

The Importance of Every Part: A United Growth

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 4, Ephesians chapter 4. We've been making our way and going through a series on the church, really the core values of the church.

We've been looking at it the last several weeks and when we began this series, I shared with you that really this series more than anything else defines my understanding of the ministry of the church from a pastor's perspective and even from a church member's perspective.

These are the values that I personally hold to and the values that I tend to make my decisions upon when I consider things for the church or in the ministry and kind of my thought process.

I shared with you from the very beginning that if you ever want to see how I understand the role and function of the church and the local community and how I make decisions, this would be the series to listen to.

I have not updated the website in the last couple of weeks and I apologize about that but hopefully this week things will get back to normal a little bit and I will be able to get it up to date and if you have not heard this series in its entirety, I would encourage you to do it.

[1 : 13] We began this series with a biblical view of the church and we kind of looked at what the Bible said the church was and we went into breaking down the four core values, the first one being the corporate worship of the entire body of believers.

So we looked at for a couple of weeks what it means for the body of believers to worship together corporately and why worship is important. In a nutshell, if you missed it, it is because God created man to worship and he did not create man to worship isolated.

He created man to worship in a corporate body and we looked at that practice and we looked at the principle that holds to that and how we value the corporate worship of the entire body of believers.

And then we moved on from there, not only just the corporate worship, we looked at the second one, a growing knowledge of God's word in every member of the body. The second value would be that we value a growing knowledge of God's word in every individual.

And each of these builds upon another because we worship God, we long to know more of God and if we're sincerely worshiping God, then we want to know more of God.

[2 : 19] And the only place that we can find to tell us the truth about God is what God has said about himself and that is the word of God. And the more we get in the word of God, that leads us to the third value, which we took a couple of weeks ago and we looked at once and we're going to look at it again today.

We're looking at this one for two weeks. And that is the value number three is that we value every part properly functioning in the role that Jesus called them to. The third core value would be that we value every part properly functioning in the role that Jesus called them to.

A couple of weeks ago, when we were looking at this value, every part doing its part, we looked at first Corinthians chapter 12 and we looked at the reality of spiritual giftedness that you have been giving a spiritual gift.

And we looked at the truth that first Corinthians 12 does not include all of the spiritual gifts because you would have to go to the book of Romans. You'd have to go to the book of Galatians. You'd have to come here to the book of Ephesians. And you would see that each time Paul records a number of gifts as it fits that particular church or that particular situation.

But there is this truth that every believer, every born again believer, every person who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has been giving a spiritual gift.

[3 : 37] And we looked at the reality of that in first Corinthians 12, that you were not giving a gift for your benefit. Rather, it says for the benefit of others, for the edification of the church.

And we're going to continue that this morning. And we'll look in Ephesians 4 verses 1 through 16 as we look at this value of the importance of every part.

And we're going to look at the united growth that comes from every part. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God in Ephesians 4 verses 1 through 16.

We'll read it and then we'll pray. The word of God says, 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.

[5 : 10] 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 to him who is the head, even Christ. Look at verse 16. 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 so much for this day. God, we rejoice in your word and we pray that your word would speak to us. We pray that the truth of it would grip our hearts and minds and it would begin to shape and move us for your glory and honor.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. We are looking at the importance of every part. If there is one verse, really, that summarizes this value, the value of every part doing, fulfilling the function and the role that Jesus has called them to in his body, it would be Ephesians 4, verse 16.

[6 : 50] If there is one verse that really defines kind of what my interpretation of pastoral ministry is, it would be Ephesians 4, 11 and 12. And this are a very critical and important passage.

It is critical because it shows not only my responsibility, but also your responsibilities. It is critical because it doesn't just encompass some of the church.

Rather, Paul here is writing to the entire body of brethren, the believers, and it really encompasses all of the church. This really shows us the importance and the value of every individual in the body. And not only just their importance and value, but it also shows us how that we can be united and in united effort grow to a maturity in Christ-likeness.

Not to grow to maturity by the world's standards, but rather to grow to become more like Christ because that really is maturity. We don't want to be more like the church down the road or more like this body of believers over here.

[7 : 51] The aim and the ambition of the body of believers is to be more like Christ. It is to be more Christ-like in our nature, more Christ-like in our work, more Christ-like in our efforts, more Christ-like in our attitudes, in our thought process.

