

Growing the Church God's Way
Ephesians 4:11-16
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Let me invite you to take your Bible this morning and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4.

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A few days ago, somebody asked me a question, and the question was this, what is the purpose of your church?

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I've been asked that question before.

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Some years ago there was this movement going on throughout the church to where each church was writing out their purpose statement. And I remember when all that came about I was thinking this doesn't make any sense to me. And here's the reason why, because whatever the purpose is here, it's the purpose at another church too. And another church, another church, another church. We all have the same purpose. Now you might have different emphasis, but we have the same purpose.

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And so my response was simply that. And I said, the church is to reach and teach. The church is to evangelize and edify. Those are the two main purposes of what we're about. We are called by Jesus to make disciples. And then we're told to teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

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And so as we come to the Word of God this morning, we're going to look at Ephesians 4, we're going to look at verses 11 through 16, and we're going to hear how to grow a church God's way. Now church growth movements and church growth experts are out there, and to be honest with you, I haven't heard too much information that takes me back to the Bible and showing me how God does it. It's more of a philosophical kind of thing that's shared with me.

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And so this morning, I have been driven to this text, and I've taught through Ephesians before. And so as we begin to look at this, I'm gonna read down at verse 11 and take us down to verse 16 as we begin to look at this text. It says, he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.

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until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be

children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love,

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We are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

03:13

When I was studying this, there were a number of questions that came out of it, and probably some questions that you may even have, because there's at least two questions answered. One is, what does the pastor do? Or pastors or evangelists, what do they do? Second question is, what does the congregation do? We tend to put the ministry just back on, quote, the paid clergy. But you know what, folks? We're all in the ministry. Every one of us.

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And we're going to see what the equipping ministry is of the pastor and the evangelists as we begin to look at this. Here's one thing you got to keep in mind when you're looking at Ephesians. The first three chapters, Paul has been giving doctrine. He's been giving teaching. He's been talking about what it's like to be in Christ. He talks about how we come into Christ. And he talks about what our life was like before Christ.

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what it's like now. And then in chapters 4 through 6, he gives the practical aspect of it. In other words, he's saying in the first three chapters, here's doctrine, the last three chapters, he's saying here's the practice of it. Put it in practice now. And that's why when you go over to chapter 5 and you look at verse 18, this really becomes the key to everything in terms of how we practice. Notice what it says in chapter 5 and verse 18. And do not get drunk with wine

04:36

But that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. Now we talk a lot about this here because we believe that this is key to everything. I mean we're told in Galatians 5-16 to walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The Spirit-filled life is what it's about as a child of God. And that is really key to doing everything that's mentioned here. You and I can't do any of this apart from the Spirit's power.

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But as Paul begins this chapter, if you'll notice up there in verse 1, he talks about walking in a manner worthy of the calling by which we have been called. In other words, the manner that we're to walk is supposed to be balanced with our calling. We have a high and holy calling, and therefore our practice is to match that high and holy calling. And if you look down at verse 2, he talks about where that all begins. What does he say?

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humility and gentleness and patience, showing tolerance for one another in love. And then he gets to the goal of it all in verse 3, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In other words, when all of this takes place, it's going to create a unity and it's going to take the diversity of the body to create this unity.

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So as we begin to look at this, there are actually six things I want us to see this morning. I think only in one other time ever did a 10-point message. This is a six-point. It's like deer hunting. You look for that six-point, you know, or whichever. But there are six things that he identifies here for us as a church. And again, the key to keep in mind is we're talking about how does God grow his church?

06:34

And the first one is found in verse 11. Notice again he says, And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers. This is where it all began. When Jesus answered Peter, after hearing his answer to his question, Who do you say that I am?

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You remember Peter answered and he said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You remember Jesus said, flesh and blood, didn't reveal that to you Peter, but my Father who is in heaven. And then he said after that, that on that revelation of what Peter said, I'm gonna build my church. And the gates of hell are not gonna prevail against it. And I tell you in the day in which we live, in the culture in which we live in, it kinda looks like that's not happening, doesn't it?

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But I'll tell you the reason why it looks like it's not happening, because of the compromise that has occurred in the church. Instead of making sure that the church is not molded into the image of the world, many of the churches have allowed the world to mold them into its image. And that's why you have woke churches today, you know that new term that's out there? That's why you have churches embracing homosexuality and lesbianism and so forth. They're

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that Christ died for. This is not something a person's born with. We're all born with a sin issue, a sin problem, right? But Jesus Christ can redeem you from all sin. He can remove it, and he does, and praise God he does. But he said he would build his church. Now, if Christ says he's gonna build his church, I wanna make sure that whatever my part is is in accordance with what he's doing.

08:25

the same way with everyone else. We need to make sure that what He's telling us to do that we're in line with that and we're not trying to do it our way. And of course this started with the Apostles and prophets. They're first mentioned here in verse 11. They later became known as the foundation of the church and Jesus being the cornerstone that we just sang about just a moment ago. If you back up to chapter 2

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look at verse 20, it says, having been built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone. If you were to go to 1st Corinthians 12 28, you would hear something like this, and God has appointed in the church first Apostles, second prophets, third teachers. Now who were the Apostles? Well,

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The Apostles were the 11. Originally there were 12. You had Judas Iscariot that betrayed the Lord, so he was replaced by Matthias in Acts chapter 1. And then you had Paul. That's the only Apostles mentioned in the Bible, yet sometimes I drive down the road and it'll say revival with Apostles so-and-so and I shake my head. I'm going, you know, you're bringing more confusion to this than you are anything.

