

# Ephesians 4:7-16

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, go into the book of Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 4. I was ready last week to preach this message. I'm ready this week to preach this message. If you were with us two years ago, well this year will be three years ago, so if you were with us in 2022 at the fall retreat, the World Trace Baptist fall retreat, you know that Ephesians 4 is where we focus and we looked at being connected.

We looked at being connected with one another. So some of you say, well, I've been through this. I've had a weekend intensive through this. Well, every time we go to the portion of God's Word, it's something new to us, right?

And then last year in 2023, we got together and we looked at what it means to be rooted in Colossians, Colossians chapter 2 in particular. One of the things that I was able to do at the urging of your pastor's wife, as she urges your pastor to be more administrative, is for the first time in my history is almost 18 years in ministry.

We know where we're going in the weekend. We're going on our fall retreat. I've never been that prepared in advance, but when there's ice on the roads and she says you can't go anywhere, then she's kind of got me, right? So last weekend of September of this year, we will be going to Booker T. Washington State Park as our fall retreat.

I really even feel like I know where the Lord's leading us in the theme of that, though I'm not sharing that with you guys yet, because I don't like to share before I know for certain. So I believe I know where he's leading us, but I want to make sure that I know before I put it out there.

[1:29] So we build on these things. We look at this. But Ephesians 4, if you remember, if you're there, and if any of you have heard me for any amount of time, you know that Ephesians 4 is very near and dear to me, because in Ephesians 4 I find my job description.

I find a job description of the pastor. As a matter of fact, nearly eight years ago, or coming up on eight years now, when I sat down with the pastor search committee here, this is the passage that I shared with them.

This is my job description. This is what I know God has called me to do, not based upon what anybody's told me, not based upon something I've been taught and trained, but simply what the Word of God says, this is what I'm called to do.

But it's not only my job description. In here you also find your job description. And it's where we come together and we see really the importance of the church.

If you've been with us, and you know we're making our way to the book of Ephesians, Ephesians divides itself very clearly. We've had a couple weeks since we've looked at it, so it's good to be reminded of it. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 deal with doctrine, what we believe, the truth that we hold on to.

[2:37] Chapters 4, 5, and 6 deal with application. That is, Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus, the church in which he spent more time than any other church, the church in which he did missional activities out of. It is this church at Ephesus in which it was declared that he had reached all of Asia.

They had brought all of Asia into an uproar because of the gospel being proclaimed out of this church, right? It became a hub for gospel exploration and expedition.

It became really the fulfillment of the Great Commission coming out of that church. Not out of Paul, but out of that church. And he's writing back to that church, and he's encouraging them on what they believe.

He wants to make sure they have their doctrine right. That's Ephesians 1, 2, and 3. And then we get to Ephesians 4, and it says this, Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have been called.

So, from 4, 5, and 6, it's all about our walk, right? If we want to look at it the way one Bible commentary says it, the first three chapters are about our wealth, what we have inherited and what we have been given in Christ.

[ 3 : 40 ] I don't know if you realize it or not, but you are rich in Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, right? He has enriched you according to his riches. Not from his riches.

Remember that? Oh, that was a glory hallelujah time. You are not given from his riches. That is, what he gave you didn't belittle what he could give me. He gave it to me according to his riches. So, as he is rich, so am I rich, and so are you rich. And it is according to his riches. We are wealthy in Christ, maybe not materialistically, but in eternity.

So, it's our wealth. And now we talk about our walk, right? These things matter. The order matters. Because you'll never walk right until you understand your worth. You'll never walk right until you know what you know, right?

You won't do what you're called to do until you know who you've called to be and you know the one who's called you. And then, as he gets into this walk, into the fourth chapter, I'm almost at my text.

[ 4 : 35 ] I promise, it's a long introduction. He's beginning to talk about this walk and talk about this walk. And when he was talking about doctrine, he started with the individual. We have been called in Christ.

We've been redeemed by Christ. We've been enriched by Christ. He's speaking to the individual. If you go all the way back to Ephesians 1, it's your calling before the foundation of the world. We're laid. He loved you. He showed his love to you.

He called you individually. And then he called you and he united you and he put you in the part of his body. So, he moves from the individual to the corporate body called the church. When we start talking about application, that is how we live it out, he starts with the church.

He goes from the church to the individual. Right? Because the most essential part of your walk is not, now I'm talking about the application side, application does not take place in solitude.

Application first takes place in the multitude or with the people of Christ. So, to begin to live out who we are, first of all, is formed and fashioned in the body of Christ.