And the Bible tells us that we can grow together towards that, but that growth is dependent upon each and every part. Growth in the body does not happen because of a charismatic leader.

It does not happen because of great programs. It does not happen because of a magnificent event or a full schedule. Those things can attract crowd, but they cannot promote growth. Growth happens because of the importance of every part.

And it is a direct result of the united effort of the body of believers. And I want you to see that, that the united growth in the body of Christ is a result of three things.

I want you to see them this morning according to this passage. It is a direct result of three very important things. Number one, a united growth in Christ towards Christ-likeness is a result of a submitted life.

[9 : 04] A submitted life. Not just a submitted life of some, but a submitted life of the entire body of believers. Again, Paul writing to the church at Ephesus. He is writing to them here, and we'll get to the therefore here in just a minute.

But he says in verse one, therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord. I love how Paul always interjects a reminder. If you come back tonight, we'll be looking at articles of remembrance as we make our way through the book of Exodus.

And we're actually looking at the tabernacle, how God is commanding Moses what to put in a tabernacle. And there are two pieces of furniture in the tabernacle that the only reason they were there was to remind people of something.

They serve no other purpose. It's the lamp and the table of showbread. They're just sitting there, right? They're just there, and they're there as articles of remembrance. And I usually kind of get lost in those things in my individual reading, but I praise God for an opportunity to study them because now I see the importance of it.

But they're just there to remind you of something. And Paul is kind of that way. He always interjects a remembrance. He always reminds you who he is and why he's writing. Not in a prideful way, not in a boastful way, because his words carry weight because of who it is.

[10:13] Look at this. He says, therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, the one who is sitting in prison, who is bound by chains, who is about to be beheaded because of my faith.

That's what history says happened to Paul. It is the one who is about to pour out my life as a drink offering. I implore you. Now, to implore is not just, I'm asking you nicely. Imploring is really that kind of prodding you, and I'm urging you, and I'm pushing you, and I want you to do these things. I'm imploring you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called. My friend, let's just stop and pause for just a minute. If there was a man who could be self-focused and self-centered and only care about himself, it would probably be Paul sitting in a prison cell with nobody else around.

If there was a man who thought, well, nobody's looking, so what? I can do whatever I want to do right now. I mean, I've got myself in trouble. It would probably be Paul.

And Paul says, me, the one who is bound by chains, the one who is awaiting my sentencing, me, who is sitting here among the praetorium guard, I want to command you, walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

[11:23] What is that? That is a submitted life. That means when life is going great, you're walking worthy. When life is going terrible, you're walking worthy. When you're up on the mountaintop, you're walking worthy. When you're going through the valley of the shadow of death, you're walking worthy.

The imploring here or the begging or the pushing or the prodding is to live a life of submission. That your life would match your calling. Now, that is so important.

What does he say? He doesn't say walk worthy of the choices you made. He says walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called. Why is that?

Because a submitted life, and we'll get to this in a little bit more detail in the next point, but a submitted life is really only a result of a proper understanding of your salvation. Now, we're talking to the believers here, okay?

Just in case you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I just want to be frank with you for just a minute, okay? If you have never really given your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, let me just be bone gut level honest.

[12:17] You cannot live a submitted life. You can live a good life. You can do good things, but you cannot live a submitted life apart from the Lordship of Jesus Christ over you.

And you can't do that. And you say, well, okay, then I need to make that choice. Now, let's properly understand our salvation. Because understanding is this. Understanding salvation helps you to live a life of submission.

Because salvation is not a result of a choice you've made. You say, wait a minute. The Bible says, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Right. It says that God gave his only begotten son that, you know, whosoever calls on him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

You're right. The Bible says that with the mouth I make confession, and with the heart I believe right. It says all those things. But do not separate your part from his part. Okay? We have a way of separating and highlighting our part, and we separate it from his part.

Because the same Bible that says all that says, but God gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believes in him shall never perish but have everlasting life. So let me ask you something. How could you believe in someone that God did not give?

[13:20] So salvation began with God gave. Right. And then Jesus himself says, no one comes to the Father lest he be drawn by the Father. Right. So you cannot make a decision for him unless he draws you to him. And it always tells us in Scripture that it is the Holy Spirit who is drawing you to him.