09:48

And there were conditions by which someone had to be an apostle. Number one, you had to be called by Jesus to be an apostle, and that's what we find in Matthew 10, when Jesus had summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out, to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. It says now the names of the twelve apostles. So they went from disciples to apostles. But you know, he didn't say that about anybody else in the Bible.

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Anybody else in the scripture? No one else is called that. And then of course you get to Acts chapter one and you find that when they chose Matthias, here was the condition by which they had to choose somebody. They said in Acts 1-21 that it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John until the day that he was taken up from us.

10:45

One of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. Now I don't know anybody today that can say that they're a witness of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus resurrected, he appeared to his disciples, he appeared over 500 brethren, and then he ascended to heaven. We are waiting on him to return, right? We're waiting on him to come back, so.

11:11

The only people that could be considered witnesses of his resurrection were those who were closely associated with him. Paul even gave this qualification in 2 Corinthians 12:12. He says, The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles. And the reason for that is because you did not have a completed Bible.

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this teacher was truly a man of God called by God was his ability to back up what he said or confirm what he said by signs and wonders and miracles. Not everybody could do that and if we had hours to talk about this it would be easy to show it to you in Scripture. But the first office that he mentions here in verse 11 is Apostle. The Apostles ended. There are no more Apostles.

12:09

And the second office he mentions, there are prophet. And prophets seem to have been exclusively for the church, we find in the book of Acts. They were not sent ones like the apostles, but with the apostles, their office also ceased. And it's interesting about when you study these prophets in the New Testament, you find that they had some practical direct revelation for the church,

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One of them took a belt and he bound his hands and he started talking about what was going to happen to Paul when he went into Jerusalem, that they were going to bind his hands and he was going

to be taken into custody. And he knew that's what was going to happen when he appealed to Caesar. And that didn't shy him away at all. So that's the second mention of leadership. But then you have two others that are mentioned. And in verse 11, it says, some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers.

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Now these two offices are still functioning. We all tend to know what evangelists are, right? They preach the gospel. But you know what? Evangelists are really more like our modern day missionaries because they were church planners. They would go into a place where Christ hasn't been named or preached, and they would preach the gospel. They would win people to Christ. They would stay there and establish a church. Then God would raise up a pastor.

13:36

eventually raise up more than one pastor, which are called elders, and then the evangelist would move on to another location and repeat the process. But he was there long enough for the purpose of teaching the church how to evangelize. You know, that is so essential today because you know what's happening in the church now? We're not evangelizing. We're not talking about Christ. We're over there in our little

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corner, our little Christian island, and we're kind of hiding away and saying, I hope that I don't have to talk about this because this is uncomfortable. I don't want to be rejected. But scripture talks about evangelism being highly important in the church. That's our calling. You find two other places where evangelists are mentioned. You had Philip the Evangelist in Acts 21 8, and then you have Paul telling Timothy to do the work.

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an evangelist in 2nd Timothy 4-5. Every church needs evangelists. Every church needs to be taught how to evangelize. And then you get another office that's mentioned, it says pastors and teachers. This would be better taken as one office because in Greek it's *poimankai didaktikos*. *Poimankai didaktikos*. Kai is

15:02

or like in particular, so it's saying pastors in particular, teachers. And the way you can read it back in Greek, you can read back this way, teaching shepherds. And that really identifies what their role is. They are teaching shepherds. And of course they are under the great shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

15:28

And they are also known by other terms. You go into the book of Acts and you find the term elder, or you find the term overseer. This is all talking about the same group. Now again, every church needs both. Every church needs an evangelist to teach the people about evangelism, to teach the church the importance of planting churches, and you also need the teaching shepherd to teach God's word to God's people.

15:56

Now to get to the heart of this, this is really where I want to land, is in verses 12 through 16, because now we begin to see what the evangelists and what the pastor teachers are doing with the people, what

they're doing with the congregation, and then what the congregation is to be involved in doing. I guess you didn't know that when you came this morning you were going to get a lesson on what your responsibilities are, right?

16:23

I believe every time we come together we should be challenged by Scripture, right? Well first, go to verse 12. And he says that he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor teachers for what purpose? For the equipping of the saints. To be equipped. And the idea of equipping is spiritual perfection.

16:50

Spiritual maturity. Do you know that Jesus said that you are to be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect? That's Matthew 5 48. Now how do you feel? Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. You know, it's easy for us to kind of look around at each other and say, well, you know, I'm a little bit better than that person, you know. But compare yourself to God. That's much different. And really, that is where we should start. He sets the standard.

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He raises the bar, if he will, and that's what we're after. We want to walk in holiness. We want to be holy as he is holy. And so he sets the standard. But again, this is a term that when we're talking about equipping the saints, we're talking about maturing the saints. There's two other places where the same word is used. In 2 Corinthians 13, 11, where

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Paul says, finally, brethren, rejoice and be made complete. And the word complete is that same word. And it's also used in Hebrews 13 and verse 21 where he translates it, equip. Equip you in every good thing to do his will. Now, if you're not getting that kind of challenge when you come to church and you're getting a little sermonette for a Christianette, you know, that's what's going on now. We're not getting sermons anymore in church, we're getting talks.

