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**C0503 -- Jan. 19, 2005 – Ephesians 4:7, 11, 15-16 – Ministering to One Another**

Verse 15 gives the contrast for the individual and v. 16 for the corporate church.

**Greek Text 4:15** *aletheuontes de en agape auxesomen eis auton ta panta, hos estin he kephale, Christos,*

**Translation 4:15** *but rather being truthful with love, we might grow up to him with reference to all things, who is the head, the Christ,*

**aletheuontes de en agape, “but rather being truthful with love,”.** The **but** marks a strong contrast here. Rather than being tricked by the dice-playing agenda of men into a false methodology we are to “*speak the truth in love*”. Dr. Robert Lightner has told me on numerous occasions that this is the most difficult NT command to follow. Interestingly, the participle **speaking the truth** (*aletheuontes*) conveys not only **speaking the truth in love** but **also living the truth in love**. In short, Paul is saying **be truthful** in both your life and your speech. Your life and speech ought to be a demonstration of truth. This is in contrast to the **deceitful trickery** of v. 14. Men of deceit and trickery hide their true intent, their agenda. In contrast, we are to reveal our true intent, our agenda. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We should therefore be straightforward and honest. **truth** is that which corresponds to reality, the true state of affairs. Our speech and our conduct ought to be a demonstration of the true state of affairs as opposed to hiding or suppressing the truth like unbelievers (Rom. 1:18). The spirit-filled Christian is marked by a life and speech that are in accordance with truth. The carnal Christian is not. The relationship between truth and love is that truth has a higher priority than love but that truth must always be spoken and lived in the sphere of love (Overhead). On the one hand, a Christian can speak the truth and yet not speak it in a loving manner. e.g. I can give you true Bible doctrine but in an unloving way. If I do this my *message* is inconsistent with my *method*. The way I deliver a message must not be inconsistent with the message itself. Like the teacher who tells his students that the lecture method is the worst method of teaching. All the while he is lecturing to them. If it truly is the worst method then why are you lecturing to us? That’s

inconsistent. In the same way, if I correct my brother with truth but in a way that runs him down and crushes him then I have given truth but not in love. I've been inconsistent. Paul is exhorting us to not be like the deceitful tricksters but consistently be truth in life and speech in love. When we do this it results in harmony and growth in the Church rather than disharmony and stunted lives. The believers' growth is Paul's next concern.

**auxesomen eis auton ta panta, “we might grow up to him with reference to all things,”**. Instead of remaining *childish* in our thinking we ought to **grow up to him with respect to all things**. It is the gifts given to believers today as well as the foundational gifts that help accomplish this growth. The subjunctive here indicates that we **might grow**, not necessarily that we **will grow**. Only if the gifts are used in proportion to the measure given will growth actually occur. Where are we to grow? **up to him**, that is, to Christ. Christ is our model for how to live and speak truth in love. He is our goal. In what areas are we to grow? **with reference to all things**. The way Paul thinks is that since Christ is the creator of everything in the universe then Christ is the Lord over everything in the universe. Since we are connected to the Creator and Lord of the universe then we ought to grow up in every area of life. We may not but we should. We want to have the DVP for every area of life. We are not called to just grow up in one or two areas but in every area; spiritual things as well as earthly things for He is the author and sustainer of both (John 3:12). How do we do this? Remember the *epignosis*, the knowledge that was directed toward Christ in v. 13. To do this we have to make Christ and His word our starting point **with reference to all things**. When we talk about earthly things this means taking God's word as the starting point for every area of human study or endeavor (biology, art, music, etc...) when God gives facts about these areas of life they need to be the starting principles from which we work out our thinking about them (Ps 111:2). In terms of spiritual things this means taking God's word as the starting point for spiritual living and thinking, particularly in the realm of morals and cognizance of the angelic realm and spiritual battles (humility, contentedness, goodness, love, unity, etc...). To **grow up** obviously refers to the sanctification process. You've got to **grow up** so that you are constantly dissecting whatever is coming in. You're not passively accepting information from TV, radio, etc...into your brain but your mind is dissecting and categorizing information in terms of biblical categories of thinking. Taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). To do this you first have to realize there are only two ways to think about things. One starts with Christ the other starts with Satan. There is no neutrality. And at every moment you are caught on one side of the fence or the other and you should be constantly working toward evaluation of every bit of information in terms of Christ and His word. He is the starting point or reference of all truth and we want to think like Christ did in reference to earthly and spiritual things.