I remember beyond a shadow of a doubt how the Spirit used to urge me and pull me and move me and how I would get so uncomfortable under the message. And I would get mad at the preacher because he would be preaching to me and stepping on my toes.

And man, that man would make me so angry. And I'd get agitated and I didn't want to hear it anymore. And I was constantly being reminded of it. It wasn't the preacher. It wasn't me. It was the Spirit working on me.

It was being things that would come to my mind and all of a sudden something would prick me in the heart. And it was God drawing me to himself. See, when you do this personality test sometimes, and I go through it in pre-marriage counseling, and there's this thing called strength finders, understanding what your strengths are.

And I've told you this before. But one of my strengths is wooing, W-O-O, winning others over, which means I like to make people like me.

[14:23] You say, well, that seems kind of harsh because when you're in the pulpit, you seem like you're trying to make everybody hate you. Well, I understand that. But at my core, I really struggle with being a people pleaser.

I do. I just do. I don't like it when people don't like me. It bothers me. Up here, it's a little bit different, I guess, because God has called me to declare something. So the truth is the truth.

But personally, in my life, I want to win you over to my side. That's just kind of a strength and a weakness. It's strong in some points. But now, here's the picture of this. God is the great wooer.

I wonder how long it's been. What's the name of that song that was played up here? By the way, young man, you're getting so much better. What was that? How Great Thou Art, right? I knew what it is. I wonder how long it's been since you declared an awesome wonder, My Lord, my God, how great thou art.

What is that song? How does that song start out with? When I survey the heavens, when I survey the land, I know I'm paraphrasing a little bit. It says, when I look around me, my heart within me cries, My Lord, my God, how great thou art.

[15:27] You ever wonder why God painted the canvas of the heavens so beautiful? Why the landscape of nature is majestic? Why you can look out into the world and something within you resonates? God, why would you care about me?

How great thou art. What's going on there? God is wooing you. He's winning you over. He's drawing you to himself. See, my friend, listen. Salvation is not a choice you made. Salvation is a calling he extended.

God began to open your eyes and he began to show you himself. He began to show you his glory. And all of a sudden, something in you said, I want that. And Paul says, and I implore you, walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called.

You know why a submitted life is possible? It's because you understand the God of glory, the one who is majestic, seated on high, the king of kings and lord of lords, the one that every power and principality of the world forces and of the air and all the world's strongholds will someday bow down before him and declare that he is king.

That one on the throne called you to himself. And he said, I want you. You didn't look at him and say, God, I want you.

[16:46] Until he already told you he wanted you. And when you understand it that way, you're not trying to live a life because you made a decision. You're living a life because he called you when you weren't able to make a decision.

See the difference? If I'm living my life because I made a choice, if I chose Jesus, and if I chose salvation, then I can wake up tomorrow and choose not to live like it's important.

But if he chose me, now all of a sudden, it's of eternal importance. He says what? Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

And this is why it's important. With all humility and gentleness. If, my friend, I am saved because God called me to himself, what do I have to boast of?

Paul says I have nothing to boast of. Paul says I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. As to the law, blameless. As to the efforts, perfection. As to works, I was killing Christians.

[17:53] I was doing all I could do and even then some. But I can't boast about that. I can't brag about that. Why? Because in spite of all that, God called me.

God interrupted my life on the Damascus Road and said, Paul quit doing so many things and just come to me. So Paul says now I realize that all of my righteous deeds are like filthy rags.

Everything I was doing, every choice I was making, every effort I was putting forth, those are filthy rags. I don't need them anymore. Now I can walk in humility.

I don't walk with my head held high because, whoa, look at me and look how much of the Bible I have memorized and look how much I attend and look how much I give and look at all these things.

No. Now I walk in gentleness and humility because in spite of me, God called me to himself.

It is walking with a submitted life, with patience, showing tolerance for one another and love. You know why you can be patient with the saints. You know why you can show tolerance with the saints. Don't you love the fact that the Bible says there are some saints you have to tolerate?

[18:52] I mean, that's a good place to say amen. I mean, just be honest. We're being, we don't have to put our Sunday best on today. We don't have to walk around saying, oh, everything's great. Yeah, it's all good. No, there are just some saints you have to tolerate.

Sometimes you have to tolerate me. Showing tolerance for one another in love. Why can you do that? You know why we can show patience with one another? You know why we can show tolerance for one another?

