

EPHESIANS

ENGAGING THE POWER OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE



ABUNDANTLIFE
FOURSQUARE CHURCH

BY HIS GRACE HE BUILDS OUR HOUSE

Week Five

Ephesians 4:11-16

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we 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. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the Head of His body, the church. 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)

COMMENTS AND THOUGHTS

These gifts are actually people who have been called to special functions. We need to remember that not all people have all the gifts. The list given here is by no means complete (see Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12).

The following information has been edited from *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*:

1. The Apostle: The Apostles were the first leaders of the Church, first in time (Matthew 10:1-2; Luke 22:14,15; Ephesians 2:20), first in authority (Mark 6:7; Acts 1:21-26), first in ministry (Acts 2:37; 6:1-4), and first in the lists (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The Apostles were those commissioned and sent forth by Jesus to initiate and direct the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and, together with Him, to found the Church (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14).

The title "apostle" comes from the Greek word *apostolos* which means "a messenger, one sent with a commission, an Apostle of Christ." The basic idea expressed by the word "apostle" is that of one sent as a representative of another and who derives his authority from the sender.

Who in the New Testament are called "apostles"? The first group to be called "apostles" were the twelve disciples of Jesus (Matthew 10:2; Luke 6:13), whose number had been reduced to eleven by the fall of Judas (Acts 1:26). In addition to the twelve, several others are called "apostles"; such as: Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:6), James (1 Corinthians 15:7), Paul (Romans 1:1), and probably Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7). The last two who were Paul's kinsmen may be referred to in 2 Corinthians 8:23 as messengers (Gr., *apostolos*) of the churches. Epaphroditus is called, by Paul, the messenger (apostle) of the Philippian church (Philippians 2:25).

There have been “apostles” throughout the history of the Church, men with mighty gifts of the Spirit, men who through the power of the Risen Christ have pushed the frontiers of the Church out to the ends of the earth. If they have not called themselves “apostles,” they have done the works of apostles. The title of “apostle” seems to belong to the first generation of the Church; however, the spiritual endowments needed for apostolic work will continue to be poured out as long as there are unreached peoples on the face of the earth. Jesus is still sending forth with a commission men who are given His authority over powers of darkness, who have authority to bind and loose, and who preach the Gospel with the anointing of a prophet. They work among us today.

2. The Prophet: The prophet, whom Paul lists among the ministry gifts to the Church (Ephesians 4:11). The prophet was one who not only exercised the gift of prophecy, but who occupied a place of leadership ministry along with the apostles and teachers (Acts 11:27; 13:1-3; 15:32; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5).

In the Early Church, there were two classifications of prophets. Any member of the general body of believers who ministered edification, exhortation and comfort through the gift of prophecy was called a prophet (1 Corinthians 14:24, 31). Another group, consisting of such men as Barnabas, Silas, Judas, Agabus, and others mentioned in Acts 13:1, were spiritual leaders of the church (Acts 21:22); they are referred to by Paul in Ephesians 4:11 as among the ministry gifts to the Church.

How does the gift of prophecy operate in and through those who exercise it?

- The prophet speaks as the Lord’s agent. He speaks that which the Lord wills him to speak. Peter defines the function of the prophet as follows: “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God, whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies” (1 Peter 4:10,11 NASB). In all gifted ministry, there is a supernatural element.
- Often the content of the prophet’s message will be given extemporaneously at the time of speaking. However, the message may be given beforehand during prayer or meditation. Many of the Old Testament prophets received their message content in a dream, a vision, or during prayer, to be delivered to the people at a later date (Isaiah 6:9-13).
- Sometimes, the message content may consist of data well known to the prophet such as scriptural truth or history. Both Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-37), and Stephen before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7), delivered prophetic messages that were filled with quotations from the Old Testament.

- Before the New Testament was written, many of the apostolic prophets were used of the Spirit, to reveal the Gospel plan of salvation; for it was only dimly prefigured in the typology of the Old Testament (Ephesians 2:20). This prophetic revelation later became incorporated in the Epistles: “... Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and PROPHETS by the Spirit ...” (Ephesians 3:4,5) (KJV).

- While prophecy is more “forth-telling” than it is “fore-telling,” sometimes it may involve prediction of the future. The book of Acts records two predictive prophecies of Agabus (Acts 11:27,28; Acts 21:10-14), the first relative to the impending famine in Judea, the second pertaining to Paul’s soon coming imprisonment in Jerusalem. Both prophecies were fulfilled. It should be noted, regarding the second prediction of Agabus in Acts 21:11, that Paul did not change his plans as a result of the prophecy, nor at the entreaty of his friends.

- It is often asked whether prophetic utterances ought to be phrased in first person (“I the Lord”), or in third person (“Thus saith the Lord” or “The Lord would have”). When someone exercises a vocal gift, he speaks as the Spirit supplies thoughts; the Spirit reveals, the prophet speaks. God does not speak, but reveals to the prophet what He wants said. Paul said: “Let the PROPHETS speak two or three and let the other[s] judge” (1 Corinthians 14:29) (KJV). Since the messages of the prophets are subject to being judged (discerned), it seems more consistent with humility for the prophet to speak in the third person as did Agabus in Acts 21:11.