[ 5 : 41 ] And you'll see why in just a moment. And it moves from the body down to the individual. He will eventually tell you as husbands how we ought to be better husbands. And we ought to live with our wives. And as wives, how we ought to be, or you ought to be better wives.

And children ought to be better children. And employers and employees, how we ought to be better workers and better bosses. All those things come, but they come after he talks about the church. You know why?

Because you'll never be a better husband, better wife, a better son, better daughter, better boss, or better worker. Until you are mature in Christ. And maturity takes place in the body of Christ. You say, oh, you're a pastor.

You're supposed to say that. That's legalism. No, my friend, that's biblical. And you'll see it from our text this morning as we are in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7 through 16. So if you are physically able to desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join me as we stand together and we read the word of God.

And I want you to see the grand design of the body. The grand design of the body. Starting in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 7. Pay attention to it.

[ 6 : 42 ] It's so good. But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives.

And he gave gifts to men. Now this expression, he ascended, what does it mean? Except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens so that he might fill all things.

And 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.

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, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ.

[ 7 : 47 ] 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.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day. I thank you for your word. God, we ask that you would speak to our hearts and minds. We pray that as we come to the text, that we do not look at it through the eyes of man, but Lord, we allow the Spirit to speak to us the truth that it contains. Lord, that it would penetrate to the very depth of our being. That it would take root in our hearts. That it would transform our minds. That it would renew us according to the word. And that our lives would look differently because of it. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. We see the grand design of the body. And what a body it is. The body of Christ referred to as the church. You know, one of Paul's favorite illustrations for the church is the body.

[ 8 : 53 ] This isn't the only place that he speaks about how the body is fitted and put together. We've seen when we went through the book of 1 Corinthians, that even there in writing to the church at Corinth, the most wicked of churches that we find in the New Testament, by the way, he refers to the church as far as being a body.

How the hand and the foot and the eye and the ear, they all have a place within the body. Here, writing to the church at Ephesus, in which we find no, at least, specific wrong that he's addressing. No offense that is brought to light. No letter that was written to him correcting them. Nothing like that. He's just encouraging them. He, again, refers to the beauty of the body. The body of Christ is one of the favorite illustrations of Paul as he refers to the church, and I'm thankful for it because the body is so grand in its design and its purpose.

Even the human body testifies to the reality of that, and we see the design that is inherent in the body of Christ. Not too long ago, I was going down the road, and I was listening to the radio and the testimony of a famous eye surgeon who actually lives in Nashville, and he was giving his testimony how he was agnostic and had no beliefs whatsoever, and his mentor in the surgical field brought him outside one time and had him look at a car and said, Do you see that car?

He said, Yes, I see that car. He said, Well, do you think that car just showed up? He said, No, somebody had to build that car. He said, Well, you've made a living out of studying the body. What about the body? He said, I end up coming to Christ. After coming to Christ, I realized something.

[ 10 : 16 ] We were doing eye surgeries, and we were repairing eyesight, and we were healing. It seemed miraculous, but the problem is we were using stem cell that was harvested from aborted babies, and it began to bother me, began to bother me, and every science in the field said, There's no other way.

There's no other way. But I thought, Lord, there has to be another way. So he began to pray about it. He began to think about it, and all of a sudden it hit him. Everything that the baby needs is evident and embedded in the embryo of the mother.

So he began to harvest after the birth, the afterbirth, and he began to pull the things out of the afterbirth. And do you know it? The eye surgeries that he began to do began to be more successful than the others because there's a grand design in the body.

When God knit you together in your mother's womb before the world knew you, he put everything you needed right there. When God knit the church together, by the way, that's exactly what it says. He knit the church together. He put everything the church needs right here.

This is one of the most encouraging things. People will say, Pastor, how do you keep from getting discouraged? How do you remain encouraged? How do you not get down? Oh, I can't say that I'm always happy.

[ 11 : 18 ] That's why when you ask me, I say, Well, I'm doing well. Well is a good answer because it can be well with my soul even when it's not so happy with my circumstances, right? Well is a good answer.

I may not always be happy, but I don't have to be discouraged. I don't have to be down and out when it comes to the church because I don't build the church. He builds the church and he fits it together.

He forms it together. He fashions it together. And he does it in such a perfect manner. That's why I've always felt like, I told you, this is one of my favorite passages. That's why I've always felt like the calling that he's called me as a pastor is to call the church just to be the church, not to be so concerned about who's not there, though that bothers me and it burdens my heart and I want to have a heart for the lost.

But to look at who is there and say, Oh God, you've put them there. You've knit them together there. Oh, what a mighty force that can be for the sake of the kingdom. And we see this here in our

passage.