Again, I'm talking to the believers. You know why we can show it in all love? It's because the same God who called me to himself is the same God who called you to himself. And I'm not there because I chose him. And you're not there because you chose him.

I'm there because he chose me. And you're there because he chose you. And if he cared enough about you to call you to himself, then I need to care enough about you to tolerate and to love you and to walk patiently with you.

And you need to extend the same towards me. It is living a life of submission. It is saying, you know what? There's some things about that believer. Listen, friend, there are some things about some saints, and I'm not talking about anybody in particular in this room, or maybe I am, maybe you think this.

[19:52] There are some things about some saints I just don't understand. But God called them to himself and loves them. So I will love them too.

That's me getting over myself and realizing the only reason I happen to be in their presence is because God called me too. It's living a life of submission.

Number two, not only is a united growth in the body of Christ a result of a submitted life, number two, it is a direct result of sound doctrine. That's why I spent so much time on this.

It is a direct result of sound doctrine. Paul says, verse 1, Ephesians 4, verse 1, therefore, right? You had a great interim pastor here who preceded me, Sidney Gibson.

I always point back to them because this does not originate with me. Brother Sidney used to say, whenever you see a therefore, see what it's there for. Remember that? It's a great saying, by the way. Now, we're picking this letter up, this letter to the church at Ephesus, midway point.

[20:53] I mean, it's exactly midway point. This is why I typically do not preach these style of messages. I would rather have started in Ephesians 1 and made our way all the way to the end of Ephesians 6 because then we would have it in context.

But, that would have been another series at another time. So, we're picking it up in Ephesians 4, which is the exact halfway point. Now, Paul wrote this letter intentionally and he wrote it very methodically in a good order.

He actually spent Ephesians 1, 2, and 3 talking about the doctrines of the faith. That is, this is what we believe. Okay?

And then he spent Ephesians 4, 5, and 6 talking about the actions of the saints. Because this is what we believe, this is what we do. That's why you have a therefore.

Okay? Because we believe these things, therefore we do these things. There are a lot of people who say this. And I used to do it too. There are a lot of people who say, God, just tell me what to do and I'll do it.

[21:57] God, tell me if I should do this or that. Tell me if I should go, A or B or C or maybe I should do D. Or is it a yes or is it a no? Or should I do it? There are so many great areas in my life. And you know what God is saying?

God is saying, before you get to do what you need to do, you need to know what you should know. The church at Ephesus is like, Paul, how should we live our lives?

Paul, how should we live our lives? And Paul spent the first half of the letter talking to them about what they believe. Paul, we just want to know what we should do. He said, well, let me remind you of what we believe.

Why? Because your actions will always reflect your doctrine. Always. You cannot have proper actions apart from correct doctrine.

Do you want to know why I encourage you to get in your Bible daily? Do you know why I encourage you to follow some type of systematic Bible reading plan where you're reading the entirety of Scripture? Do you want to know why I think that reading the Bible is so important?

[22 : 58] It's because I could set up here all day long and tell you what you should do and what you shouldn't do, and I could tell you what actions you should take and you don't need to take, but it won't do a thing until you know the truth of what the Word of God says.

But when you let the Word of God and the truth from the Word of God grasp your heart, all of a sudden, your actions begin to follow your doctrine. There's some things in your life you want to change.

There's some things in my life I want to change. There are. I mean, let's just be honest. We're all like, you know, clay in a potter's hand, still being mowed it. There's some things I want to change. There's some things I want to get away from. So what should I do? You try harder. No, learn more. Learn more. What does Paul say here? Where does he go in the doctrine? He says, With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing the tolerance for one another, and love, being diligent, verse 3, to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Look at this. Here's the doctrine. Why do you need to do these things? Because there is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling. Do you understand this? Every one of us that accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we all have the same hope.

[24 : 02] We do. We're all saved with one hope of our calling, one Lord. There's one Lord. I don't have a Lord and you have a Lord. There's one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

There's one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. What does he say? The doctrine is important. There are some things that we can disagree on and be okay.

But the foundations of the faith, the doctrinal issues, we need those. And before we ever will be united, it is a result of a sound doctrine.

The strongest churches in history and the strongest churches in time. Friend, and I don't say this because I'm a pastor. Maybe you think I do.