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And talks are lasting about 10 minutes. And frankly folks, I can't live on that. I know when I study my Bible, it takes me more than 10 minutes. It takes me more than 10 minutes to understand a text. And when I preach it, I'm just trying to give you the overflow of what I've been learning. And as our church knows, it takes more than 10 minutes, right, to do that. But the whole process of equipping happens

18:44

with the Bible. You know, I know we live in this technology age now where people have the Bible on their phone or they have it on their iPad and they carry that and I'm okay with that, as long as you're using it for that purpose in church. Not for some other purpose, emailing or whatever. But there is something about having a Bible and holding it in your hand that you can't do with a phone. You know, it's like live streaming. Live streaming has its purpose.

19:13

And I'm thankful that we can do it. Because we have people that can't come to church anymore and so they watch the stream. But they will tell you too, that is much different than sitting physically in a church and physically experiencing the ministry of the saints. There's so many things you can't do through a

live stream. You can't have fellowship. You know a while ago when everybody was walking around we had the traffic jam right there in the middle. You can't do that online, right?

19:43

You can't walk around and hug each other. You hug a screen and that'll kind of look funny.

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But you can't have that kind of fellowship that you can have. Certainly you can listen to sermons and things like that, but there is so much there that we miss out on. But scripture is key to equipping the saints. When the apostles taught in the early church, they taught what was called the apostles doctrine.

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and they had fellowship and prayer and the breaking of bread. But the priority of the church was scripture. And you know, all throughout the ages, that's always been the priority. You go back to church history, the whole Protestant Reformation was over scripture. Because in the early times during those dark ages, the Catholic church had the scripture in Latin, and the people didn't read Latin. Anybody in here read Latin? Anybody in here read Greek? Anybody in here read Hebrew?

20:46

The original scriptures are written in Hebrew and Greek. If I just stood up here and just quoted Greek or Hebrew or anything or any other language to you and you didn't know what it was, it wouldn't be fruitful at all. It wouldn't have any help for you. And so we speak it in the language that we speak and then we we teach through it and sometimes we have to break down certain words that that are very hard to define in the Greek or Hebrew language and we're trying to define it in our

21:14

beautiful English language that is just as much troublesome, right? But it is the key, and I just remind you that 2nd Timothy 3 tells us it's the key when it tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God and it's profitable for teaching. I remember one time hearing a false teacher talking about the word profitable, and he said, see we're supposed to profit off of this. We're

21:44

In other words, money. Now that word profitable means useful. It's useful for teaching. It's beneficial for teaching. And for other things, it says for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. And then it says, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The only way the man of God.

22:07

And in this case, that's a term for a pastor. The only way he's gonna be equipped is by scripture. And if that's true of the man of God, isn't it also true for those who are not called into that aspect of ministry? Not everybody's called to be a pastor. Of course, he limits it to men, but not everybody, even in that category, is qualified to do it. 1 Timothy 3, Titus chapter 1, give all of those different qualifications.

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But the first aspect of equipping is with scripture. The second aspect of it is with prayer. Over in Acts six, there was a problem in the church. The Hellenistic Jews were being neglected by the church and

so they brought their complaint to the apostles and the apostles said, well, we can't leave the word of God to serve tables so you need to choose out seven men full of Holy Spirit, full of wisdom.

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so that we may appoint them over this task." So they did, and they went out and they chose seven Hellenistic Greek men, because those were the people that were being neglected, and they brought them back to the Apostles. The Apostles examined them, and they appointed them to that ministry. And the Apostles said this, and we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They kept the priority what it is.

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If you ever move your pastor away from that, you're divesting him from his purpose. Again, he's a teaching shepherd and he needs to be devoted to the ministry of the Word and prayer. Now I can just tell you from personal experience, it's easy to walk in my study, sit down, and immediately start jumping into studying without praying. And then prayer comes up when you're stuck. Lord, help me. I don't know what this means.

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But it's going to back up long before that. It's the ministry of prayer and the ministry of the Word. And so when you have this completing going on, this maturing going on, it's being done with the Word, it's being done with prayer, and it's being done to mature the saints. And now from this point on, he's going to talk about what the saints are to do. Look back there at verse 12.

24:23

He says that they have been given for the equipping of the saints for what? The work of service. That's the second one. The first one was evangelism, if you're taking notes. The second one is ministry. This word service is the same word that we get deacon from, diakonos. And that word is talking about serving.

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We need more servants, don't we?

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Problem is we tend to have a lot of chiefs, we don't have a lot of Indians. We got a lot of people willing to lead, but we need some people willing to follow. And the only way that we're gonna do the ministry together is that you need both. You need those who lead and you need those who follow. But the idea here is, as the goal of the evangelists and the goal of the pastor teacher is to move the people out of the pew.

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and to move them into each other's lives. Ministry is with each other.

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You know, when we tend to think of ministry, sometimes we're thinking evangelism. And it can include that, but primarily what we're talking about here is with each other. Just turn around and look at each other right now. Your ministry is that person sitting next to you. That's your ministry. And I have to ask

the question, how many of you are involved in each other's life outside the church? Do you spend time together? Do you talk? Do you pray together?