**hos estin he kephale, Christos, “who is the head, the Christ,”**. This defines to **him as the head, the Messiah**. By referring to Christ as **the head** Paul is referring to Him as **the head** of the Church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). By referring to Him as **the Christ**, Paul is emphasizing that **the head** of the Church is **the Messiah**, the same one promised to Israel in the OT, not a different one.

**Greek Text 4:16 ex ou pan to soma sunarmologoumenon kai sumbibazomenon dia pases aphas tes epikoregias kat energeian en metro enos ekastou merous ten auxisin tou somatos poicetai eis oikodomen eautou en agape.**

**Translation 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together through every supporting connection according to the working in measure from each individual part, causes the growth of the body to building itself up in love.**

“**from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together**”. **from whom** refers to **the Christ**. Christ is the one who ultimately **causes the growth of the body**. Paul is moving to the church as a whole and away from the individual. Individual growth was the subject of v. 15 but corporate growth is the subject of v. 16. **the whole body**, which is the Church, is **being fitted and held together**. He’s drawing an architectural analogy here as he did in Eph 2:21. The **body** is a building that is being built up. This building began on the Day of Pentecost and will be complete on the Day of the Rapture. The Church is not just those believers living today but every believer since the Day of Pentecost. The Church is a living building that is continually being built up. Each of us, as we grow are like stones in the building that are being carved, chiseled, and smoothed to fit together perfectly (e.g. the ancient pyramids). Believers are not thrown together haphazardly, but skillfully (e.g. Tom and Cynthia Holubik’s home). We are being intimately **held or joined together**. This shows how the body is growing. As individuals in v. 15 grow up into Christ so the entire body is growing into a solid structure that will be complete at the Rapture. **Being fitted and held together** are both in the *passive voice* meaning it is an outside force that is causing this growth. Namely, it is the grace of God acting on us to fit us together and hold us together intimately. How is this building held together and built?

“**through every supporting connection**”. The picture is that of individual believers exercising their spiritual gift(s) so the body can grow. Spiritual gifts are Christ’s determined means through which He is building up His body. **every** believer is therefore required to **supply** the connections, not just the leaders in the assembly. Every believer’s gift is necessary to make all the right connections toward unity. In the ancient world the word translated **joint** was used by Hippocrates to describe the function of the *ligament*.

The *ligaments* are what connect bone to bone in the human body. So, here Paul may be using an illustration from Anatomy and Physiology. Paul loves to describe the Church in terms of Architecture and Anatomy and Physiology. Architecture demonstrates that the body is still being built. Anatomy and Physiology shows that the body is alive and interdependent. Like cells and organs of the human body must interact in order to function properly so distinctly gifted believers must interact in order for the church to function properly. Growth occurs not in isolation but together. As I touch you with my gift and you touch me with yours growth occurs. The amount of growth is what Paul touches on next.