It's not to be self-promoting at all. But this is, again, I'm trying to help you understand my theology in pastoral ministry, my thinking, my God-centered thinking in this.

[25 : 00] The strongest churches throughout history and the strongest churches today are the churches with the strongest emphasis on Bible preaching and teaching. I didn't say the biggest.

I didn't say the biggest because there are some great shows being put on. And the Bible also tells us in latter days, men will love to have their ears tickled and they will love to have their senses influenced and they will be drawn to the show.

It also tells us, if you look at the strong churches, the ones doing the work of the kingdom, the ones doing the work for the kingdom's sake who are changing history because of their actions.

I challenge you, look at it, do some church history, do some just history history, look back over history and I'll promise you that every strong movement of God finds its root in strong doctrine.

Somebody said, wow, the Bible commands me to do this? I think I'm going to do it. What is that? That's doctrine. Understanding the Bible. Someone once told me and accused me many years ago, someone once told me, he said, Billy Joe, you don't believe in revivals.

[26 : 16] I said, what do you mean I don't believe in revivals? They said, you just don't. He said, I said, what's your basis for not saying that I don't believe in revivals? well, you don't ever schedule a revival. And I said, you're right. He said, see, you don't believe in revivals.

I said, you're wrong. He said, what do you mean? I said, well, you're right in that I don't schedule revivals because man cannot schedule revivals. Man can schedule a meeting, but man cannot schedule a revival. Okay?

And I don't. But I do believe in revivals because I point people to the Word of God every day. Every time I stand up, I point people to the Word of God. And what I have found in history is revival always flows from people getting in the Word of God.

And by the way, every great awakening in America and every great awakening, just about every great awakening around the world was all started by laymen of the church. Somebody's saying, man, I got in the Bible and it says that we should be praying together. Anybody want to meet and pray at lunch? And then boom, great awakening. I mean, it's just amazing what happens. I believe in revivals to the heart of my being.

[27 : 20] But I don't think we should schedule it and call it a revival. I think we need to dive into the Word of God, learn the doctrines of God, and see if God will awaken my heart and my soul and revive His people.

What a being it is. We see this. The only way the church is united is if it holds to sound doctrine. Number three.

We see the importance of a submitted life. We see the importance of sound doctrine. Number three. And this is really the crux of the matter because we cannot get to number three until we get to number two. Unless I live my life submitted to the calling He's called me to.

And unless I'm living that submitted life according to sound doctrine. Number three. A shared labor. A united body growing together to Christ's likeness is a direct result of shared labor.

I don't have time to dive into this whole theology of Christ ascending and descending, and we're not going to get into that right now. But I do want you to see this. In verse 7 it says, but to each one of us.

[28 : 23] Now the Bible says to each one of us. You know what that means. I'm going to give you a great term here. Each one of us literally means each one of us. Okay, let's not read into it.

Paul is not writing to the super saints. Paul is not writing to a group of pastors. Paul is writing to the church. Okay, so each one of us, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you can say that He is Lord of your life and you've surrendered your life to Him, if He has called you to Himself and you accepted that invitation, if you heard Him knock on the door of your heart, you open the door, He came in, He fellowships with you, then He's writing this to you.

To each one of us, grace was giving according to the measure of Christ's gift. There we go, spiritual giftingness again. The gift that you were giving when you accepted Jesus Christ, when Christ called you to Himself and you accepted that invitation, He gave you a gift, a spiritual gift.

I can't tell you what it is, but you can begin to look at your life and you can see what causes your heart to burn, what causes you to be excited. Paul says, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. I have to preach. The disciples said, what we have seen and heard, we must testify about.

That's the burning that began to swell inside of me so I knew God was calling me to preach. Maybe that's not yours. Maybe it is yours, but I want you to understand this. Whatever it is that God is putting in your heart, it gets you excited.

[29 : 38] It begins to move you. It starts giving you these feelings of spirit leading. Whatever that is, look at this. It says grace is the reason you were given that gift. That gift He gave to you is a measure of grace that is showing God's favor towards you.

He gave you, you say, well, my gift is the gift of administration or my gift is some behind the scenes gift, the gift of prayer. Praise God for His grace that He's called you to pray.

Praise God for His grace that He calls you to get people organized like me who are so unorganized. Praise God for the gift that He's given you because it is a display of His grace towards you.

