

Walking Forward
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Ephesians 4:11-16

- *"We have people for that!"* You've seen it in movies and TV shows; the snobby, elegant rich person says to their guest, *"Don't worry about those dishes or that trash, we have people for that!"* (Think: Downton Abbey)
- Sometimes followers of Christ take that approach to the work of ministry.
- Illustration: *"We didn't bring a Bible to church, we had people for that."*
- Even in evangelical churches today, some Christians believe it's the work of the staff to do the work of the church and we are to be served.

Big Idea: When it comes to the work of ministry we DO have people for that! Those people are every believer who has trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.

- This text is about each believer using our spiritual gifts. Verses seven and eight say: ⁷ *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ⁸ *Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."*
- Salvation is a free gift given and paid for by Christ in his death for our sins.
- After He gave that first gift, He went to Heaven and now gives gifts (plural) to those whom He has saved. Some are given leadership gifts:

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

- You could do a long study on each of these roles. Here's an overview:

- **Apostles** – Someone who is sent out with authority. In the New Testament context apostles had “seen the risen Lord...been endowed by God with the ability to do amazing signs and wonders to confirm their gospel... gifted by the Holy Spirit with unparalleled wisdom...among the foundational ministers of the original church who revealed sound doctrine and wrote the New Testament texts...Because of the uniqueness of this ministry, there are no “official” apostles today.”ⁱ
- **Prophets** – We think of foretelling the future but they were also “forth tellers” of the voice of God. “[T]hey revealed the Word of God when the New Testament Scriptures had not yet been completed and collected.”ⁱⁱ The office of prophet (in this sense) has also ceased.
- **Evangelists** – It’s the job of every believer to share our faith (Matt. 28:10-20) but some have been give the gift of evangelism “a special ability to communicate the gospel, to make it particularly plain and relevant to unbelievers, and to help hesitant people take the step of faith.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Pastors** (shepherds) and **teachers** – Pastors “shepherd their flocks by meeting the day-to-day needs of the congregation— counseling, confronting, comforting, and guiding.” And they “feed their sheep through the teaching and preaching of the Word.”^{iv}
- So what is the real purpose of the work of our church leaders?

¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

- The job of church leaders is not to DO the work of ministry, but to equip all followers of Christ to do the work building up the body of Christ.
- Dr. Howard Hendricks: *“The church is too much like a football game—fifty thousand people in the stands, desperately in need of exercise, watching twenty-two people on the field desperately in need of rest.”^v*
- Warren Wiersbe: *“The saints do not call a pastor and pay him to do the work. They call him and follow his leadership as he, through the Word, equips them to do the job (2 Tim. 3:13–17).*

The members of the church grow by feeding on the Word and ministering to each other.^{vi}

- **What are some signs of a church that is measuring up to what Christ expects His church to be? What things would be evident?**

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,

- In the NLT: "[W]e all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."^{vii}
- "Unity in our faith" means being of "one mind" on the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Examples: "the Trinity, the full deity and full humanity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the atoning death of Christ to pay for our sins, the miraculous bodily resurrection of Christ, the promise of His future return, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and similar orthodox, nonnegotiable truths."^{viii}
- Christians will still disagree about non-essentials but a mature body of believers will be of "one mind" on those essential doctrines.
- A maturing church is also growing in the knowledge of Jesus.
- Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8 ⁸ ...everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (NLT)
- That unity in our faith (doctrine) and knowledge of God's Son comes from consistent study and application of God's word. Knowing and doing God's will from God's word makes us more like God's Son.
- How do you test if a church is a maturing group of believers?
- How much do they talk about Jesus? How much do they look like Him?
- Christ-likeness of the people is a sign of a maturing group of believers.
- Verse fourteen gives us the next sign of a maturing church.

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.

- **Why do we warn small children not to talk to strangers? Why don't we take a three year old to a seminar on spotting creepy people?**
- We protect small kids by teaching them not to trust strangers.
- As that young person grows we will teach them how to discern if someone is trustworthy. That takes years of teaching and experience.
- Small children aren't mature enough to be discerning. They can be gullible. Sadly, some "baby Christians" can be equally as gullible when a false teacher uses "cunning, craftiness, and deceitful schemes."
- We protect "young" Christians by teaching them to be careful not to just accept what appears to be Christian teaching.
- As that young Christian grows we will teach them to know God's Word and listen to the Holy Spirit so they can discern truth from false teaching.
- Notice that false teachers have to use lies and deceit to get converts. The truth of God's word reaches people without being clever or manipulative.

^{15a} Rather, speaking the truth in love,

- **How do some Christians misuse this term "speaking the truth in love?"** *"I'm going to "lovingly" tell you how I'm right and you are wrong!"*
- Let me be a little less cynical. Some sincerely think of speaking the truth in love as lovingly telling someone a difficult truth.
- Sometimes spouses have to lovingly tell the other spouse a hard truth.
- That lines up with our study in the first half of chapter four. We should do everything in gentleness and love including telling someone a hard truth.
- The context of this verse is a little different based on the previous verse.

- The key to the context of this verse is the meaning of that word "truth."
- In this context Paul is speaking of lovingly but firmly sharing the truth of God's word; not my opinion, nor my preferences, but God's word.
- As we said last week, though we are to be loving and gentle with people we cannot compromise on the truth of scripture. There are two extremes in this: 1) overlooking truth in order to keep peace, 2) jumping on someone who has deviated from biblical truth in an aggressive, mean-spirited manner. Both are wrong. The key is a balance of both truth and love.

^{15b} 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.

- Verses 15 and 16 describe what we call SANCTIFICATION.
- "The word sanctification is related to the word saint; both words have to do with holiness. To "sanctify" something is to set it apart for special use; to "sanctify" a person is to make him holy."^{ix}
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, sanctification is God's will for every believer.
- That means every believer should be (v.15) "growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church." (NLT)
- When we're each growing to be more like Christ, look at what He does:
- ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT) ^x
- Isn't that a vision of a church you and I would want to be a part of?
- All those diverse members with diverse gifts fitted together perfectly by Jesus "so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."
- Wouldn't you love to be a member of that church!

- A church like that is not about denominations or regulations but sanctification. It starts with each individual follower of Christ growing more like Him through the power of His spirit and the truth of His word.
- **What are some ways we can each live out this passage?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- *"We have people for that!"* Sadly, some Christians believe it's the work of the staff to do the work of the church and we are here to be served.
- When it comes to the work of ministry we DO have people for that! Those people are us; every believer who has trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.
- I know you didn't "pack for a guilt trip" but here are some questions for you and me under the heading of sharing the "truth in love."
- In my Christian life, am I being equipped for service or just educated or entertained?
- Do I really believe God has given me one or more spiritual gifts to use in ministry? Am I using them or making excuses for why I can't.
- Do I sit back believing someone else will do the work of ministry?
- The best way to find out what your spiritual gifts are is to find a ministry that intrigues you and needs help (they all need help) and volunteer. You'll be amazed at how Christ will equip you as a saint if you'll just be available.

ⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid* (p. 243).

^{iv} *ibid*

^v *ibid* (p. 246).

^{vi} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 38). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#)

^{viii} Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 246). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

^{ix} <https://www.gotquestions.org/sanctification.html>

^x Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Eph 4:15–16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.