And we understand the reality of the grand design of the body. First thing I want you to see here is the distributed gifts. The distributed gifts.

[ 12 : 24 ] When Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and he's writing to them in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and following, he begins to speak of the spiritual gifts. And we saw there when we were looking through the book of 1 Corinthians that everybody has been given a spiritual gift.

Here Paul emphasizes that same reality because he says in verse 7, But to each one. Do you notice that? To each one. But to each one. Each one. And I'll give you a good little hermeneutic study of scripture here.

Each one means each one, right? Each one. So if you are one in Christ, then that includes you, right? I'm one of the each. To each one, it says. But to each one of us, grace was given.

Now grace is the necessary means and the necessary empowerment to do that which Christ has called you to do. So if God has put a calling upon your life, and he has.

And if God has called you and equipped you and fit you to do a work, and he has. Because he doesn't call us to fill heaven. Heaven is already full. There's myriads upon myriads and myriads of angels. As a matter of fact, heaven is so full, Jesus said he went to prepare a place for us because it was already filled up.

[ 13 : 32 ] He had to prepare a place for us to be, right? He had to add on to the father's house to make room for his bride. That's a biblical picture of the wedding supper of the lamb. The groom goes and adds on to the father's house.

Think about that for just a minute, dads. Your son gets married, and rather than your son going out the door, your son says, Dad, I've got to build on to the house. Why? Because I've got to bring my bride back. And we're going to have a lot of kids, and we're going to have a big family.

So I'm going to add on a lot to the house. And the dad says, okay, that's fine. That's what happens. That's why when you see the parable of the ten virgins, they're waiting on the bridegroom who went to go get his bride and take her back to daddy's house, right?

Because he built on to his father's house to make room because the house was already full. And Jesus said he went to prepare a place for us. Heaven's already full of the praises of God.

Look at every vision you already see. There are myriads and myriads of angels falling on their faces saying, Holy, holy, holy is the lamb, right? Worthy is the lamb. We see this. It is full of his praises.

[ 14 : 28 ] There are cherubim and seraphim and all those weaned creatures that daily praise the glories of the father, who daily sing the praises of the savior. God didn't save us so that he could be praised by us.

We praise him because he saved us. That's a big difference there, right? He didn't save us and call us to himself so that we could take up space in heaven because we will never fill it up. It is immeasurable.

It is unfathomable how big it may be. He called us and equips us and gives us the grace and empowers us. I'm trying to slow down. I promise. To do that which he's called us to do.

It says, but to each one of us, grace has been given. Friend, listen to me. God has called you to a work and the wonderful thing is that Christ has given you enough grace that you can do it.

You say, well, I don't know if I can do what he's called me to do. Well, the word of God, I don't care if you know it or not. The word of God says you can. Sometimes we need to convince our mind of what our heart already knows.

[ 15 : 25 ] And do not go by feelings and speculations because the last time I opened up scripture, it said the heart of every man is desperately wicked. And the heart of every mind is tainted towards ungodliness.

The truth is not found in how we feel. That's why we're well. The truth is found in what he declares. And it says, but to each one of us, grace has been given.

Now finish that verse. Look at what it says in verse 7. But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. That is, you have been given sufficient grace for the gift that he's bestowed upon you.

We haven't all been given the same amount of grace. Grace here means empowerment. Ability. So whatever he has gifted you, he has given you enough ability to do.

Not all of us have the same amount of grace. We're not in a race here, by the way. This isn't, we're not boasting. We're not puffing one up, lifting one up above another.

[ 16 : 35 ] Listen, the grace that God has given me because he's called me to be a pastor is different than the grace that he gives you and the calling he's called you to be. Why? Because it takes a lot more grace for me. I know me. I need a lot of grace.

A lot of mercy. A lot of empowerment. But to doubt the reality that you can do what he's called you to do is to say, Lord Jesus, you can't. It's not a matter of if we can.

Some of you know this about me. I'm not a big fan of public speaking. He's all, pastor, you stand up in front of people all the time. I don't like public speaking. As a matter of fact, when I am doing anything other than opening up the Bible, I'm as nervous as a cat in a room full of rocking chairs, as they say, right?

I just don't like it. I never have been. I don't like drive-thru windows. I don't like those machines because sometimes they think I'm a lady as opposed to a man.

I always try to get my, you know, real deep voice there so they know I'm a man. I just don't like them. I don't like these things. I'm not a big public speaker. But enough grace was given because of what God's called me to do.

[ 17 : 42 ] One thing that you find about most pastors, most pastors are not big fans of public speaking. And in their mind and in their heart, they don't like it. But as Paul would say, woe is me if I fail to preach the gospel.

