got their names—they told the story of a tribe, kingdom or church's relationship with their Lord and God.

This framework is not without function. Granted, God can do whatever He wants. He can speak through donkeys, ^(Num 22:22-35) burning bushes ^(Ex 3) and angels. ^(Lk 1:26-38) But His most ordinary way of ministering His redeeming grace to a hurting world in need is through His people—through individuals and families and through His Church on earth.

What does He use His people for? For the aims that we see throughout the New Testament instruction to the Church—growing in our knowledge of Him, serving one another, reaching out to our neighbors, strengthening and cultivating our marriages and families, growing in personal character and Godliness—all with a passion for God to be glorified in and through our lives. So beyond entertaining children or bricks and mortar or notoriety in our community, we are committed to equipping one another, by the power of the word of God and His Spirit at work in the lives of His people.

Our text ends telling us **why** God equips His people. Is it that her staff might work that which is pleasing to her current and potential members? No. It is “*that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.*” This is a beautiful mystery, isn't it? God uses His people for things that please Him. One facet of this mystery is we'll never really know all the Lord does through the service of His people. Most all of us can think of one person or another whom the Lord has used to shape our lives in profound ways. And we also know that those people have little idea how much of an impact they have made in our lives. Its wonderful.

The Church exists for God to use her members together for ends pleasing in His sight—ends that are ultimately done through Jesus Christ Himself working in and through the lives of those who make up His Body. So our passion as a Church must be to be as equipped as possible for this glorious calling. Such equipping must not only begin but find its authoritative core in our unwavering fidelity to God's word. This will be where we return over and over, that we might be equipped to proclaim the whole Gospel because we ourselves have bathed in it.

May the Lord build His Kingdom through Oak Hills by using all the ordinary and extraordinary means available to us by His grace. May we study and love the Scriptures, and may we embrace our call to walk through this life in fellowship with one another, forgiving where there is hurt, pursuing peace, extending grace and believing the best. May God find pleasure in what He sees in and does through every individual and family here at Oak Hills. And may Jesus Christ get all the glory for it.