

1. We hear a lot about church growth today

- A. Everybody has their opinions and methods – from worship leaders in skinny jeans to fog machines
 - 1). There is a lot of good – a lot of interesting things – clever techniques
 - 2). Books are written – church growth experts are crawling all over the web
 - a). But the truth is – anything that doesn't square with what is written here is not God's way
It is man's attempt to impose himself onto what only God can do – build his Church

Transition: What we have before us today is God's way to build a church

Eph 4:11–16 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ⁽¹²⁾ to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ⁽¹³⁾ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ⁽¹⁴⁾ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ⁽¹⁶⁾ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Outline

- A. The Gifting to build the Body of Christ
- B. The Building of the Body of Christ
- C. The Power to build the Body of Christ

I. THE GIFTING TO BUILD THE BODY OF CHRIST

Eph 4:11 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

1. First thing: Notice who gives these gifted men to the church = Jesus Christ

- A. Men do not appoint other men – all they can do is pray and seek God for his appointments
 - 1). When men do this on their own – without prayer – they get it wrong A LOT!

Transition: Let's look at the gifted positions here

Apostles (saw this last week)

1. Special ambassadors of God's work – had a unique 3-fold responsibility

- A. To lay the foundation of the church
- B. To receive and declare the revelation of God's Word
- C. To give confirmation of that Word through "signs and wonders and miracles"

Thought: They had unique responsibilities with unique requirements to be Apostles

- A. Commissioned personally by Jesus – Had to have seen the risen Lord personally
The writings and teaches fully inspired by God and working of miracles
- B. Add all these things together and we determined the office of Apostle is not for today

Transition: Let's look at Prophets – Paul links them with Apostles in laying foundation of the church

Eph 2:19–20 (ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ⁽²⁰⁾ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Prophets

1. Like Apostles – were gifted at ministering God's message to his people

- A. They would foretell the future at times

- 1). But more often their job was to exhort, encourage, and strengthen God's people

2. Are there prophets today?

- A. I believe prophecy has not ceased entirely but the office has
 - 1). There have been prophecies that led people in grey areas – turned out to be true
 - a). But that is the exception not the rule today – not normative
- B. I've noticed people claiming to be Prophets who constantly hear from the Lord get it wrong a lot
 - 1). The OT penalty for doing that was to be stoned to death
 - a). I think our biggest problem today would be finding enough stones

Evangelists (self-explanatory)

1. Those who are specifically gifted to preach the good news of salvation

- A. I am praying the Lord gifts us with this – we are doing so much out in the community

Pastors/teachers

1. Those who shepherd the flock primarily through the teaching of the Word

- A. Therefore the dual title – Pastor/teacher

Transition: These gifted men are given by Jesus Christ to build his church

- A. The way they do that is seen in vs. 12-16

I. THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Eph 4:11–13 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ⁽¹²⁾ to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ⁽¹³⁾ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Intro: You'll notice a progression in these verses

- A. We move from equipping the saints (believers) to do the works of ministry
To the body being built up by those equipped saints
This leads to the body living in unity.
Coming to a full knowledge of Jesus Christ and becoming like him
It also leads to the body being protected from false teachers
- B. Let's see what happens when this process proceeds as God desires

First: The Saints Will Be Equipped

Eph 4:11–12 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ⁽¹²⁾ *to equip the saints...*

1. The first task for the Pastor-teacher is to equip the believers

2. Equipping defined: To restore to its original condition – to be made complete

2 Cor 13:11 (NASB) Finally, brethren, rejoice, *be made complete...*

- A. When you are saved through the evangelists then equipped by the teacher

- 1). You are moving towards that original condition – who man was before the fall

Those holes that sin left are being filled – you are becoming more complete in God's kingdom

Transition: But how is that done – what are the tools God uses to move you towards that wholeness?

3. The tools given by God to equip the believer (we'll see 4)

THE WORD OF GOD

2 Ti 3:16–17 (ESV) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ⁽¹⁷⁾ that the man of God may be complete, *equipped for every good work.*

- A. The first purpose of the pastor-teacher is to feed himself and the people
- 1). At the same time – through feeding them – he leads them to feed themselves
 - 2). The Pastor instructs how to read the Bible – how to ask it questions – how to look for context

Thought: The Pastor should be excited about the Bible so his people become excited

Frank Colquhoun: If our preaching fails to catch fire it will hardly warm the hearts of our hearers.

DMLJ: Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.