I must proclaim that which I've been told. You must do that which God has called you to do. You say, well, what is that? Well, that's, I can't tell you what God's called you to do, but I can equip you into doing what God's called you to do.

But the first thing I want you to notice in that distribution of gifts is that he has given you enough ability to do it. Because grace was given to each one of us according to the measure.

You say, well, I can't do that. Well, maybe that's not what he's called you to do. Because it goes on to say, therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives and he gave gifts to men.

This is a quote of Psalm 68. If you go read Psalm 68, it says, and gifts were given to him. So there's all this Bible commentators and translators saying, well, was Paul misquoting the scripture?

[ 18 : 41 ] No, he was bringing the fullness of the scripture because what he's doing here is he is showing you that the picture of God ascending mount, the mount there, where Temple Mount was and how his ascension is, what they would sing when the Ark of the Covenant was brought up, that God was victorious, that he was captive over all things and gifts were given to him because he was the victor.

Well, here's the wonderful picture of the fullness of that is the gifts that were given to him, he turned around and gave them to us. Because Psalm 68 says, for you, O God, are a God of deliverances. From you belong freedom and deliverance from death. That's a gift given to us, right? He delivered us from death. What a gift that has been given to us.

And we see this, this picture, it says now this expression, he ascended, what does it mean? Except that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth. And he who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens so that he might fill all things.

A lot of questioning on this, I just want to answer. Really, if you read it, it's original language. What it is saying is that he who is in the highest of highest of heavens, he who sat on the throne of heaven came to the lowest form in all of earth. Listen, he didn't come to earth as a king, he came to earth as a child born in a manger.

[ 19 : 50 ] He took the lowest form in all the earth that he could take for us. And he left captives, those who were captive, that is who? Us. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, he set you free.

What he set you free from? From your captor who was Satan, who had you bound in slavery that you were born into. You were born a slave. You didn't have to sell yourself there. Your parents already did that.

Adam and Eve did it a long time ago in the garden. When he took from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they decided to forsake the way of God, they sowed you into it. You can't do anything about it. You were brought into it. You were born into it.

You were brought forth into slavery. It is someone that needs to be stronger than you to set you free, because one that is stronger than you already holds you captive. Jesus Christ, he came, he ascended on high, and he set free the captives.

That's us. He led captive the captives. That is, he took me who was a captive, and he led me. He captivated me and took me by his love and by his presence. Oh, what a Savior.

[ 20 : 47 ] And not only did he set free the captive, but then he gave gifts to the captives, because the Bible tells us, and he who descended is also himself who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

And he gave, so friend, listen to me. This distribution of gifts was given to all who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. He has gifted you.

And then in his grace, he has empowered you, and he has given you the ability to do what he's called you to do. You say, well, Henry Blackaby wrote that study so many years ago, knowing and doing the will of God.

How do I know the will of God? I love how Henry Blackaby did that a long time ago. It was so simple. You can read all kinds of books. You can listen to, well, nowadays, you can listen to all kinds of podcasts. You can listen to all kinds of whatever and other you want to.

I still read books. You can do all those stuff, right? You can get your Kindle out. I like turning pages. I can't highlight a Kindle. It has yellow markers all over it, and I can't see it anymore. And I know some of you are going to say, Pastor, there's a way you can highlight.

[ 21 : 50 ] I have one, I know. Still not as good, right? I can't pull it off the bookshelf and my pages be wore out because the highlighter is making the pages stick out. I like books. Anyway, you can do whatever you want to. People tell me how to do the will of God.

I like what Henry Blackaby said. He said, get in the Word. And when you've done everything God's told you to do in the Word of God, then go ask him, okay, now what? Because you'll know, I promise, by being in the Word, being in the Word, you say, Pastor, how did you know you were called to pastor?

How did you know you were called to preach? You want to know how I knew I was called to preach? I was reading the Bible. And in reading the Bible, I thought, well, man, I need to, I got to tell somebody these things that I'm learning.

And God was just so gracious. It's not me, he who has eyes to see and ears to hear. But it says that naturally you can't do that, but then the Spirit helps you do that. And then I was just reading the Bible. And somebody said, preacher, they didn't say preacher back then.

They said, Billy Joe, would you teach the Sunday school classes? I was like, well, I mean, I guess. So I said, yes, the door opened. I taught a Sunday school class. And I was doing this. And somebody came to me and said, Billy Joe, the youth, they need some help.

