

PUT ME IN, COACH!

## Team Jesus

Ephesians 4:7-16

Dr. Doyle Sager

First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

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Walter Alston only batted once in the Big Leagues, and it was for the St. Louis Cardinals. And he struck out. But he went on to manage the LA Dodgers for 23 years, winning seven pennants and four world championships. You see, he just had to find out what his gifts to the world were! Spiritual gifts (our God-given passions, interests and talents) are not static. They change and develop all through our lives. Bill Hybels, in his book *Simplify*, has reminded us that each new epoch of life, each new stage, calls for a fresh yielding to God's Spirit, and to ask ourselves, "What in my life are the unread pages? What unopened books are there in my life?" Several years ago I was in a workshop I heard a speaker say that perhaps the root cause of such boredom in our world today is the grief over the death of undeveloped, unborn, latent gifts that never come to be.

Now let's look at our text. Verses 7-16 make up one long sentence in Greek. But it doesn't start with us. It begins with God. God's generosity (gifts). Air to breathe, life, family. Salvation, hope, love. So why not celebrate who you are and how God made you and what God has given you? Our text reminds us that to be on Team Jesus is to have some gift/endowment. Everyone does! And those gifts are not just for some "elite" class, Read vv. 11-12, and note that everyone is in the game. To change from a baseball to a football image, I remind you what Bud Wilkinson once said: "Football is a game in which 70,000 people in the stands desperately need exercise and 22 men on the field desperately need rest." That's the church! The pastors are not to do it all; pastors are equippers (the word is used of mending fishing nets in Mark 1:19, helping us think of equipping as healing people to become all God intended).

Watch this video clip and consider. **[\[Play video "Making Disciples"\]](#)**. Now would be a good time to remind you of what Jerome (347-420 AD) said--our Christian baptism is our ordination to ministry. We are all called to ministry. I recently heard Dr. Molly Marshall remind us that it's the church's job to notice, name and nurture the giftedness of its members. Laity is not second class! Do what you love, what you're passionate about. Be flexible and open the Spirit. Ministry is not validated by a paycheck, but by God's presence in that ministry.

I met a man recently who was raised in a devout Lutheran home. He shared with his parents one time that he was considering entering vocational ministry to be a pastor. Time went by and do you know what he is doing today? He is a lobbyist down here at the Capitol. I would submit to you that one job is as holy as the other. If followers of Jesus do not answer the call to be school teachers, lobbyists, politicians, attorneys, bankers, farmers, homemakers, then we forfeit our witness in the world.

And listen to how this all fits together in God's church, when we are all in our place, using our gifts, serving (v. 13), *The Message*: "...working within Christ's body, the Church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ."

I can't often quote Whitey Herzog from the pulpit, but when I can, I like to. He once said that to succeed at baseball, you have to be smart enough to figure it out...and you have to be dumb enough to believe that any of it really matters. In other words, there are things more important in life than baseball (for some of us, heresy, I know!). What really matters in life? A personal, vibrant relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. We don't discover God's purpose by seeking it; we discover God's purpose by seeking Him. God calls us to Himself before God calls us to a job. I encourage you--seek a real relationship with God through His Son.

To the children and youth here today, I want to especially encourage you. God has a plan for you. God wants to use your life. And to everyone older than that, I want to say: God isn't finished with you! And to those of you listening today who are not yet Christ followers, I have a word. Maybe God's call on your life is not first of all through guilt over your sins. Maybe your need for Christ is manifesting itself through an emptiness. Something is missing in your life. You have gifts, abilities, talents and Christ is claiming them. God wants to make you a blessing for noble purposes. I'm inviting you to hear God's call.