26:01

Do you go and visit people together? You know, the pure and undefiled religion, James says, is to visit orphans and widows. Do you do things like that? Go out and try to minister to them because they're now at a stage in their life where they can't come physically to church. We have a number of them as well.

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And that's one aspect of it. But another aspect of it is to keep in mind is that God never intended for the evangelists and the pastor teachers to do everything.

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And it doesn't matter how gifted they are. Doesn't matter how talented they are. Or even how dedicated they are. The work is too great. And it's too impossible for one or two Steves to do. Right?

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God's basic design for the church is for the equipping to be done so that the saints can serve each other effectively. The entire church is to be aggressively involved in the work of the ministry. And let me just have you to hold your place right there. Let me have you go to 1st Corinthians and go to chapter 15.

27:17

15 and verse 58.

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Paul says, Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Who's he talking to? Brethren. Who are brethren? Christians, believers. He's talking to the church at Corinth, be more specific. And what does he say? Be

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be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Who is to be involved? Always in the work of the Lord.

28:03

believers. And who are we to be involved with? Each other. Here's another verse. 1st Peter 4:10 says, as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another. As good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Our ministry is with one another. Now you may have come across this in the New Testament in your reading of the Bible and you'll find about close to 30 one another's.

28:33

are mentioned. The one another's are there to show us how and in what way we are to minister. Here's what we're to do for each other. I'll just read them to you. We're to love one another. You know that's mentioned more than any of them. That's mentioned 84 times. But we're to love one another. Another one is to be devoted to one another. Romans 12:10.

29:00

A third one, give preference to one another, also Romans 12 10. Romans 14 19 says build up one another. Romans 15 5 says be of the same mind to one another. Romans 15 7 says accept one another. Romans 15 14 says admonish one another. Romans 16 16 says greet one another. I think we got the greeting part down, right?

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1 Corinthians 12 25 says have the same care for one another. Galatians 5 13 says serve one another. Galatians 6 2 says bear one another's burdens. Ephesians 4 2 says show tolerance for one another. Ephesians 5 25 speak truth to one another. Ephesians 4 32 be kind to one another. Are you starting to pick up what your ministry is? Ephesians 5 21 be subject

29:58

to one another. Philippians 2.3, regard one another as more important than yourself. Colossians 3.13, bear with one another. Colossians 3.16, teach one another. 1 Thessalonians 4.18, comfort one another. 1 Thessalonians 5.11, encourage one another. 1 Thessalonians 5.13, live in peace with one another. 1 Thessalonians 5.15, seek after that which is good for one another.

30:27

Hebrews 10-24, stimulate one another to loving good works. James 5-16, confess your sins to one another. Yo, wait a minute, I was all right with all those till I got to that one. And I know why you would say that. Because unfortunately, when you share things like that in some of the places that we quote, call a church, it's not kept confidential. And it becomes headlines. And that's why we don't do it.

30:58

But we need to. James 5 16 pray for one another two more. First Peter four nine be hospitable to one another and last clothe yourself with humility toward one another. First Peter five five.

31:13

So you're to minister to one another. To hear a Christian say that I am not accountable to anyone doesn't know their Bible. It's totally ignoring the Bible. In fact, I would venture to say that much of what we don't know in the Bible, if we did know, we'd be very uncomfortable and we would be reexamining what we're doing. Because my contention has been for 39 years, that's how long I've been a believer, is that the church...

31:41

doesn't do everything that Jesus said to do. We tend to do what we want to do. We tend to do what's more comfortable for us. What benefits us better, instead of truly sacrificing ourselves and doing what Christ has called us to do. He is the Lord, right? He is our master. I used to have a ball cap that I wore and it said, Jesus is my boss. And I could literally wear that hat because I'm a pastor. He is my boss.

32:11

And Steve, he could wear that same hat, you know, too. And frankly, he is all of our boss, right? We're subject to him.

32:24

And how you do the one another's is through spiritual gifts. You know, every one, every believer has a spiritual gift. And spiritual gifts are not talents. Playing the guitar is a talent. That's not a spiritual gift. Playing any instrument is a talent. And there are some that are better than others, right? There are some that are really good at it. But.

32:52

ministering these one another's, you need the spiritual gift to do that. And you get the spiritual gift the very moment you're saved. The Holy Spirit gives each child of God a gift. Let me just tell you what they are real quickly. If you want to look at them, Romans 12 mentions a few of them. In fact, the text in Romans 12 and the text in 1st Corinthians 12, there's very little overlap. There is some

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parallel but very few, but I would have to contend to you that the listing in 1 Corinthians 12, you have a lot of temporary sign gifts that are mentioned, those disappear in Romans. And Romans was written after 1 Corinthians, not before it.

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And so that tells me that in some of these temporary sign gifts that actually stopped when they met their purpose, the focus for the church was on these permanent edifying gifts. And look at what they are. They're in Romans 12. And they begin there at verse 6. He says, Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each one is to exercise them accordingly, the prophecy according to the proportion of his faith, in service and his serving.

34:10

Or he who teaches in his teaching, or he who exhorts in his exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. What you need to do if you're not sure what your spiritual gift is, is I would just say go through the list. First start with which area do you desire the most in terms of serving God? What's the greatest passion of your heart? And then secondly, test the gifts.