[ 22 : 51 ] Would you do the youth? I said, I don't know anything about teenagers, because our kids were all little at that time. But someday I need to learn something about teenagers, because they're growing, right? So I said, yeah, I'll do the youth. So Carrie and I did the youth. We did it for like 20 years.

And we were there, and we were working with them. And it felt like 20 years. It wasn't really okay. So some of those years felt like about 10 years. I mean, we had some good youth groups, right? We did.

We had such good youth groups. We got neon green shirts and put their names and letters and numbers on the back of the shirts. Everybody thought it was so cool. It's just so we could see which teenagers were running away. We had everybody's number written down, right?

They all thought it was cool. We had their names on the back of their shirts, so we knew who it was from across the auditorium. Oh, I know who that is. I go get him, right? No lie. Good minute. A lot of grace and mercy there.

And I said, yes, I'll do that. And I was just in the Word, right? I was just reading the Word. I was just reading the Word. And somebody came to me and said, man, you know, our interim pastor, he can't be here on Wednesday nights. Billy Joe, would you preach on Wednesday nights?

[ 23 : 45 ] I said, I don't know anything about building a sermon. I remember the very first sermon I ever built, Keep It Out of the Ditches. I don't know. What a title, right? I can't even tell you what it was.

I got it written down somewhere, some chicken scratch letter written. So I said, yeah, I'll start preaching. So I just started doing what God was opening the door for me to do. And I started doing it. And all of a sudden on Sunday mornings, I became interim to the interim.

And I said, okay, so that's desperate, right? Everybody's left the church. Nobody's here. Would you do it? Nobody. Okay, I'm still here. So I just started doing the doors that were open. And next thing I know, God said, you're a pastor.

You know how that happened? I was just reading the Word. And everything he gave me the opportunity to do, I did it. That's it. Just reading the Word. What if every believer read the Word and everything God gave them the opportunity to do, they did it?

That'd be amazing, right? It'd be amazing. We wouldn't all be preachers because he's not going to give us all that opportunity. We wouldn't all be missionaries, but the ones on the mission field, he wants to be on the mission field. When they get the opportunity, they'll go.

[ 24 : 51 ] Whatever it is. Sometimes he'd give us the opportunity to clean the church. Did that too. For 17 years, my wife cleaned the church, and I helped her for a number of those years.

I learned a lot of valuable lessons. Never whistle while cleaning the men's toilet. Don't do it. Bad things can happen. Just saying. Keep your lips closed when cleaning the men's toilet. Learned a lot of lessons.

A lot of humility there. You learn a lot of things by just doing what God gives you the opportunity to do. Humbling. Learn those things. Wonderful things.

You know seriously what I learned about cleaning the church? When we first started doing that, we were young. We were broke. God gave us the opportunity to do it. I gave her the opportunity to do it. I was going to help her. We had to because we had three kids at that time, and I was there.

And the pastor looked at us and said, I want when people walk in this church for it to look perfect. He challenged us. He started showing me the value of reflecting what we think about God in the church.

[ 25 : 46 ] People ever wonder why sometimes I get a little bent out of shape, and I'm trying to get to church? It's because that was instilled in me very early in my walk. That when people walk in, what they see is going to reflect what you feel about your Lord and Savior.

That was imparted to us very early on. So, when I was sweeping and vacuuming, and not always joyfully, I was well when I was doing it. I was like, at least it's going to show people what I think about the Savior.

So, I'd put lines in that carpet. I used to sit back and go, look at them lines. Kids, we'd make the kids walk around the outside of the church. Don't put footprints in that sanctuary. We ain't going to have the first footprints in there.

You'd think I'm joking, but we didn't. Why? Because we want to do all that you do unto the glory of God, not unto man. See, these are things we learn.

And God gave us the ability to do it, so we see the distribution of gifts. Number two. Oh, Pastor, how many of you got? Only ten. I'm just joking. It's only three. Distribution of gifts. Look at the desired outcomes. So, why does he give you these gifts?

[ 26 : 47 ] Why does he give each one of us these gifts, right? What is he wanting to do? It's not just so that we feel useful. It's not just so that we can have something to do. There's an outcome that God desires. This is why he starts with the body.

This is why he starts with the church, right? He doesn't start with the individual. He starts talking about living out your faith. He starts with the corporate body called the church. And this is why. Verse 10, it's, well, let's go verse 11.

And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers. I'm in there, right? Pastors and teachers. That's, some say, well, this is one office. And it is, but not all teachers are pastors, but every pastor is supposed to be a teacher.

So, there's kind of a two-fold meaning here. So, he gave some. He didn't give all. He didn't give everybody that. He just gave some. And he gave these for a purpose. Here's my job description, right? This is what I see.