“**according to the working in measure from each individual part,**”. The amount of growth is in proportion to the *energy* contributed by **each individual part**. The word for **working** is *energeia* and is only used of God and Satan in Scripture. So, whenever we exercise our spiritual gift it is God’s energy, in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is working through us. When we allow Him to **energize us** to the measure of the gift of grace we were given then growth occurs. Where did we see that word **measure** in this same chapter? v. 7 where Christ gave **each a measure of grace**. We are each to use our gift in proportion to the amount of grace dispensed to us, *not more, not less*. An analogy with the human body is once more appropriate. If the liver, which cleanses our blood from toxins, is overtaxed (by too much alcohol, sugar, etc...) then it harms the body. That organ is doing too much work. If certain organs stop working then likewise this harms the body. Hippocrates remarked that good health results when the various parts of the body function proportionately to one another. Pain results when one part of the body is overtaxed or out of use. “Briefly then, each member of the body of Christ is to function to the measure Christ has given him or her (v. 7). When members fulfill their responsibilities, then the body of Christ can grow properly as Paul proceeds to develop next.”<sup>i</sup>

“**causes the growth of the body**”. Here we come to the main verb *poieitai* which is a present middle indicative indicating that the **body** grows from within. You might think that the body is responsible for the **growth** but since Christ gave the gifts and is the head of the body He is the ultimate source of the **body’s growth**. Finally, the final goal is mentioned which parallels the end of v. 12 as...

“**to building itself up in love.**” The body here is a living organism that must be built up. Growth can never occur apart from love and so the **building** must take place in the sphere of **love** being exercised among one another. “As a child grows better in an atmosphere of familial love, so the church grows better in an atmosphere of love between believers. Paul enjoins believers to be truthful evn avga,ph| (v. 15) and to grow evn avga,ph| (v. 16).”<sup>ii</sup>

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

About ten years ago, the concept of “spiritual gifts” really seemed quite simple to me. All I had to figure out was whether *all the gifts were operational today, some of the gifts were operational today, or none of the gifts were operational today*. Once I figured out that some of the gifts were operational today and some were not I thought that was basically the end of the discussion (Heb. 2:3-4). However, after this I was still confused about spiritual gifts and I imagine I’m not alone in this confusion. I wondered, what exactly is a spiritual gift? What are the spiritual gifts? How do I know what my spiritual gift is? Like you, perhaps, I was introduced to a “Spiritual-Gifts Inventory” where I was asked a series of questions that miraculously promised to reveal my special gift. Like you, perhaps, I wasn’t so convinced by the results. The test was more like psychological exam that reduced the spiritual gifts to a personality profile. The test seemed like anyone, pagan or Christian could take it and walk away with the same answers. I also wondered, like many of you perhaps, why so many people never seem to figure out what their special gift is. Maybe they just hadn’t taken the Spiritual Gifts Inventory yet. Maybe that was the answer! But, obviously the Spiritual Gifts Inventory is not a test that comes out of Scripture and if Scripture is sufficient as 2 Tim 3:16-17 clearly states then the Spiritual Gifts Inventories can be dispensed of. There must be some other reason some Christians never discover what their gift is. Another question that plagued me for some time was the issue of these being Spirit-empowered gifts. I mean, if some gifts are still operational today it should be obvious when we see someone using their gift because it is the omnipotent Spirit’s power behind the gift, right? If everyone has some special ability then everyone’s ability must be abundantly obvious? So, as you can see, this area is not always so cut and dry for Christians. I think most Christians really have a lot of questions about spiritual gifts.

To resolve some of these questions and tensions I have been doing some research over the past years and weeks, searching the many books on the Holy Spirit, books dedicated to spiritual gifts, and the scholarly journal articles dedicated to the subject. There seems to be some confusion and uncertainty in these resources as well.

## BASICS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Some basic teachings regarding spiritual gifts are *first*, that every believer possesses at least one spiritual gift though a believer may possess more than one gift (1 Cor. 12:7). *Secondly*, all gifts are essential but some gifts are more important than other gifts (1 Cor. 12:28). *Third*, the gifts are sovereignly bestowed upon us by God and at His pleasure (1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:7). We should not therefore seek to have some gift. 1 Cor. 12:31 is talking about