And it says here that He gave gifts to men. I'm not going to dive into that because I just don't have time. He quotes a verse from Psalm saying, when He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives and He gave gifts to men, which means His ascension was really His distribution of His gifts.

We're not going to get into 9 and 10 because those are deep passages, but they're good. So we'll save that for another time. We're looking at shared labor. Look at verse 11. And He gave some as apostles.

[30 : 53] Now we have this definition of apostles as those that have seen the risen Savior and being sent out by Him to proclaim it. We see that. And some as prophets. Prophets are not necessarily fortune tellers. Prophets are fourth tellers.

This is what God's Word says. Now apostles and prophets had their place in New Testament time because there was no fullness of the Word of God. There was no scripture, right? So someone had to go around saying what God had said until it was recorded for us to open it up.

They depended upon those apostles and prophets. He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists. Now evangelist is a little bit different than a prophet because evangelist is going for the purpose of seeing people answer the call that God has extended to their life.

Some people today still have the gift of evangelism. That's not one of my strongest points because mine's going to fall in this fourth category. But there are some people who have the gift of evangelism. I've seen them. They can walk up and sit down on the bench to you next to Walmart or at Walmart and before you know it they can be taking you through scripture and they just have the gift of evangelism.

It's a great gift and it's a gift that needs to be exercised. It's a gift that's needed. But it doesn't mean the Bible also says that pastors are to do the work of an evangelist so it doesn't excuse me from doing it. It's just we see here that my giftedness as I see it falls in this fourth.

[32 : 05] It says and some as apostles some as prophets some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers. Now verse 11 really Paul is focusing on those who hold a visible position in the church.

These are ones you see at church at Ephesus. Now pastors and teachers are one person because it doesn't say some as pastors and some as teachers. The flow is interrupted there so they're put together some as pastor slash teacher which means a pastor really is a teacher.

That's why I choose these are just truths that I adhere to things that I really came under conviction of many years ago.

Now here it is in verse 12. Now I remember when I sat down with the pastor search committee of this church and they asked me and I explained to them this verse this is a verse that I point to and this is a verse that I live to.

Why did God give those gifts to the church? Now by the way he did not give many he gave some right? Just a few. He gave a few apostles he gave a few prophets he gave a few evangelists he gave a few pastors and teachers to the church.

[33 : 08] Why? Not to everybody. Look at this. For the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. Which means he gave some gifts to the church for the sole purpose of equipping the saints.

I know some of you may feel like I'm not much of a gift given to the church but by God's grace hopefully I can be God gave me to the church to equip you.

And others he's calling to the pastor teacher he's giving it to the church to equip the saints. That's why if you leave hungry I didn't do my job. If there's something you need to do a ministry and I don't help the church provide that to you I'm not doing my job.

You can point me back and say pastor your job is to equip me to do the work of the ministry. And I'll say you're absolutely right so what do you need to do the work of the ministry because it's right there it's right there in black and white right? He gave pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints but he didn't give the pastors and teachers to do the work of the ministry he gave them for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.

We're looking at why every member matters. I am to equip you to do the work of the service. I'm being impressed by Tom. I appreciate Miss Lynn's rearrangement of the schedule this morning to give me more time but I'm still being impressed by Tom.

[34 : 25] I am to equip you until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. so my responsibility is to continue to equip you to do the work of the ministry until every one of us look like Jesus Christ and I walked in the door this morning and I didn't look like Jesus Christ.

There are still areas of my life that need to be redeemed and refined and renewed. Still walking in my weakness so my job's not done but neither is yours right? I'm to continue to equip you until we all reach that measure of a mature man.

Verse 14 as a result as a result of this we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried around by every wind of doctrine. See there's that sound doctrine thing.

If you don't know your scripture then you don't know what you believe and you'll believe anything. You need to know it by the trickery of men by craftiness and deceitful scheming but speaking the truth and love we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head even Christ.

So here it is the church can grow verse 16 and this will wrap us up this is how we grow this is how we're united from the whole body being fitted and held together friend read these clearly by what

every joint supplies by what every joint supplies and according to the proper working of each individual part which causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

[36 : 02] Do you want to know why every member matters? It's because if there's one joint out of place or one part not working properly the body will not grow.

And we are not an organization the church is an organism it is something that is alive and vibrant and growing and we ought to be maturing and becoming more Christ-like.