34:40

Third, listen to others because others could evaluate you in seeking to carry out that gift and listen to what they have to say. Because you know, you could have a guy up there teaching and he does not have the gift of teaching. And everybody knows it but everybody's afraid to tell him. That's a problem because he's functioning in an area he shouldn't be functioning in. We do that to people that sing, unless you're Simon Cowell on AGT, right?

35:08

if anybody ever watches that, but he's pretty brutal, but we don't act like that, right? We don't tell somebody, you need to find something else to do. You can't sing, brother. And then we throw in there, we're making a joyful noise to the Lord. Yeah, brother, you made a noise.

35:28

I just say that jokingly, but that's how we do it. That's how we function, because we don't want to hurt anyone. And I understand that. But spiritual gifts are how we carry out the one another's. This is how we function with each other. And it is so important that we understand that when we're doing ministry,

unless you're doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit, you're not ministering. You're doing it all in the flesh.

35:59

And it is so easy to do. It's easy to stand up here and preach in the flesh. But I don't want to do that.

36:06

While Steve was playing that song, I'm just over there praying and I'm going, Lord, I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe, I need the Holy Spirit to take whatever I say up here. I mean, I've done everything that I know to do to prepare, but it's up to him to do the rest. It's up to him to deliver it to the hearts of the people. There is so much going on during this time that we don't always realize the spiritual work that's taking place.

36:37

Well, going back to Ephesians 4.

36:41

The equipping of the saints is number one for ministry. Number two is for edification. Edification is to build up the body of Christ. When you have a proper equipping by the evangelists and the pastor teachers, then that's gonna lead to a proper ministry or service by the congregation, and that's gonna result inevitably in building up the body. Paul speaks of this.

37:09

spiritual edification, this development of the church by these words building up. It's interesting those words literally mean to build a house. What do you do when you build a house? You lay a foundation and then you begin to put the edifice up. After a while you can't even see the foundation so you don't even know what foundation was laid there when it was built. And sometimes you have to come back and re-examine. You know some structures they get little cracks and things like that from it settling on the foundation.

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and you have to go back and look at how it was done and things like that. They actually have professionals out there that can do those things. For us on the other side, we don't ever want to see things like that, you know what I mean? When you got cracks in your foundation that show up in cracks in your walls or cracks in your ceilings. That's not a good sign right there. But when it comes to the church, this is used to build up, to edify, to encourage.

38:09

I do believe when you come to church, you should be encouraged by scripture. You should be encouraged by the one another's being carried out as each person is using their gift. You know, there's sometimes just someone's presence walking in as an encouragement, especially if they've been struggling with something and you haven't seen them in a while. And praise God, they're doing better now.

38:35

But this is a built up, or being built up, that occurs through evangelism, and it occurs through the preaching and teaching of the word. Over in Acts 20 and verse 32, Paul said to the elders there at

Ephesus, he says, now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

39:05

Do we really understand how powerful the Bible is? I heard one time about a pastor that had a gentleman come in for counseling.

39:17

And he walked in and as if to kind of walk past him, not even recognizing that he was there, and he sat down and he told him his story. He said, I'm an abortionist. I perform abortions for a living. I murder babies for a living. That's what he said. He said, I'm living with a woman that's not even my wife and I hate her too. Can you help me?

39:40

You know what he said? No, I can't help you, but I know who can. And he handed him a Bible. And he told him to go home and read the Gospel of John. That's all he told him. Well, a few weeks later, the guy came back in, he sat down, he said, I know who Jesus is. He's God. That pastor asked, how did you know that? He said, well, I read the Gospel of John.

40:07

He said, I also know what he did for me. He died on the cross for my sins. He said, well, how you know that? He said, I also read this book called Romans. And he said, the pastor, I'm so, well, what does this mean to you? He said, well, I've already written my resignation to the abortion clinic. I called my former wife and asked her if we could come back together. Listen, guys, it's only the word of God that can do that.

40:31

And again, all he did was hand him a Bible. You know, in seminary, if that's the answer you gave, they'd flunk you. Just to tell them, give them a Bible. But the Bible tells us in Hebrews 4:12 that it's powerful, it's alive, it's active, it's sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierces even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, it's a discerner of the thoughts.

40:57

and the intentions of the heart. I mean, if anything can read your heart, it's the word of God. You and I can't read each other's hearts. Our hearts deceive us. And then we have people out there on Christian radio saying you need to trust your heart. I'm not gonna trust my heart because the things that come out of the heart are evil, evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, all those things Jesus said comes out of the heart. So I don't wanna trust that. And even Jeremiah said the heart's desperately wicked. Who can know it?

41:26

So I could sit in there with a counselor trying to pull things out of my heart and I could deceive him as my heart's deceiving me and he could think that he got to the heart of the matter and he never did because that's how deceptive the heart is.

41:45

But again, I remind you, 2 Timothy 3, 16, the Scripture's beneficial for teaching, right? And for reproof and correcting and training in righteousness. If I wanna know what God expects of me, if I wanna know how to live a holy life, then it's gonna come by the Scripture. I have to go to the Scripture to find out what it says.

42:14

And so when we do that, that builds the church up. You know, when we read scripture, there's a reason why, you know, for the seven and a half years I've been here, we've read scripture every service we would read. Right now, we've been on a goal to read the New Testament, and you saw we were at 2 Peter 3. And we just keep doing it, and when we're done, we start back over, and we just keep doing it. We just keep reading the scripture. And then, eventually, we'll teach on many of those passages as we...