desiring to see the more important gifts exercised in the assembly, not selfishly running after them. *Fourth*, though the Scriptures do not explicitly say when we receive a gift(s) it is reasonable to say that we receive them at our spiritual birth. *Fifth*, most if not all of the gifts have to be developed. Some of the gifts clearly need more development in order to function properly (e.g. teaching will take years of training whereas helping will not require years of training but can certainly develop). *Sixth*, spiritual gifts are analogous to natural talents. We are born with latent natural talents which only come to the surface when we try those areas out (e.g. music, art, sports, etc...). Sometimes we discover natural talents late in life. Spiritual gifts are not just an extension of our natural talents. They are distinct and are given to us at the moment of our spiritual birth. Like a natural talent the spiritual gift may lie latent for many years until we are equipped to do ministry. This leads to the *seventh* observation. I found this in so many texts even though it is not often observed. Spiritual gifts are basically “ministries” rather than “abilities”. If spiritual gifts were primarily “abilities” then we could boast about our ability like the Corinthians did. But Paul corrects that notion in all three representative lists by showing that they are primarily “ministries” empowered by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they are clearly not for self-edification but for body-edification (1 Pt. 4:10). For a believer to edify and build up the body he first has to be doctrinally equipped or trained and then he can do the work of ministry in his particular area of giftedness (Eph. 4:14). Some believers never are doctrinally equipped so they never really engage in effective ministry. This is one reason some people never seem to discover their gifts. *Eighth*, for spiritual gifts to minister effectively they must be exercised in love (1 Cor. 13). Without operating in the sphere of love they are worse than worthless.

## WHAT ARE THE GIFTS?

### **Teaching** (*didasko* Rom. 12:7)

Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Often eloquent, mighty in Scriptural knowledge. Having been trained or instructed, fervent in spirit meaning hot, boiling with passion, teaching what he knows accurately, speaks freely or boldly in public. Greatly helps believers straighten out their doctrine. Powerful at refuting false doctrine by use of Scripture.

### **Helps** (*diakonos/antilempsis* 1 Cor. 12:28)

Everybody to some degree helps around the church but some have the gift of helps or service. Phoebe is one good example (Rom 16:1-2). Deserve commendation, serves at a local church (not itinerant ministry), to be received in a worthy manner. Helpers also need help too. Those who have a large measure of the gift may be the best organizers. They are

kind of like gap-fillers. They get done what has to be done and free up others to minister in their areas. Mark also had the gift of "helps" (2 Tim. 4:11). He may have been instrumental in recording manuscripts (e.g. modern day typing, etc...). Fetching things or people. Those who hold the office of deacon often have this gift (Acts 6:1-7).

### **Administration/Ruler** (*kubernesis/proistemi* 1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:8)

There is very little about this gift given in the NT. Two Greek words describe this gift, *kubernesis* which means "to steer a ship" and *proistemi* which means "to protect, to manage, to care for". These are the people who are gifted to lead others and others willingly follow. They guide the people in a certain direction. Obviously these people need to have sound doctrine so they are able to steer the Church in the right direction. The best administrators are those who have the most doctrine. They also are able to manage tasks efficiently, they often teach though they do not have to have the gift of teaching. Those who hold the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:4; 5:12) and deacon (1 Tim 3:12) often have this gift. Their leadership helps others in the church be fruitful as Christians (Tit. 3:8, 14).

### **Evangelism** (*euaggelistes* Eph. 4:11)

Philip (**Acts 8:5**; 12f, 26, 29ff, 34, **35**, 37ff; **21:8**). These gifted individuals would travel to new areas and preach the good news of Jesus Christ. People really pay attention when these people speak and people respond to their preaching. Their ministry is primarily to the unsaved. Timothy also seems to have had the gift of evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5). This is not the same gift as teaching. Teaching is to the saved while preaching is to the unsaved.

### **Pastor** (*poimenas* Eph. 4:11)

Peter (John 21:15-17). Peter was given the gift of pastor. Pastor is from the Greek word *poimenas* which literally means shepherd. He leads the sheep, he provides, protects, and cares for the flock. The gift of pastor is closely related to teaching. One may have the gift of teaching but not the gift of pastor while every pastor has the gift of teaching. Walvoord says, "the first duty of a pastor is to feed his flock on the Word of God." The secondary duty is to care for and protect the flock. The gift of pastor does not mean he is a great social promoter or leader. A true pastor gives himself to teaching the word of God.