We ought to be pushing on to the fullness of the maturity of man that we can be as he is as Paul says we will see him faces unveiled and be like Christ we want to be like him someday.

He is our standard no one else is Jesus is the standard and if we're not there yet then we still need to grow and the only way the church grows is when every joint is working and every member is properly functioning.

So that being said let me see if I can speak the truth in love if you choose not to exercise your spiritual gift in the church you're not hurting you you're hurting everybody else.

[37 : 21] because your gift is not about you. If you say God I ain't got time then God's going to say I literally gave you all the time in the world how are you using it?

Nobody else in this world has more time than you. It's a humbling thing isn't it? Nobody else and I'm one who speaks of reality I look and I say Lord what happened to all my time?

And it's a convicting thing. There's nobody else in this world who has more time in their day than I do. But there are people who use their time differently than I do.

You say well God I don't know if I can do it or if I want to do it. And God says don't you know I called you to do it? God do you know how much it's going to cost me?

It says when he ascended on high he gave gifts to men and you know Jesus says you know how much it cost me to give you that gift? I gave my life. I shed my blood to give that gift to you for my glory and my benefit in my body.

[38 : 38] And you say but God do you know what I have to give up to use my gift in the church?

You know what he says? I gave up glory. I left the throne of heaven to come to the lowest parts of the earth so that I could give you that gift.

And you say well God I'm just not going to do it. I'm just not going to do it. I know what it is that excites me. I know what it is that moves me. I can tell even as Billy Joe talks right now Lord the Holy Spirit is working telling me there's something I'm supposed to be doing in your body.

But God I'm just not going to do it. And God does not create robots. He gives you that option. But let me just tell you from the very bottom of my heart.

I need you to do it. And every other member of this body needs you to do it.

I had one disc rupture in my spine about four years ago. One little bitty disc.

[39 : 48] One thing. One tiny bit of material shot out of a hole, a little bitty pinhole in my disc and landed on one nerve.

Man it stopped me in my tracks. L5 hit S1 and I was done. And if they told me what had stopped me, the man in me would be like that's not going to stop me.

At least I said that. I'm not going to let it get me. And that one thing would not let me go. My body could not be right until that one thing was taken care of.

Friend listen to me. I don't want to be that one thing in the body of Christ. Because he called me to serve in his body. I'm wrapping up.

We're in NFL preseason football right now. The games that don't matter, right? Well it matters for some. Because on the roster, they're not yet down to their 53 man roster.

[40 : 59] On the roster they have multiple positions. And people are fighting for position. Some teams drafted receivers when they already had receivers. Some teams drafted quarterbacks or maybe should have drafted a quarterback when they already had a quarterback.

And what they're doing is they're promoting competition to see who's going to win out. Since I've been here as pastor, we've seen God add other members to this body.

But I want to tell you something. God doesn't draft people to make other people stop working. It's not competition. You say, well somebody else has got my gift. Good. God said we needed twice the gift in this.

We're not in preseason. We all matter. We're not cutting the roster. We're not knocking down. No, God has given us the gifts to use for his glory. And if there's somebody else who has your same gift, there have been times where I've pastored churches where five pastors were in the audience.

And I went, thank you Lord, if I ever missed, there's somebody there. I mean, five pastors. I'd look out and I'm like, wow, there's a lot of preachers here who know a lot more than me. Praise be to God for that.

[42 : 03] It's not a competition. I'm not trying to win my spots. This is a labor for eternity. And I just want to challenge you now as we come into our invitation time, I want to ask you, how are you responding to the gift that he graciously gave you?

We're going to have a song. We're going to have a time of invitation. May this also be a time of preparation for the taking of the Lord's Supper. Let's pray together. Lord, I thank you so much for this day.

God, I thank you for the truth of your word and I pray that you would search me. Lord, try me. Lord, help me to know my mind. Help me to know my heart. God, see if there be any way inside of me that I must confess or remove from before I move forward in the taking of the Lord's Supper.

Lord, I ask that you do that for each one of us. Lord, if there's someone here today who doesn't know you, they've never given their life to you, maybe there's a burning in their heart even in this message. They say, I want to part in the body.

Lord, may they understand your calling. Lord, may we each understand your calling to live accordingly for your glory. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

[43 : 11] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[47 : 58] Amen.