42:43

have our services together. But it is the word of God that builds you up. It's the word of God that edifies you. So he says that the purpose of apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastor teachers is to mature the saints for the work of ministry and for the building up of the body of Christ. And so when we do minister with one another, the church is gonna be built up. It's going to be edified. But if we sit.

43:12

in our pews and we stare at the back of each other's head, we never have a relationship with anyone, the church is not going to be built up, eventually it's just going to die. Because we're relational people, right? I mean if you never said a word to your spouse, do you think that would be good? If you never said a word to your children, you never told them you love them, never hug them, never had anything to do with them, do you think that's good?

43:41

You think that would help them? Now they're gonna have problem after problem, aren't they? And they're gonna manifest in their behavior. And it's gonna be at home, it's gonna be at school, it's gonna be wherever they are, and they're gonna carry that as they get older into the workforce. And they're gonna carry out that anger. So there's a point to everything that we do, and the church has that same privilege. We minister to the body with our gifts, through the one another's, the church is built up.

44:11

Notice the next one or the fourth one. And it's in verse 13. He says, until we all attain to the unity of the faith. This is how long this is going on. This is going on until we are unified. It's also going on until we are mature. This is a lifelong process. This is something that the pastor teachers have to stay focused on and continuing to equip the people for. It never stops.

44:41

But look at that fourth one, Unity.

44:45

When the church is properly equipped, when the church is doing its ministry, it will produce unity. Now, there's a verse over in Philippians 2.2 I'd like for you to look at because it gives four things that happen to get this unity. It says, first, that we have to be of the same mind. That's one. Number two, we have to

maintain the same love. Number three, we have to be united in spirit. And number four, we have to be intent on one purpose.

45:15

same mind. We should be thinking the same. We should be saying the same things and we're talking about Scripture here. And then he says in the next verse, Philippians 2-3, here's how it's accomplished. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another more important than yourselves. That is so key. So here it is.

45:44

If I'm to minister with the one and others with my spiritual gifts, that will build up the body, that will create unity, but it all has to be clothed with humility. I have to be willing to humble myself and treat others as more important than myself. It's Jesus first, others second, self third.

46:11

I think we wrestle with Jesus first and self first. I think that's where we wrestle. And we want Jesus first in everything. We say that and we keep making sure that He's first. He's priority in our lives. But then we fall into the second role and we put ourselves over others. And we're saying right here, we're not to do anything with selfishness, but we're to do it with humility. And it starts in the mind.

46:41

humility of mind regarding one another more important than yourselves. Now, he's already talked about this in Ephesians 4. In verse 2, we pointed out humility. Verse 3, he says, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And then he says there's one body, one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all. And all of that is talking about unity.

47:11

There's unity in the Godhead. There has to be unity in the church. And you know what? When people walk in and see a unified church, that's very attractive. They see a church that is stepping all over themselves to minister to each other. Listen, if we all did that, everybody would be ministered to. Nobody would be missed.

47:34

You wouldn't have somebody over there going, well, nobody's ever talks to me, nobody ever calls me, nobody ever visits me. Listen, if we're all ministering to each other, then we're also gonna pick up those who can't come. And we're gonna reach out to them, and we're gonna talk to them, we're gonna try to meet their needs, whatever that need is. And they say, well, I can't come to church anymore. Well, you know what? The church records this service. Would you like a copy of it? I'll bring it to you. I'll personally bring it to you. And that's one of the ways.

48:03

to minister. Or you can go and sit down with them and read scripture with them. And just visit with them and show them that you care about them and that you love them. That's putting others before yourself. That's preserving the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. That's achieving that goal through humility of having the same mind. And that's only possible

48:32

if we all believe commonly held truth. You know, there are things in the Bible that are non-negotiable truths. And then there are some things there that's got room to wiggle.

48:45

But when we're talking about our Savior, we have to affirm what the Scripture says about Him. He's God. If we arrive at something else, then we miss the Scripture. There are so many places in the New Testament that say specifically that Jesus is God. We're looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus, Titus 2.

49:13

Even the Father said of the Son in Hebrews 1 8, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness, as the scepter of your kingdom.

49:24

You can't get any clearer than that, that's just two.

49:28

And of course scripture also gives us others. Look at the next one. We're doing this until we attain to the unity of the faith. So unity was number four. Number five is knowledge. He says, and to the knowledge of the Son of God. Now Paul's not talking about salvation knowledge here. He's talking about deep knowledge. The word knowledge that's used here is epinosis. Epinosis refers to a full knowledge. That's correct, that's accurate.

49:56

It's a deep knowledge that comes from prayer. It's a deep knowledge that comes from studying God's Word. It's a deep knowledge that comes from being obedient to God's Word. I mean, even Paul prayed that the Ephesians would have a knowledge of Christ. And again, this is another lifelong process where we are seeking to go deeper and deeper in our understanding of our Savior. And listen, knowing Jesus.

50:25

According to scripture, it's him knowing you. You know, we tend to do this when we're evangelizing. We say, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? And we get a very similar answer, yes, I know him. Here's another question you can follow up with. Does he know you?