### **Exhortation** (*paraklesis* Rom. 12:8)

Barnabas and Justus are good examples of those who had the gift of exhortation. These people encourage and admonish others toward activity. They often take the lead in some effort and encourage others to follow them (Acts 4:36). These people are great encouragers. They can always see the good in others or their capacity and they encourage them to press on or step up (Acts 11:22-23). Exhorters encourage believers to stay faithful (Acts 14:20-22). They often report on what God has done which encourages and admonishes us toward activity.

### **Giving** (*metadidomi* Rom. 12:8)

All believers give to some degree but some give abundantly beyond typical means. The word basically means “to give a share” of their physical belongings to those in the Church who have physical needs. Modern examples would be R. G. LeTourneau gave 90% of his income to the Lord by way of a Christian foundation and then tithed 90% of the part he kept for himself. Basically, LeTourneau lived off of 1% of the income he made. John Wesley is another example of one who clearly had this gift. When he died he left an estate of two silver spoons and a well-worn frock coat. Yet it is estimated that John Wesley gave more than \$185,000 during his lifetime.

### **Mercy** (*eleeo* Rom. 12:8)

All Christians are to be merciful because they have received the mercy of God but certain Christians have the gift of mercy. They give outstanding attention to those who are sick or afflicted or need aid and do it with cheerfulness.

### **Faith** (*pistis* 1 Cor. 12:9)

All Christians have saving faith but the gift of faith refers to a remarkable confidence in God to supply all their needs and to guide their steps. These Christians will not shrink back in fear of men or circumstances because they trust that God is powerful enough to take care of them and the situation.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY GIFT IS?

First, the Scriptures never command us to seek to find out what our gift is.<sup>iii</sup> I think this observation is somewhat significant. The Scriptures seek to simply point out that we all



have at least one gift and that the gifts are ministries that are designed to edify and build up the Church. However, the Scriptures assume that we can discover what our gift is. The underlying assumption in Corinthians for example is that these people know what gift they have. Their problem was not in knowing what gift they had but rather what the gifts were and their purpose. They thought they were special “abilities” that were for self and therefore resulted in boasting. Paul corrected this by teaching that the gifts were “ministries” given by God and designed to edify one another. How does one know what his gift is? There are several general things that you must do to know what your gift is.

*First, you must put God first in everything.* Your basic orientation to every area of life should start with God (that’s what we call DVP). People are born with the natural orientation of starting with self (that’s what we call HVP). All men are born depraved and their basic orientation to every area of life starts with self (Rom. 5:12). After God graciously saves you at the moment you believe in Christ you hopefully come to realize the biblical teaching that God is the Creator of all things, spiritual and physical (Gen 1:1ff; John 3:12). He has necessarily spoken to every area of life. Therefore, two logical implications arise. 1) Our thought life must be re-oriented. If we are born depraved then every persons thought life is basically oriented in terms of self. The depraved person thinks that all thoughts find their origin in and start with man. But the Christian view-point is that whenever we think about any area of life our thinking about that area ought to start with God’s thinking about that area. How is the mind re-oriented in every area of life so that it starts with God? By searching inquiry and study of the Scriptures. For example, if we want to study art we have to start with God’s thinking about art. God’s thinking about art is found in the Bible. When we discover God’s thinking and re-orient our thinking to His thinking then we are thinking God’s thoughts after Him (Ps. 36:9). This means our minds have been *transformed* to Christ rather than *conformed* to the world (Rom. 12:1-2). Although not many Christians have done this in basic areas of life some have. For example, if you are interested in God’s view of Art then you might be interested in the book *God Through the Looking Glass: Glimpses from the Arts* by William and Aida Spencer or, if you are interested, for example, in Mathematics then you might be interested in the book *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* by James Nickel. Personally, I think every Christian child should be trained to think about these areas in terms of God’s word as the basic starting point and pre-condition for every area of life. They are a part of everyone’s life and culture and they are God’s creations (Ps. 111:2). 2) Our behavior must be re-oriented. Since we are all born with behavior patterns that are against God and start with self to please self then once we become Christians our behavior needs to change. Our basic moral orientation must also be re-oriented so that it starts with God. This change also takes place by searching and study of Scripture. Therefore, the first step toward recognizing what your spiritual gift