PRAYER

The Leaders in the church: Ac 6:4 (ESV) But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

- A. The pastor-teacher is responsible to prepare himself through prayer – to pray for his people
- 1). And to lead his people to prepare themselves in prayer
 - a). This happens through instructing with the Word – giving examples
 - b). And setting the pace with his own life – hypocrisy to tell you to pray if I’m not

Thought: Praying people in the church is so important

- A. People who see the incredible promises of God about prayer – believe them AND PRAY

Mt 7:7–8 (ESV) “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁽⁸⁾ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

- 1). You get a church full of people believing that and that church will push forward the kingdom
- 2). But it starts with the leaders in the church

Transition: Brings us to the third tool God uses to equip the saints

TRIALS

- A. These are the tools God uses to refine the believer – to purify them
- 1). God brings this not the Pastor – though the Pastor can be a trial
- B. The Pastor’s job is to teach the Scriptures that equips the people to face the trials

Such as: Jas 1:2–4 (ESV) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ⁽³⁾ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁽⁴⁾ And let steadfastness have its full effect, *that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

- 1). When we respond to God’s testing by continuing to do the right thing = perseverance
 - a). Our spiritual muscles are strengthened and our service for him becomes more effective
- 2). Picture of lifting weights – each rep we’ll call persistence against resistance builds muscle
 - a). Remember that – every rep is making you stronger – every choice to do the right thing
 - b). The trial is so beneficial if you’ll take advantage of it
 - 1a). I don’t send them – but I can help you learn how to use them

Transition: The last means of spiritual equipping

SUFFERING

1 Pe 5:10 (ESV) And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, *will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

- A. The suffering will end but the work it does is invaluable - you are strengthened and established
- B. Romans 5 speaks of the benefits of suffering

Rom 5:3-5 (NIV) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. (5) And hope does not

disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

- 1). Suffering produces perseverance – which produces character – which produces hope = assurance
 - a). We see character being formed which convinces us God has done a saving work = we rest
- 2). It all leads to a greater experience of God's love – as it drives us to him

Point: The Pastor teachers is involved in all four of these

- A. Through proclaiming the word in a easy to understand and apply manner
- B. Through praying down blessing on the church – laboring for those under his care
- C. Through using the scriptures to teach the saints the values of trials and struggles
 - 1). And how to go through them so they will gain the benefits they are meant to bring
- D. Basically setting the pace – so the people themselves will read their Bible – pray – see benefits of trials

Thought: This is God's way to build up his church

Transition: So the body is to be equipped by the Pastor to do what? Next point

Second: The Saints Will Serve

Eph 4:12 (ESV) to equip the saints *for the work of ministry...*

1. The equipped saints are to serve the saints who are being equipped

- A. This is something everybody is to be involved in

Eph 4:16 (NIV) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, *as each part does its work.*
- B. The church is not a one man show – Pastor doing everything – omnigifted and omnipresent
 - 1). Church that expects Pastor to do everything won't be healthy - the Pastor will burnt out
 - 2). God's plan is for the Pastor works hard at equipping others – Study and prayer
- C. This doesn't mean the Pastor doesn't serve – he does – he sets the pace
 - 1). But he doesn't do everything – he can't be at everything and still do what he's called to do
- D. The Bible is clear - the entire church is to be involved in doing the work of the Lord

Transition: So the Pastor is called to equip the Saints through the Word and Prayer

- A. The equipped saints are called to serve the saints who are being equipped
- B. And when that is happening we will see the next step taking place – the body will be being built up

Third: The Body Will Be Built Up

Eph 4:12 (ESV) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, *for building up the body of Christ,*

1. The more who are involved the healthier the body is going to be

- A. When people aren't waiting for the Pastor to do everything – which becomes a huge bottleneck
 - 1). When they are calling each other when they don't see one another at church
 - 2). When they are visiting each other in the hospital – counseling each other
 - 3). Preparing meals – encouraging each other
 - a). This is the way a church is supposed to work – *every part doing its work*

Point: When the body is taught well – equipped through the word

When the body sees their responsibility to give out rather than just taking in

- A. The natural result will be the body will be built up
 - 1). This built up body will experience the next steps
 - 2). We could say the next steps is what this process is heading towards – ultimate purposes

Fourth: The Body Will Be United

Eph 4:13 (ESV) until we all attain to the *unity of the faith...*

1. “Faith” does not refer to the act of belief that results in salvation

- A. It is referring to the body of Christian truth, to Christian doctrine
 - 1). Many think “Don’t teach doctrine it only divides”
 - a). But unity is impossible unless its built on the foundation of commonly believed truth
Therefore, doctrine doesn’t divide – it unites – we believe in the same things!
 - b). If you don’t believe in the same things you can’t have spiritual unity
- B. That’s why the Pastor/teacher **MUST** be concerned about teaching sound accurate doctrine
To Pastor Timothy: 1 Tim 4:16 (NIV) Watch your life *and doctrine closely.*
To Pastor Titus: Titus 1:9 (NIV) He (The overseer) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others *by sound doctrine* and refute those who oppose it.
 - 1). There can never be unity in the church apart from doctrinal integrity