50:46

if I've ever been asked a question like that, does he know me? Here's the reason why I would say that, and let me just show you the verse, so I want you to look at it. Go to Matthew 7.

50:59

Matthew 7.

51:07

Verse 21.

51:10

To me these are the most haunting words ever in Scripture. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them.

51:39

Say it with me, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. They didn't do the will of God, they did their own will. And it showed up in a lawless life, an unruly life. And again, these are haunting words. Not everyone who says, just because someone says Lord, does that make them a Christian?

52:09

In fact, in verse 22, the understanding behind this is that this group of people have been in hell, they're standing at the judgment, and they're in utter shock to have been in the judgment.

52:22

And it's really a plea, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not cast out demons in Your name?

52:35

We not perform miracles in your name? I mean, there's shock.

52:44

That's why these are the most haunting words. You know, I hear that, and yet your flesh in two minutes will forget it. And it's the most horrifying text of scripture.

52:59

To hear the Lord Jesus say, depart from me, I never knew you. And all your life you served Him. All your life you were in the church. And all that time you thought you knew Him. And you thought He knew you. But you were never saved.

53:21

That's what's astounding. Jesus said in John 10, 27, my sheep hear my voice and I know them. And he wasn't speaking about knowing their identities. He was talking about knowing them intimately. He knows us intimately. We were reading in 1 Corinthians last night as a family and came across this verse in chapter eight, verse three. It says, if anyone loves God, he is known by him.

53:49

So how deep is your relationship with Jesus? Do you have a deep knowledge of Him? Do you know that He is the Son of God? Do you know that He is God incarnate? Do you know that He's the coming judge?

54:03

You know that He forgives sin?

54:07

I mean, we tend to talk about that, but do we really know it experientially? Well, the last one I want to give you, number six, it picks up in the third part of verse 13. He says, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, as a result...

54:32

We are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head even Christ.

54:48

What is all that? That's spiritual maturity. Did you know that you can arrive at spiritual maturity in this age? That is possible. I'm not talking about perfection. There's a difference between perfection and maturity. You know, as I have grown older in my life, there are some things that I no longer do that identified my immaturity.

55:14

That's the one thing about young people, they don't have experience in life with a lot of things. And so, they may have a book knowledge or they may have knowledge from watching movies or whatever. But they really don't have the experience. They have the knowledge, but they don't have the wisdom that comes from that knowledge. And some of that is just time. It just takes time. And you know, let me just...

55:40

give you a word of encouragement to some of you that already passed your retirement age and sometimes you're asking you know I've already raised my kids I mean you might be raising your grandkids to my mom did that or your children are doing that and you feel like you don't really have anything to do you know your ministry is really just begun you know Titus talks about your ministry says the older women are to teach the younger women

56:10

I mean, how important is that? We've got a generation coming up. They don't even know what genders are.

56:18

There are some 30 different genders out there and the Bible says there's only two, male and female.

56:25

So they need to be taught that. They need to be taught how to love their husbands, to love their children. You know, it says, when it says love their children, it means to be children lovers. Instead, what do we read in the news? We pick up the paper or we go online and we read the news and we find out, like I was reading the other day, this lady killed her four kids. I just can't fathom that. I have seven kids. And I've never wanted to kill any of them. I've gotten frustrated with them.

56:52

over the years and who hasn't gotten frustrated with their kids, right? But I never wanted to kill them. And the wicked things that some of these, that people come up with to carry that, I just can't fathom that. That just blows my mind because scripture tells us that children are gifts. They are gifts.

57:15

But do you understand all of that?

57:19

And so, he doesn't want you to be children. Paul says grow up.

57:29

Because what happens when you're a children, you're tossed here and there by every wave and you're carried about by every wind of teaching.

57:40

You're deceived by the trickery of men, and the word trickery means dice.

57:47

like they do in Las Vegas out there with the casinos and they have a way to alter the dice so it works in their favor. So they cheat. And that was the idea of trickery and the craftiness and deceitful scheming he says there in verse 14. See, when you're a child you can easily be deceived, but when you grow up it's not quite that easy, you know?

58:17

God's greatest desire for His church is that every believer, without exception, be just like His Son, the Lord Jesus, and manifest the same character qualities that He manifested. And you know, again, it takes time. You don't arrive at spiritual maturity overnight.

58:38

So it does take time, but there should be an active pursuing to grow. Now, scripture does give us a passage of scripture that talks about growing, and let me just show you this real quick, go to 1 John chapter two.

58:57

Look at verse 12.

59:02

He says, I'm writing to you little children because your sins have been forgiven for his name's sake. I'm writing to you fathers because you know him who has been from the beginning. I'm writing to you young men because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you children because you know the father. I have written to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning. I have written to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you. And you have overcome.

59:30

evil one. This is a progression. The progression is you start out as a child, but then you move to a young man, and then you move to a father. Your goal is to be a spiritual father or mother. You don't want to stay as a child, and you don't want to stay as a young man. Look at what the difference are. As a child, the only thing you seem to be focused on is the fact that your sins are forgiven.

59:56

beloved, don't misunderstand me, there's nothing wrong with that. That's enough to run hallelujahs all day long, right? But then young men, they're focused on the fact that they've overcome the evil one and they're strong and the word abides in them. But fathers, notice the difference between fathers to children and young men. It says of fathers, they're focused on knowing Him who has been from the beginning. This is that deep knowledge that

01:00:26

Paul had already mentioned that deep knowledge of the Son of God.

