

The Church is called to be the visible presence of Jesus in this world. However, modern church culture has often reduced the church to merely a meeting that happens in a church building—an event people attend once or twice a week. With this mentality, the church often means very little to us, and it's no wonder we find our churches lifeless and full of empty religion. We must return to biblical New Testament Christianity.

So, what does a New Testament church look like? How is it structured, and who should be the leaders in our churches? Let's begin by going to Ephesians chapter 4 and discovering our blueprint.

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16 (NKJV)*

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## **How Do We Grow?**

### Every Member Equipped for Ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12)

As we see, "some" have been given specific gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—to equip the rest of the saints for the work of ministry. It's not solely the responsibility of "ministers" to do the work of the ministry; rather, it is the entire body's responsibility. Yes, even the ordinary churchgoer who thinks they have nothing to contribute to their local congregation has been tasked to do the work of ministry.

Without the few in leadership faithfully using their gifts of teaching, prophecy, evangelism, and shepherding, the whole body cannot be healthy. The church is the body of Christ, and our Savior did not die for a weak, useless body. Stop believing the lies the devil has whispered in your ears to convince you to stay on the sidelines of your faith. Your Father has given you unique gifts. While you may have similar gifts to others in your church, those gifts express themselves differently based on the unique "packaging" they come in—namely, the way you were fearfully and wonderfully made. Therefore, you are needed. Instead of your distinctiveness being a

hindrance, it is precisely what God uses to do the work of the ministry. No one can serve like you because they aren't you.

### Growing to Maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13)

Verse 13 reveals what we should be striving for: unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and growth into a "perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." An immature, ineffective Christian is often weak in either their understanding of truth or their ability to apply it. Do you gather with the saints simply to check a box? Do you leave week after week unchanged and no closer to your Savior?

You cannot grow into the fullness of Christ without submitting yourself to Godly leadership. Just as little children need the protection and provision of their earthly parents, we need the spiritually compelling voices of those who have, with endurance, already traveled the road we are on. We do not learn the truth merely to be properly informed; the truth must also be properly applied in our lives so that we may grow to the fullness of Christ.

### Avoiding Spiritual Instability (Ephesians 4:14)

Without the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our churches and in our own daily lives, we will experience what verse 14 describes: being "no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." This instability is prevalent in our day.

If this description resembles your church or your own personal story of sanctification, then your example of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom is suffering. The light you are shining is dimmed by a lack of consistent expression of truth and love in your life, which consequently hinders the work of the church as a whole.

### Speaking Truth in Love and Mutual Edification (Ephesians 4:15-16)

These verses are the picture of the whole—the wonderful vision of what the Church should be. We are called to speak the truth, yes, but always, always in love. This isn't just about avoiding harshness; it's about the very motive and method of our communication. Truth without love can be destructive, and love without truth is ultimately empty. It's in this powerful combination that we "grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." This growth isn't a solitary journey; it's a corporate one.

Notice the imagery: "the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies." Think of the intricate design of your own body. Each bone, muscle, tendon, and ligament has a specific function, and when even one part isn't working correctly, the entire body suffers. You might limp, struggle to lift something, or experience persistent pain. The Church is no different.

"According to the effective working by which every part does its share" – this is the core truth we must reclaim! It's not about a few super-Christians carrying the weight of the ministry. It's about every single member understanding and actively engaging in their God-given role. Your unique gifts, your specific passions, your particular experiences—these are not accidental. They are precisely what God intends to use for the building up of His Church. Whether your gift is hospitality, prayer, administration, encouragement, mercy, or a combination of these, your contribution is vital. When you withhold your "share," the body is weakened, and its growth is hindered.

The ultimate outcome of this faithful participation is profound: it "causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." The Church doesn't grow simply through larger numbers, but through the mutual building up of its members in love. This is a dynamic, organic process where each person's ministry serves to strengthen and mature the others, creating a vibrant, living organism that truly reflects Christ to a watching world.

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### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

We stop seeing church as an obligation or a spectator sport. We embrace our identity as vital members of Christ's body. We actively seek to understand our gifts and how we can deploy them for the good of the whole. We commit to a community where truth is spoken in love, where leaders equip, and where every "joint" is supplying its part.

This is the New Testament blueprint: a call to a living, breathing, impactful Church that moves beyond the building and into the world—a powerful testament to the fullness of Christ in our lives. It's time to stop standing on the sidelines and step into the vital role God has uniquely called you to play in His Kingdom. The health and mission of the Church depend on it.