Transition: Next we see where all this is leading us too – now we move to the ultimate purpose

Fifth: Intimacy with the Son of God

Eph 4:13–14 (ESV) until we all attain to the unity of the faith *and of the knowledge of the Son of God...*

1. Not knowing him in a saving way – knowing him in an intimate way

- A. This is the ultimate blessing that Christianity has on offer – this is what all this is heading towards
 - 1). We enter into an intimate relationship with God himself
 - 2). So many want to settle for less – but Christ is everything in Christianity
- B. I was praying through some issues that I was anxious about – was applying Psalm 23
“Father, I want to be one of those sheep resting in green pastures and lying by those still waters. Work that rest into me.”
 - 1). The Lord whispered “I am that green pasture – and I am those still waters”
 - a). You go there by drawing near to me! Praise God! That makes it simple! I can do that!
 - b). He is our peace – joy – satisfaction! AND rest!
 - 1a). He is our green pasture – he is our strong tower that can’t be shaken

Transition: Teaching and doctrine – building up – unity - serving - it all leads to intimacy with Him

- A. It is about him – it is for him – it is all meant to lead us to him – to enjoy him
- B. As we are drawing near to him we have the next one – we are becoming more and more like him

Becoming Like the Son of God

Eph 4:13 (ESV) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...*

1. The natural progression

- A. We are saved and come under the sound teaching of the Word of God
We are equipped and start to serve our King and his people – and we are all built up
We are united because we believe in the same truth
That truth is designed to lead to intimacy with Christ
 - 1). And as all this is happening we are becoming more and more like Christ
- B. His character is fashioned into us – which is God’s design for us
Ro 8:29 (ESV) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...

Thought: Prayer is vital in this – I love this thought about spending time with God

Kent Hughes: Prayer is like a time exposure to God. Our souls function like photographic plates, and Christ's shining image is the light. The more we expose our lives to the white-hot sun of His righteous life (for, say, five, ten, fifteen, thirty minutes, or an hour a day), the more His image will be burned into our character. His love, His compassion, His truth, His integrity, His humility.

Transition: As all this is happening something negative stops happening – we are protected

2. The natural protection in the body that is being built-up

Eph 4:14 (ESV) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- A. A healthy physical body has the ability to rid itself of germs that cause disease – immune system
 - 1). It is the same when the spiritual body in a church that is healthy – because of the Word
 - a). Those believers are no longer immature and vulnerable to spiritual deception
- B. But when a church doesn't take the Word seriously what happens – no immune system
 - 1). People are weak and susceptible to every false doctrine that flows into the church
 - 2). They hear these deceivers on Christian TV and buy in – literally – to their ministries
- C. The cults – JW's – Mormons are filled with ex-Christians swept off feet because didn't know their Bibles

Thought: But look at what happens in a equipped – built up body

Eph 4:15 (ESV) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

- A. I love this – as the body is built up through the Word – the body starts to protect itself
 - 1). We're not being tossed to and fro by false doctrines
 - 2). We are speaking the truth in love – we are correcting ourselves – protecting one another
 - a). Just saw that happen not that long ago – somebody was watching a known heretic
Gently – lovingly they were corrected – be careful did you know he believes.... oh
 - 1a). That stopped the danger of that brother being deceived
 - 2a). This is the way an equipped – built up body acts – it's beautiful

Transition: That leads us to the power behind all of this

- A. Because of time we're only going to touch on this – we will return to it next week – too important

IV. THE SOURCE OF POWER TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST

Eph 4:15–16 (ESV) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ⁽¹⁶⁾ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, *makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

1. It is Christ who makes all this happen

- A. He makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love
 - 1). Makes sense since he is the one who said
Jn 15:5 (ESV) *...apart from me you can do nothing.*
 - a). Apart from him the teaching carries no weight
 - b). Apart from him the saints will not understand the word being taught
- B. But Revelation tells us the Lord walks amongst his church to empower
 - 1). My prayer is always – he will visit us in power – he will enable us to be effective

Point: We can plan all these things – but if we aren't dependent – trying it on our own = EPIC FAIL

CONCLUSION: THE PROCESS

1. The evangelist brings them in and the teacher equips

- A. This is done through teaching sound doctrine and prayer

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- 1). The Lord uses trials and suffering
 - B. Through all this the body begins to serve – as they serve each other they are built up
 - C. As they sit under sound teaching they are brought into a place of spiritual unity
 - 1). They draw near to Christ in intimacy – and they become like Christ in character
 - D. The immune system is also being built up – there is natural protection that is taking place
- 2. The power behind all this is Christ himself**
- A. We do our part but in absolute dependence upon him to enable it

To build up the saints

When saints are equipped – they minister to one another – the body builds up