01:00:33

So when there is evangelism, when there's ministry, when there's edification and unity and knowledge and maturity, that's gonna cause the church to grow. And let me show you that, look at verse 16. It says, and from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies. Now you know that if you've got ailments in your body, it's not functioning correctly, right? And it's not unified.

01:01:03

Right? So he's using that same analogy. We are the body of Christ. We are individually members of one another. Jesus is the head of the body. Now notice, he says, the whole body being fit together and held together by what every joint supplies. We are like the joints in the body that are supplying to the whole body.

01:01:29

and according to the proper working of each individual part. We're all doing what we're supposed to be doing. We're all ministering, we're all doing it with one another, we're all doing it through spiritual gifts, we're all doing it through the power of the Spirit of God. The body is unified, the body's being built up. We're not children any longer, we're growing, we're maturing, and guess what? Verse 16, it causes the growth of the body.

01:02:00

You can't have what he says in verse 16 if all of these others are neglected. You understand that? If you're not ministering to one another in the power of the Spirit through the one another's and spiritual gifts, church ain't gonna grow. If you're not seeking to build up each other, if you're not seeking to have a deeper knowledge of Christ, if you're not seeking to grow in the Word and be mature in the Word, church ain't gonna grow. Won't happen.

01:02:29

So it says right here, when we're all doing our part, it causes growth.

01:02:36

So as I said when I started this, two questions are being answered. What's the pastor do? Not all of this. Though we are guilty of doing all of this. You know why? Because we run into a wall where so many are not doing it. And so many are not willing to be equipped to do it. When I came to Christ 39 years ago,

01:03:02

I wanted to know what this book said. I wanted to know what this book meant. This has now radically interrupted my life. Radically transformed me. I was not looking for Jesus. I was not looking for church. I was not looking for any of this.

01:03:20

What I was involved in, my drugs and all that, that was me, that's what I wanted. I didn't want any of this other stuff. And God invaded my life. He interrupted my life. And didn't stop, He kept doing that over and over until He gave me the new birth. And when He gave me the new birth, my eyes were open now. And I could finally now respond to the environment of God.

01:03:50

could now see things that I was blind to. Same for you. He opened our eyes. In the words of Acts 16 where Paul is preaching the gospel and the ladies are there listening and one of them's name is Lydia, it says the Lord opened her heart to give heed to the things spoken of by Paul. God opened her heart. That's how you come to faith in Christ. He has to open your heart.

01:04:20

And that opening of your heart comes through the preaching of the gospel.

01:04:27

All of us have a ministry. Don't think the ministry is just for staff, people that we quote, hire. See, that's problematic for me because this is not a job. It's a life.

01:04:46

therefore when you lose quote the job it's almost like losing your life.

01:04:56

There have been, when I look in the Bible and I see people like Elijah, God just used him on Mount Carmel and they killed all the prophets of Baal. I mean, that was a mighty victory, what took place there. And then the next scene, he's running from Jezebel because Jezebel says she was going to kill him. And he's running like a madman, fully depressed on top of that.

01:05:22

thinking that he's the only witness and God tells him that he is he's kept witnesses for himself. He's not the only one. But I'll tell you sometimes you feel like you are. And God never meant us to be alone, you know. We have ministering to do with each other. And even for a pastor it's not one-sided. The congregation ministers back to the pastor

01:05:51

through the carrying out of these things, through using their gifts. Pastors don't possess all the spiritual gifts possible.

01:06:02

But the one gift that they should possess so they shouldn't be a pastor is teaching. Because it says in 1 Timothy 3, 2 that they have to be apt to teach. They have to be skilled in teaching. And that's a gift. And now that gift can be enhanced and built upon, but it's a gift.

01:06:24

Now beloved, are you doing these things? Is this part of your life? Or is this the first time you're hearing this? But evangelism, ministry, edification, unity, and knowledge and maturity, that's what we're about. And if you're not involved in these things, either you're not being equipped, or you're lazy, or you're disobedient, or you're lost.

01:06:47

You know, there is no reason for anybody to believe that everybody in church is saved. We want them to be, but Jesus said there's tares among the wheat, and He said He would be the one to separate them, not us. So this morning, whatever describes you, would you go with me now to prayer and talk to the Lord about it? Would you examine your heart?

01:07:16

Look for these things in your life, and if they're not there, then maybe this is a wake-up call for you. Maybe now you say, gosh, now I know what I'm supposed to be doing, even though you may have been told this a hundred times. But now you know. And just like anything, we're responsible for what we've been given. And let's make sure that we're good stewards of what the Lord has given to us. If today you've never received Christ, I urge you to repent and surrender your heart to Jesus.

01:07:47

He will save you, He will transform you, He will change you from the inside out. And I just remember that there were many times that I tried to change myself and it wasn't gonna happen. But when there was a surrender of the heart.

01:08:03

and God opening that heart, that changed it right there. Father, we thank you so much for this time we've had in your Word today. Thank you for all of our guests here today. We pray too as we have some fellowship together after our time here now that you would bless that time and bless the desserts that we're gonna enjoy. Just bless the fellowship. But more importantly, I pray God that we give heed to your Word and we examine ourselves correctly and accurately.