Ephesians 4, 13, or 12 and 13. For the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. So, he gave these some to equip the saints.

[ 27 : 44 ] So, my primary job description, according to scripture, is to equip the saints. Right? It is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry or for the work of service, it says, to the building up of the body of Christ.

So, I'm to equip the saints to do that. But, not just me. Each and every one of us. This is the desired outcome. This is what he wants. So, he gave these some for the equipping of the saints. If you

know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you're a saint.

That's what the Word of God says about you. He says, well, I don't feel like a saint. Well, you're a saint positionally, even if you don't feel it experimentally. Right? So, you are a saint by position. So, my job description here is to equip the saints, that is, all the believers in Jesus Christ, for the work of service to the building up of the body.

So, I equip you so that in your service, you build up the body. Right? Well, how do we build up the body? Well, let's continue reading on. 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.

Sounds complicated, but just stay with me. And as a result, we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine. So, the best way to equip the saints for the work of service and for the church to mature is not necessarily just physically.

[ 29 : 02 ] It says to the point that we all know what we believe. So, that we're not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. It is, the church is mature the greatest when it is enriched the fullest.

Remember what we said, doctrine matters. And I don't just say this because this is one of my heartbeats in ministry. I say this because this is what I feel like. To the depth of my being.

We need to know what we believe and we need to believe what we know. Doctrine matters. We mature when we grow in our understanding. I promise you that if you study church history, the churches that fail are the churches that are tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine.

You find me a church that is not steadfast in their doctrine. I don't mean denomination. It could be a denomination. It could be a single church. But you find me a church that is not steadfast in their doctrine.

And the new wind of doctrine comes and they kind of go with it. And then they change over here and they go with this. And they go over here and they change over here and they change over there. And I'm going to find you a church that won't last. You have to be steadfast in what you know.

[ 30 : 17 ] Because it's a mark of maturity. Just recently started reading a book, Baptist Theology. A four century study of what Baptists believe. 400 years of Baptist doctrine.

Some of you say, oh, that sounds exciting. Well, it does. But you know what I found? That in the 1600s, the same thing Baptists were believing in the 1600s, the same thing they're believing in the 2000s. Pretty astounding.

Why? Because doctrine matters. And you need to know these things. You need to know what you know. And the way we mature one another is not make each other feel better.

The way we mature one another is that we equip the minds. Because you need to know you will never step out on faith when you feel insufficient and insignificant in your mind.

You say, well, you know why most people will never share the gospel? It's because they're going to be afraid they're asked a question they can't answer. Well, welcome to the club. Every one of us are asked questions that we can't answer.

[ 31 : 21 ] But the more you know, the greater confidence you have. And the more you understand and the more you grow and the more you get in the word and the more you're there. And you have this simple humility that you can say, I don't know everything.

I don't know every answer, but I know the one who does. So let me take you to the Savior. Right? And you get familiar with your scripture. And your Bibles begin to be earmarked and worn out and underlined and all these things.

And you begin to grow in this. These are the ones that God's using. And it's not because they're super saints. It's because they're equipped workers. Nowhere else in the world do you go get a job and the employer will look at you and say, we don't want you to learn anything else but what you already know.

Just do what you can. You get hired and they tell you, we want you to grow. We'll pay for your education. We want you to mature in your education. We want to teach you. You may not know what you need to know, but we'll teach you and we'll train you and we'll equip you to do it.

Right? And when we equip you to do it, you'll be able to do it better. Yet when we come to the church, we'll say, we just stay the way you are. It's okay. No. You need to know. You need to grow. You need to understand. You need to mature. And that's why we have one another.

[ 32 : 21 ] Right? Because some of us are further along than the others. Scripture has a big word for that. It's called discipleship. Right? Where we walk beside other individuals and we walk them along and say, let me help you.

You want to render a brother or sister or you want to equip a brother and sister to do greater works of service? Then walk through the word of God with them. Right? And let them fall in love with the Savior because of what God says, not because of what man says.

And you let them see the scripture and they're like, oh, wow, that's addressing every problem and every issue I have. And they begin to be astounded by what the word of God says. Next thing you know, they're going to be so on fire the world can't put them out and they'll be laboring for the kingdom.

Not because you convinced them, but because you introduced them and you equipped them.

Right? This is why Sunday school is important. This is why small groups are important. This is why discipleship is important. Listen, Sunday school teachers, from the nursery to the oldest of the old. I'm not going to call those classes out. I'm getting in trouble. From the nursery up, those teachers need to know what they believe. I mean, your doctrine ought to be steadfast. Why? Because it's up to you to impute it to others.