is requires change in our thought life and behavior. No change can take place in these areas apart from the word of God. The more we do this the more we put God first in everything and the better position we are in to realize our spiritual gift so we can minister to others.

*Second, you must seek God's specific will for your life.* Discovering God's specific will for your life also requires searching and studying Scripture while in fellowship with God. This sets up the environment so that God is directing your steps. When you do so you are on your way to recognizing your spiritual gift.

*Third, you must pray that God would reveal your spiritual gift to you.* If we don't ask God to reveal our gift to us we shouldn't expect Him to reveal it to us. God answers prayer and God wants you to know your spiritual gift so you can minister effectively.

*Fourth, you should expect confirmation from others.* Most often others can see our gifts more clearly than we can. To them it is clear where we should minister whereas for us we still aren't sure. Be sensitive to the remarks of others because God often uses others to confirm to us our uncertainties.

*Fifth, you must be prepared to face responsibility when you realize your gift.* You have a responsibility to the rest of the Church to use the gift of ministry God has given you. The burden of knowing this should lead you to minister. The joy of the gift should inspire you to minister.

So, there are five things you must do in order to recognize your spiritual gift: 1) you must put God first in everything 2) you must seek God's specific will for your life

3) you must pray that God would reveal your spiritual gift to you 4) you should expect confirmation from others 5) you must be prepared to face responsibility when you realize your gift.

This helps us answer the second question of why some Christians never seem to discover their spiritual gift.

## WHY SOME CHRISTIANS NEVER DISCOVER THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFT

Simple, they don't do the five things listed above. The primary thing they do not do is search and study the word of God. Search and study what the gifts are. Do a word study. Discover examples of people in the early church who had these gifts and see what things

they do throughout the NT to get ideas of how they ministered. That will give you ideas of how to minister.

## WHY ISN'T EVERYONE'S SPIRITUAL GIFT ABUNDANTLY OBVIOUS?

If the Spirit is the one whose power enables us to minister then why isn't it abundantly obvious who has what gift? There are several right answers depending on the conditions. If the believer isn't doing the five things mentioned above then obviously his spiritual gift will not be obvious. If he is however, then often times others recognize and confirm to us how God has gifted us. On another level however, when we read Paul's lists we realize that some of the "ministries" required an extra-ordinary enablement to perform (e.g. healing, prophecy, tongues) while others required enablement, but no more than any other daily Christian activity (e.g. teaching, administration, serving). This is one reason some people's spiritual gifts are not abundantly obvious. The enablement needed is not out of the ordinary. Finally, one additional reason everyone's spiritual gift is not abundantly obvious is because Christ determines the measure of grace given to each individual. Some are given more grace and others less. Those who possess less will not be as obvious. Fortunately, it is not the measure of the grace given that determines reward but our use of the gift. God knows all these factors, we should not focus on those factors that we cannot control, we should leave that to God. What we should do is be actively ministering to others to the capacity that God has given to each of us with the goal of equipping others to do ministry so that the Church will be built up to the full stature of Christ. When each of us works together then we work like a healthy body. No one should be doing too much and no should be doing too little. We should all be doing to our capacity. This is God's design for the spiritual gifts that each of us possess. This brings glory to God.

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<sup>i</sup> Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 576.

<sup>ii</sup> Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 578.

<sup>iii</sup> Gene Getz, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and pastor made this observation.

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