3. The Evangelist: “Evangelist” comes from the Greek word euangelistes, which is defined as “one who proclaims good news.” The English word “gospel” translates another form of the same Greek word. An evangelist, then, is one who devotes himself entirely to “preaching the gospel,” especially the message of salvation. The term “evangelist” is used only three times in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5).

4. The Pastor-teacher: In the grammatical structure of Ephesians 4:11, the term “teacher” does not have a definite article, as do all the proceeding terms for the ministry gifts. It seems, therefore, that “teacher” is to be taken together with “pastor.” This does not mean that the terms are interchangeable. There may be teachers who are not pastors, but there cannot be pastors who are not teachers (Acts 20:28-30).

The word “pastor” (Gr., poimen), used to refer to the spiritual leader of a local church, is found only once in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:11). However, the figure of the church as a “flock” (Gr., poimen), and of the work of the spiritual leader of the church as “shepherding the flock of God” (Gr., poimaino), is found several times (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

The fact that teaching was the principal goal of The Great Commission as given by Matthew (Matthew 28:19,20), shows the importance of the ministry of the teacher. The book of Acts reinforces this observation: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42) (KJV).

Ephesians 4:12 *To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (NRSV).* These specially gifted people (4:11) were for the goal: to equip the saints. The word for “equip” means to make right, like the setting of a broken bone, or to bring to completion by training or restoring.

The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers equip the believers to do the work of the ministry, which results in the building up the body of Christ. The church builds itself in the faith as the members care for one another, show love, and generally manifest the other gifts God gives (as mentioned in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12). God has given His church an enormous responsibility — to make disciples in every nation (Mt 28:18-20). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many other tasks. Fulfilling this command solo would be impossible. But God calls us as members of His body. No one should be a bystander, an observer. Everyone must do the work of ministry. Some of us can do one task; some can do another.

Ephesians 4:13 *Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (NKJV).* The word “until” indicates that the process described in 4:12 must continue until a certain end is achieved — when all believers come to (arrive at, attain) unity (Philippians 3:11). The goal includes making a united effort to live out and proclaim this faith.

Every believer must have a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This unified body of believers is called to be mature and full grown, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. The focus is on “we” in this verse — every believer as part of the entire body. This metaphor means that the church, as Christ’s body, must match the Head in growth and maturity. This does not speak of perfection (impossible in this life), but of growth — such as children growing into adults, which ties into the following advice regarding this growth. (Luke 2:52, where Jesus grew “in stature.”)

Ephesians 4:14 *We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming (NRSV).* Because believers are called to maturity in the faith (4:13), they must no longer be children (or like helpless infants). Christ requires childlike faith (referring to trust and acceptance — Matthew 19:14). This, however, pictures children who are easily led astray. Believers should avoid this error. People who are “children” in their faith and knowledge must grow up and mature (4:13).

Otherwise, they are susceptible to false teaching (every wind of doctrine). They will be unstable, rootless, without direction, and susceptible to manipulation. A small boat on a lake, tossed to and fro and blown about, is unable to stay on a course and reach its destination. Immature believers, like children, are unable to discern trickery and craftiness and thus will be knocked about with various teachings contrary to God's Word.

Ephesians 4:15 *But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him who is the Head, into Christ (NRSV).* Believers are not to be like immature children (4:14). In their witness for Christ, they need not resort to trickery and scheming as do the false teachers (4:14). Instead, their continuous objective should be to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, measuring up to His full stature, as described in 4:13. Believers should want to be like Christ, the Truth (John 14:6), and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, who guides the church, the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). Satan, by contrast, is the father of lies (John 8:44). As followers of Christ, we must be committed to the truth. This means that our words should be honest and that our actions should reflect Christ's integrity. Speaking the truth in love is not always easy, convenient, or pleasant, but it is necessary if the Church is going to do Christ's work in the world.

How can believers "grow up into Christ"? The answer is that Christ forms us into a body — a group of individuals who are united in their purpose and in their love for one another and for the Lord. If one person stumbles, the rest of the group can pick that person up and help him or her walk with God again. If an individual sins, he or she can find restoration through the church (Galatians 6:1), even as the rest of the body continues to witness to God's truth.

Ephesians 4:16 *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (NIV).* Christ is head of this body of believers (4:15) and its source; without him there could be no body, no church. From him alone the body grows and builds itself up in love.

The reference to growing and building refers not so much to increased size as to increased faith and spiritual strength. This increase can occur because Christ, as Head, supplies all the needs of the Body. The description of believers joined and held together by every supporting ligament describes the bond in Christ that holds the church together. The "ligaments" are the joints, the junctures, the contiguous links that join together the various limbs at the point of contact. The ligament provides the means of support, as a contact point between parts of the body and as a way to transfer strength and balance to each part. "Joined" means integrated, being fitly joined together, as a fastening joint in house construction or as a shoulder joint for the body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does unity in the church look like?
2. What does diversity in the church look like?
3. How is it possible to have diversity and yet unity?
4. What is needed in order for the church to mature in Christ and faith?
5. How is unity possible with so many different types of people and personalities?

**WHAT WILL YOU
DO WITH WHAT
YOU HAVE LEARNED
???**