[ 33 : 26 ] And what you're saying is, I'm going to teach you some things that will transform and radically use your life. If you can't do that, then put yourself under someone's feet that will.

You know, I have to do that. As a pastor, I call pastors all the time. They're further along the road than me. Why? Because I need to know. A lot of things I don't know. One of the most significant moments in the history of my ministry was Hebrew Springs, Arkansas.

I might have told you this. I was at this convention, School of Expository Preaching by David Miller. I got an invitation to that. It was all expenses paid. I was there. Hebrew Springs, Arkansas. This is dot on the map. How many people know where Hebrew Springs, Arkansas is?

I was like, about five of you. Great. Some of you know it because there's a lake there. There's good hunting there. There's good fishing there. There's also a little bitty Baptist church right there outside the campground of that lake. And it's a wonderful, wonderful piece of God's country, right?

But there's nothing else there. And I was sitting at this hotel in Hebrew Springs, Arkansas. And Kerry was up in the room. And I went down to go sit with this pastor. And his associate pastor was with him. It was late at night.

[ 34 : 31 ] We'd been through meetings that day. And that pastor asked me some questions, pastoral questions I couldn't answer. And it rocked my world.

Because for the first time, as a pastor, pastor to pastor, I had, and he was asking me things I should have been able to answer. And I remember I walked back up to the room and I was curious, that'll never happen again. And so for the next six months, I began to work out not only his questions, but every other question I thought anybody might ask me.

Because I didn't want that humiliation again. But that's for every one of us. Right? Because we need to be sitting at tables talking about the things of Christ.

And the desired outcome is that we would mature in Christ. And we would be more effective in Christ. And how do we do that? By knowing and understanding. Because look at what it says, verse 15.

But speaking the truth in love. You know, we will never speak the truth until we know the truth. And the reason there are so many silent believers is because they don't really know the truth.

[ 35 : 39 ] And we will never be truly loving until we have a full understanding of the gospel. That we're not speaking the truth judgmentally. But it is the most loving thing that we can ever do. Is to tell another individual the error of their ways.

Because we genuinely love them. Big difference. Some people arm themselves with the truth so they can use it as ammunition to defend their belief.

Scripture tells us to arm ourselves with the truth so that we can use it as an exhibition of our love for others. Speaking the truth in love. Which means that we are to talk.

And we ought to speak truth. Which means we need to know truth. And we ought to be loving when we do it. There's the desired outcome. Number three, finally. Look at the dependency on every member.

There's the distributed gifts, the desired outcome, and the dependency on every member. To speak the truth in love. We are to grow up in all aspects. All aspects means all aspects.

[ 36 : 37 ] We are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ. Which means every aspect of our life ought to be affected by the lordship of Jesus Christ.

That as we grow, the gospel not only just changes who we are positionally. That we become sinners and now we're saints. Or we were sinners and now we're saints. It doesn't change us who we are positionally.

But it begins to change every aspect of our life. If there's any aspect of our life that is untouched by the gospel, then we still have some growing to do. And I can promise you, each and every one of us in here, we still have some growing to do.

Because each one of us have this little part of our life we're trying to guard and keep away from. But it says in all aspects, right? We're to grow up in all aspects unto the lordship of Jesus Christ. To him who is the head, even Christ.

How do you do that? You can't do it alone. You ever realize that? Growth never happens alone. Just like if you're into working out or any of that thing. You move forward in workouts a lot better with other people.

[ 37 : 39 ] I've worked out by myself. Not recently, as you can tell by looking at me, right? So I've worked out by myself. I'm like, this is boring. And then I've worked out with others. And it's challenging, right?

And it pushes me and it causes me to grow. And I'm like, man, okay. And then there's those days where you got up. Because I used to do it early in the morning. And I remember I'd wake up at 4 o'clock. And if I was the only one going to be there, I'm like, nah, not today.

The bed's good. But if somebody else was going to be there waiting on me, I was like, okay, I got to go today because he's going to be there. And, you know, you have to have other people. The church is the same way. You're not going to grow spiritually by yourself.

Because it says, from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies. So the picture, here's that picture. He sewed the body together. The wording here is something that historically was used by musicians.

It means to harmonize the musical instruments, to bring them together so that they sound. You know, there's nothing more amazing to me than hearing all these different instruments and seeing all these things.

[ 38 : 35 ] I don't know anything. I'm not musically gifted. I'm not musically talented. I used to mess around on the guitar and just beat it up, right? I never could play it. I always wanted to. But anyway, there's nothing more amazing.

You see all these things are so different. All of a sudden, boom, they come together. They sew it together. And you're like, wow, that's amazing, right? Because it makes sense now. It says something. It does something. That's the picture here.

On our own, we're just a bunch of different instruments that are making different sounds. And we don't always sound that good by ourselves. But when you put us together, when you sew us together, it's wonderful.

But it says that we are fitted and held together by what every joint supplies. You know what holds the church together? You. And the person next to you.

And the person next to you. And the person next to you. Every joint holds the church together. According to the proper working of each individual part. Proper.

[ 39 : 31 ] That word proper means working in measure. That each individual part, and I promise I'm almost through, is working according to the measure that they were supposed to.

I remember the one job I never wanted to work and ended up working it because God worked circumstances out so much. And I had a job at an auto manufacturing plant. And some people loved it, and that was God's calling.

I just, you know, I always told God I was never going to work in a factory. And God said, guess what? You're going to work in a factory. It was some formative years. But I remember it always amazed me that they could take a flat roll of steel to a finished product in a matter of hours.

I mean, they'd go from flat steel to driving it on the lot in a matter of hours. But between the flat steel and the guy driving it out the back door, there were a lot of parts. And one thing I noticed, one thing that almost every night I hoped for when I worked nights there, is that one of those parts would mess up.

Because when one of those parts messed up, the whole line stopped. And I'm going to tell you, when that thing was running as fast as some of those lines were, a minute and a half break was like an eternity.

[ 40 : 35 ] You're like, whoo, I can get caught back up right now. And I would just hope that one of those parts would stop and shut it down. But it was dependent upon each and every part working in unison to make it.

Sure, they could take it from flat steel to a car in a matter of hours. But in between that were all these various parts and all these various people. And every part and every portion had to be working according to measure, right?

We didn't ask the spray guns on the robots in the spray booth to be welding the cars together in the body shop. Right? We didn't ask that. We just wanted to spray guns to spray paint and the body shop guns to be welding.

And we didn't ask any of those things. Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. Some of you don't. We didn't ask anything else to do other than what it was supposed to do, to work according to measure. But if it didn't work according to the measure it was supposed to work, it would shut the whole operation down.

This is the church, right? Here's the church. The church grows and it matures according to the proper working of each individual part. That means no one is overworked. No one is overtaxed. No one is overstressed.

[ 41 : 38 ] No one is ever burned out because no one is ever laboring in the body more than they have been given grace to labor. Listen to that again. When the church is what it's supposed to be, you're not stressed out.

You're not burned out. You're not wore out. You're not overtaxed. You are doing what you've been called to do and you're doing what you've been given the energy to do because you're doing it according to the measure of what you've been called to do.

That's what the proper working of each part is. And it shows us, look at what it says, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. There's no part so small that it does not have an important part in the body.

I want you to hear me out. I'm closing here. There's no part so small that it does not have an important part in the body of Christ. But on the other hand, there's no part too small that it cannot cause great harm to the body of Christ.

That means everybody has a place to build the body up in love. But when even the smallest part decides it doesn't want to work according to its measure, the work will be done, but the stress is laid upon those who haven't been given the grace to do it.

[ 42 : 57 ] You see the importance? You see the grand design of the body? My wife's grandmother is one of the greatest people I ever met.

Couldn't see anything. I learned to drink coffee with a blind lady making you coffee in a percolator. That's coffee. That's why I can drink strong coffee. But she could hear a pin drop in the other side of the house.

She's one of the hardest person to keep a secret from. You know why? Because when the eyes felt her, the ears picked up. The work of the body will be done.

But if each part isn't doing its part, you know why there's stress and burnout and overworked and overtaxed? Why these things happen? It's because some of us go, I'm just a little part. It won't matter.

They won't miss it when I don't do it. Yes, we will. This is why we find the job description for every believer. What a grand design God has put into his body.

[ 43 : 55 ] I need you. You need me. It's wonderful that we can cause one another to be built up in love. Right?

We all matter. We all matter within the body of Christ. Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your goodness.

I thank you for your word. Lord, I know that when we come to it, we search ourselves according to the light of scripture. Lord, I see so many areas where I'm like, I'm failing here, God.

God, I just ask that you help us to reconcile that, Lord, in our hearts and minds before a holy God. Help us to confess that. Lord, also help us to move beyond that.

To not live in a moment of accusation. Lord, to live in the grace that you've extended to us to do the things you've called us to do. Lord, then we know it's not about promotion of any particular church, but it's about exalting the Savior through the love of the body.

[ 44 : 58 ] Lord Jesus, we just want you to be magnified among us and we ask it all in Christ's name.  
Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen.