

How Does the Church Make Disciples, Part 2

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 19, 2017

Well, before we get started in our sermon time, I want to draw your attention to an announcement in the bulletin (if you look in the top corner of the first page on the right there), Katie and I are trying to get to know everyone in the church and there are too many of you. So what we've decided to do is a thing called ... we're just calling it Meet the Pastor. And every other Sunday night we're going to have folks over for just a time of fellowship and snacks and those things. And there are so many of you, that we have to divide you up alphabetically.

So I've been told by the time we get to the Vs, there's going to be a lot of people. Richard told me that, so you can talk to Richard about that. But the first one is A through C, this is next Sunday night. So if your last name begins with the letters A through C, please come to our house next Sunday night, five to seven o'clock for a time of fellowship. We live up on Promontory, and the address is there. We'll put it in the bulletin next week as well. So we'd love to see you guys for that.

All right, well you can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. And as you're doing that, last week was a blessing, wasn't it? I've already alluded to that. To hear Stan talk about all the Lord has done to bring us together, to hear him remind us of the importance of friendship and relationships in the church, to hear Carl put the fear of God in your new pastor. I told him afterwards, I said, "Man, Hohn buttered me up, and you scrape the butter off ... painfully, slowly." I was trying to disappear into that pew right there. He's a big man. But it was good, wasn't it? I mean it was a wonderful day, and I pray it's the sign of many more to come. But church is serious business, isn't it? We need to take it seriously.

Charles Spurgeon said, "We don't play at preaching, we preach for eternity." And we don't play at church either. We do church for eternity. You're here for the next life, not this one. That's why you're here. Martin Luther said, "The pulpit is the throne of the Word of God." And the same goes for the church. The church is the throne of the Word of God. This is where people come to hear God speak. I don't know why you came here today, but if that's not why you came, you came for the wrong reasons. We're here to hear the Word of God.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, "A holy Minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God." And so is the church. The church can do a lot of damage. It can tear down a lot of strongholds, but this is serious business that we're involved in today. This is a big deal, and I think last week really set a tone for that. The service set a serious message for the ministry here that I pray we'll stick to as we go forward.

But with that in mind, this morning we're continuing a series called Foundations of the Church. We're talking about foundations, foundational or fundamental issues of the church. We're talking about the seriousness of the church if you will. And so far, we've said that the church is the people of God for this age. That's a serious thing. And, it makes disciples, that's what the church does. It makes followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It helps them practice their gifts. That's what

we talked about last time. The church is where people learn how to use their gifts for the glory of God. If you would read in Ephesians 4:7, it says this, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." That's an interesting verse, but it means that when God saved us, He gave us gifts. When he brought us to salvation and a new life, He measured out the gift to us. Some got this one, some got that one. We have one Christ but different gifts.

And he goes on to say this in verses 11-13, he says, "11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 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." Now there's a lot in there, but essentially Paul says it's the job of the leaders of the church to equip us for the work of service and to unify the body. It's the job of the leaders here to teach us how to use our gifts and to bring us into a mature man, to one man.

We're to be so connected to one another that we look like one person. You can look at it this way, as I was preparing for this sermon, I came across a survey saying that the number one reason why people leave churches is because they can't get along with other Christians. That surprise anybody? I mean have you guys been in church for longer than one day? That's so wrong, because you come to church to be unified. And that's why you have your gifts, to be one man, not to leave every time there's a problem. But the survey said, one common reason why adults leave churches is because they're disenchanted with other Christians. The study reported that 37% of believers leave over the behavior of other people. They're irritated by them. They're insulted by them. They're offended by them and neglected and ignored by them, to the point that they leave. They hear the wrong things. They get their feelings hurt, and they're never heard from again. And that's so sad because God gave you gifts so you could work it out, not so you would leave.

This is so common, the story is told, I think Larry Nelson told me this story, but the story is told of an old man who lived on a deserted island for 30 years, until he was rescued by some sailors who were passing through. And when they found him, they discovered that he was religious and he had built several huts on the island. And so they asked him, "What is this hut for?" And he said, "This is the one where I worship, that's where I go to church." And they said, "What is that one for?" And he said, "That's the one I used to go to before we had a split." It's so true, we fight even when there's only ... we're on a deserted island. And they say if you get ten Christians in a room, you'll have 50 different opinions. It doesn't glorify, it's not what God intended for His people.

I read somewhere recently that in a church John Bunyan grew up in, there was a door off to the side where the priest would go in and out without having contact with the people. And I think some Christians want that. There's an extra door right there and one right here. Some of you would probably say, "I just want to go out the door, and I don't want to talk to anybody." I mean they say things like, "Church would be great if it wasn't for the people. I love Christ, but I don't love Christians. I want to be in church, but not with the church. I want to pray, but I don't want to fellowship." Can I just tell you that you can't have it that way? You can't like Christ but not Christians. Christians are those who reflect Christ. You can't be in the church and not with the

church. You can't have a door off to the side. God gave you gifts, so you would go through the main door. Jesus measured them out, so you could be with others.

Just an example of this in the chapter that you're looking at, the word "one" is mentioned eight times in Ephesians 4 because that's what the chapter is about. God wants us to be one. He wants us to be at peace. In fact, the Bible says this over and over again. Did you know that in every book of the New Testament, just about every book of the New Testament, there is a call to peace? There's a call to be unified.

Just a couple of examples of this. In Matthew 5:9 it says, "Blessed are the what?" "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Do you want to be blessed? Jesus says make peace. Go out and get along with others. Mark 9:50 says, "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." It reminds me the words of Theodore Roosevelt who said that, "The single most important ingredient in the secret to success is the ability to get along with others." Jesus says that here. He says if you want to have salt, if you want to make an impact in the world, if you want to make a difference, make peace. Luke 6:31, "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." That's about making peace. Imagine how much peace would be made if everybody would just do that? I read somewhere else that in all the reported years of human history, there's only been about like 400 something years of peace. Thousands of years of warfare. Jesus says it would all stop if you would just treat others the same way that you want to be treated yourselves. John 17:20-21, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me...that they may all be one. They may be at peace." Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is...peace...". Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...". But you get the idea. Over and over again, the Scriptures call us to peace. The way some believers act, you would think He's called us to war. They're always arguing, they're always picking a fight. But the Scriptures call us to peace.

God is a God of peace, and He wants His people to be a people of peace. That's why He gave you the gifts that you have. That's why He brought you to salvation. That's why His Son died on the cross to end the war in your soul and to end the war with other people. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Our sermon is titled: "How Does The Church Make Disciples?"

Well, one way you make them is to teach them how to get along with each other. So what does the church look like when it's at peace? It's a rare thing nowadays. You don't see it very often. So what is this supposed to look like? How do we make peace here at Grace Fellowship Church? How can we be unified? Well in Ephesians 4:14-16, Paul gives us several areas where a church demonstrates peace. So if you're taking notes, here some areas where a church demonstrates peace.

And the first one is this: a church demonstrates peace in its stability. The church demonstrates peace in its stability. To say that another way, if you want to make peace, you need to be a stable person. It's hard to make peace with a roller coaster, isn't it? It's bouncing around all the

time, jerking, jerking in every which way. It's hard to make peace with people who live like roller coasters. You can't hold on to them. And Paul says this in verse 14. He says, "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by the waves...". Paul says as a result of your leaders, equipping you to do the work of ministry, as a result of you getting saved and receiving the gifts, as a result of you becoming disciples and living in peace with each other and working hard to be unified, you're no longer to be children tossed here and there by the waves.

Paul gives us two word pictures in verse 14. The first is that of children. He says, "We're no longer to be children." As many of you know, children are not very stable. Are they? I'm not going to ask how many of you sat beside a child during the first part of the service, but they're not so still. They bounce around all the time. They're distracted by everything. I remember when my Jeremiah first learned to walk, we had these huge hallways at church. I mean they were 100-foot long. And he would see me in the hall and he would say, "Daddy." And he would start running towards me and then he'd get distracted, and off you go. I get so excited. My heart would beat, "Here comes my boy ... He's gone off." It's a mind of a child right? It gets distracted by everything. You put something shiny in front of a child, he's gone. And some Christians are like that. They're constantly distracted. They're constantly moving around. Everything looks good to them. Everything goes in their mouth, just like a child. Babies; they can't tell the difference between dirt and milk. I mean I've pulled rubber bands out of my children's mouth before ... why do they put that in there? They have no stability. Paul says that doesn't promote peace. That mindset as a Christian does not bring people together.

And it brings us to a second word picture in verse 14, that of a ship. The verse says, "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by the waves". That phrase, "Tossed here and there" refers to a ship. You can just picture a ship on big waves just being bounced around from place to place in the ocean. Specifically, this verse could refer to one of Paul's shipwrecks. Scholars believe that Paul wrote this book just after one of his major shipwrecks on the way to Rome. And as he remembered that shipwreck, getting bounced around like a pinball, Paul says, "That doesn't promote peace either." There is nothing peaceful about a pinball machine. We shouldn't be blown about by everything. We shouldn't bounce around from this thing to that thing to this. Churches shouldn't do the "40 Days of Purpose" today, "The Prayer of Jabez" tomorrow, and "Your Best Life Now", and the day after, I mean, pick something. We shouldn't do, "The Love Dare" this Sunday, "Jesus Calling" next Sunday, and "The Shack" the Sunday after that. There should be some stability in the church. We should have some convictions. As J. C. Ryle said, "We shouldn't be jellyfish Christians who have no backbone. We need to stand up for something."

And Jesus talks about this in Mathew 7. Some of you remember this, but He says,

24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

The church needs to build itself on a rock, and rocks don't move, right? People need to know that the same thing you're teaching today is going to be the same thing you're teaching next week, is going to be same thing you're teaching the week after. I tell the men's group on Wednesday night, I say, "Guys, let's just be honest here. We're not trying to find new ideas. We're trying to find ideas that are 2,000 years old." And when people come in and say, "What about this tradition and what about that tradition in my church?" That might not be old enough. We want to go all the way back to the New Testament.

I told you last week when Martin Lloyd Jones built his new church in London, he set the pulpit into the ground. It's not moving. It's not going anywhere. We're not going to change everything when the latest flood sweeps through. We're not going to reinvent ourselves every time someone comes out with a new idea. This church is bolted into the ground of God's word. And it will be bolted here next week, and it will be bolted here the week after, and it will be bolted here the week after. That's how you make peace.

It's hard to make peace with things that waiver all the time. Isn't it? I mean come on guys, that's the problem we have with our political leaders, isn't it? They change their mind all the time, and they're men. I'm not knocking them, but friends, you follow a God that doesn't change His mind. He doesn't waiver. God doesn't go back and re-inspire the Bible every time a bad doctrine floats through the church. So you can follow Him. Which leaves me to ask the question, do you waiver? Do you bounce around here and there like a child? Are you a different person every week? Or, are you stable? Are you settled in the faith? Are you bolted into the ground, and when the winds come and the waves crash, you stay the same? Are you distracted by everything like a child? One day you cry "daddy", and then off you go? If you are, it will be hard to get close to you. If you are, it will be hard to make peace. You need to learn to settle down. You need to learn to be stable.

Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." And you need to own that. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should change His mind." And you need to follow that. There needs to be certain things that you won't change your mind on as a Christian. There needs to be certain convictions that you will not waiver on. That brings us peace. That gives us unity. And that leads to another area where the church demonstrates peace, and that is in discernment. The church demonstrates peace in its stability. It demonstrates peace in its discernment.

You bring peace to the church when you're a discerning person. A lot of people think discernment creates disunity in the church because you're always criticizing everything. But if you do it the right way, discernment creates unity. Because, we can't all unite around the person of Jesus Christ if we don't all believe the same things about Jesus Christ. Does that make sense? Do you get that? We can't all come together over the word of God if we don't believe the same things about the word of God. You have to have some discernment. You have to have the ability to say these things are right and say things are wrong. You can't be like a child who puts everything in his mouth.

And Paul goes on to say this. Just as he did in the first part of verse 14, He gives us two word

pictures here in the second part. The first is that of a ship, which we just mentioned. He goes on to explain some more about this ship. He says, "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." That phrase "carried about" refers to a ship that's been blown totally off course. He starts off with being bounced here and there by the waves, and he goes on to say not only is it bounced here and there, now it's being carried. It's picked up and taken wherever the wind wants it to go. A new doctrine comes in, and whoosh, there it goes. A new book hits the shelves, and off it goes. A new song comes on the Christian radio, and there they are swept up in it. No matter what it says, no matter what it presents, they have no anchor. That's the idea here. There's no discernment.

Then Paul gives us another word picture in the back half of the verse and that is of playing dice. If you read all of verse 14, it says, "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by the waves carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." That word trickery is *kubos* from which we get our English word cube. It refers to the cube that was used to play dice in the ancient world. Dice were often loaded. They were often cheating with them. So *kubos* became synonymous with trickery. And Paul says here, "We're not to be carried away by trickery, by liars."

I hope you know that God is not the only one who calls men into the ministry. Satan calls men into the ministry too. As a matter of fact, he calls lots of men into the ministry. The devil is a very busy devil. And Paul says, "You shouldn't follow them, that doesn't promote peace." Because here's what happens, you hear someone say, "I know how to get saved, just get baptized as an infant. That's how you get saved. That's how you go to heaven," and you bring that idea into the church, you are going to have a fight, right? Because we don't believe that. We don't embrace that, so you're going to have an argument if you go promoting that kind of idea in here.

You hear someone say, "God spoke to me last night and He said that it's okay for me to cheat on my wife." You bring that idea in here, you're going to have another fight. You're going to rip our peace to shreds if you do handle it the wrong way. You talk to someone they say, "Mormons are nice people. They're our brothers in Christ, let's do a church service with them." Same thing, your lack of discernment is fracturing our peace. Your failure to see right from wrong is breaking our harmony. You can't be blown about by every wind of doctrine. You can't chase after every idea that comes into the church. Listen, we're in the Bible Belt. You can't go very far in Chilliwack to hear some ideas that are out there. I mean, there are churches around here that say you have to be baptized to be saved. Or, that God is speaking to them and giving them new revelation, or that Mormons and Jehovah's Witness are our brothers in Christ. You have to have a filter for that. You have to have an anchor. To say it another way, you can't be open minded about everything.

Do you know that one of the words for a fool in the Old Testament meant open minded? To a Jew, a fool was someone with an open mind. Everything goes in, and everything goes out. There's no filter. If you told a Jew, "I have an open mind," he would tell you, you need to shut it to some things. You open it to the truth, you shut it to lies. Otherwise you're a fool, which leads me to ask the question, are you open minded about everything? Do you live where everything goes in and out of your mind, or are there some ideas you won't accept? I think it was Thomas Edison who said 5% of people think. 10% of people think they think, and 85% of people would

rather die than think. Are you the 85% who would rather die than think? Listen, God commands you to turn your brain on when you come to church, not off. I'm afraid some people come to church and they unscrew their head at the neck, and they put it under their seat here in the service, and then they put it back on, on their way out. That is not what God is calling you to do. You're to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Paul says in Ephesians 4, to be of one mind. That means you have to think. If you don't, you're going to be hurting the church, not helping it.

There are some commands in Scripture for the need for discernment, and then we'll move on to the next point, but 1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...". You need to test the spirits. You need to look into them. Compare them with the light of God's word and see if they're true or not. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Examine everything carefully...". Examine means to look into it, to investigate it, to scrutinize it. Paul says you do that with everything, every doctrine. You don't take the preacher's word for it, you go to the Bible. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no one deceive you...". 1 Timothy 4:16, "Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching...". Matthew 7:15, one more, it says, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits...". Jesus says you are supposed to judge people in certain circumstances and you judge them by their fruit. You can't be open minded about everything. That's not how you promote peace in the church. If a wolf comes in and starts howling, you reject him. Stay away from his teaching. And that leads us to another area where the church demonstrates peace.

This is not the typical talk about peace, is it? You guys thought you'll hear warm verses in here, didn't you? Paul says, peace is serious stuff, and you have to work at this. But you can do it in the power of the Spirit. So the church demonstrates peace by being stable, having discernment. We're no longer to be children tossed here and there and playing dice and getting tricked. Here's another area where the church demonstrates peace, that is in its growth.

The church demonstrates peace in its growth. You bring peace to the church when you grow as a Christian. You know on one hand you're never supposed to change, you're supposed to have certain convictions you stick to. But in another hand, another way, you're supposed to be growing, right? And in another way, you're not supposed to be the same person tomorrow that you are today, because you're supposed to be growing more and more like the Saviour.

And the only way to leave childhood is to grow. My son is two and half feet tall. If he stayed two and half feet tall for the rest of his life, there'd be a problem. I'm kind of hoping he sort of has some Dutch in him because you guys are tall. I'm kind of praying for that. I want a basketball player out of him, but you've got to grow. And with that in mind, Paul goes on to say in verse 15, he says, "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ." He begins the verse with "but" to show a contrast. As the false teachers use trickery and deceit to deceive you or to divide you, we speak the truth in love. That's the contrast. "We're being honest with you," Paul says, "And we're doing it because we love you." And the way this is written in Greek is interesting. That phrase literally means "truthing" or "doing truth." It's an active thing here. Paul says we don't just sit around and say, "Mm-hmm, that's

interesting Pastor Jeremy. Tell me some more systematic theology,” we put it into practice. We hear the systematic theology, and we go out and live it. That's how we grow.

And you can look at verse 15 another way. When a baby is born, his head is huge, but his body is small. Anybody seen a baby lately? He has to grow into his head. And for those of you who haven't seen a baby recently, you know that when they stretch, their little arms come up to here right? They can't even get over their head. It's the same way when you're saved. When you're saved, you are way out of proportion. And Christ is your head, but you don't look like Christ yet, do you? You've got to grow. You have to mature. Your little arms and legs and neck have to catch up to everything else. C. S. Lewis once said that the Christian life is like putting on a mask. And by that, he wasn't referring to hypocrisy. He meant that if you're a believer, you put on Christ day in day out. You follow His teachings, and eventually you begin to take the shape of Christ. Put a mask on your face long enough, and your face will start looking like the mask. It's the same idea. It doesn't happen overnight.

“But that growing process,” Paul says, “Unites us. It brings us together.” I mean, no one has arrived yet. Can any of you say, “I've arrived in the Christian life, I've got it all figured out?” Can anybody say that? If you were to come to me in my office and say, “Pastor Jeremy, I'm struggling with sin.” I would say, “Me too. Let's talk about it.” I may not be struggling with the same sins you're struggling with, maybe not to the same extent, but I struggle with sin. Let's encourage each other as brothers. If you were to say, “Pastor, this life is hard.” I would say, “I know. Tell me about it. Let's go through it together. Let's carry each other's burdens.” If you were to say, “Man, this person said something really cruel to me, and I'm struggling with that.” I'll say, “Man, people say cruel stuff to me too, but let's work through it together.” But on the flip side if you were to say, “I don't need to grow. I've already arrived.”, that's not going to bring us peace. If you've got the mentality that “I'm up here and everybody else is down here”, there's no harmony in that. There's no togetherness. You need to be humble and admit you have room to grow. And that leads to another area where the church demonstrates peace, and that is in its priorities. It demonstrates peace in its stability, discernment, growth and in its priorities.

Verse 15 says the church has one priority over any other, and that priority is Jesus Christ. The ancients believe that all life flowed out of someone's head, so that if you cut off the head you, you kill the life to the body. And they were right in that. We don't see too many headless people walking around. And verse 15 says that “...we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.” Jesus is our head. He gives us life. He gives us vitality. Cut Him off, and the church is over. And you can see this actually in the whole passage.

In the Greek language, ideas come in paragraphs. So if you want to understand what an author is saying, you don't just pay attention to his words or his sentences, you catch the whole paragraph. Ephesians 4:7-16 forms one long paragraph in Paul's writing. This is one long thought. And that thought is that Jesus is head of the church. Verse 7 (if you just start at the beginning of the paragraph), “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.” So at the beginning, Christ is measuring up the gifts. He's giving them to us. And then towards the end, verses 15 through 16 say, “...we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is head, even Christ.” Jesus is our priority. He holds us all together. You don't come here for the music or the people or the sermons, not ultimately, you come here for Christ. Amen? I mean the music and

the people and the sermons all point to Him. All these things are kind of peripheral. Christ is the center.

Let me ask you, is this true of you? Is Jesus the head of your life? Is He your priority? We often get our priorities mixed up. We think if I put God number one, and family number two, and my job number three and hockey number four ..., right? But the problem with that is you're a sinful person and you're going to mix it all up, aren't you? You're going to flip flop them depending on when the NHL championships are on, or whatever is going on. I've used this illustration before in other places, but if I were to go to my wife and say, "Honey I love you. You're the number one priority in my life, but right behind you is Dina, and right behind her is Sally, and right behind her is Mary." What would she say to me? She would say, "You better get your priorities straight, or this is over." Jesus Christ would say the same thing to you as a believer. He would say, "I am the priority of your life, or we're done." He would say the same thing to us as a church. "I am the head. You don't have ten heads. You have one head. Everything else is second to that." We don't say Jesus is number one, music is number two, people are number three. Jesus is everything. He calls the shots, He determines where everything goes. I was talking with someone the other day about an issue in the church and I said, "I'll tell you what? I appoint you the head of the 'make everybody happy' committee. And when you make everybody happy, you come talk to me." I haven't heard back from him yet, but that's not our priority as a church. Christ is our priority. He's our head. We want to "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ."

One author put it this way, he said, "The critical question for our generation, and for every generation is this: if you could have heaven with no sickness, and with all the friends you've ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you still be satisfied with heaven if Christ was not there?" That's a good question in there. Could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ was not there? Let me ask it this way. Could you be satisfied with Grace Fellowship Church if Christ was not here? Would you be satisfied with this ministry if all we did was spend time talking about our hobbies, our preferences, what kind of food we like, what kind of clothing we like, and we left Christ out? Would that satisfy you? If it would, Paul says you don't understand what this is about. You misunderstand the purpose of the church. The church exists to exalt Jesus Christ. We don't have ten heads, we have one head. We don't have ten lords, we have one Lord. He is our priority. He gives us peace. We're all going the same direction together. We want to be like Christ, amen? And that leads to one more way the church demonstrates peace. Its stability, discernment, growth, priorities. And one final area where the church demonstrates peace and that is in its perseverance. You bring peace to the church by persevering, by keeping on keeping on.

I kind of hinted at that a little bit when we talked about stability. You can't be stable if you don't persevere. But if you read on in verse 16, Paul rounds off the paragraph this way. He says, "From whom ..." so he says, "even Christ, 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 building up of itself in love." As Paul closes this paragraph out, he says that the church is held together and is continually held together by Jesus Christ. That phrase building up is in the present in Greek which means it's an ongoing thing. We're built up, and we

are being built up by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are held together, and we're being held together by Christ. The head gives us life, and He helps us to persevere with one another.

I don't I think I have to tell you that you have to put up with a lot of stuff if you are in church, don't you? You put up with a lot of stuff. You set up for a luncheon, and you cook and cook and cook and someone says, "I don't like that soup." And you spent 14 hours on it on Saturday. "I don't like that soup." You practice and practice and practice for worship, and someone says, "I don't like that song." You preach and preach and peach your guts out, and someone says, "I don't like your tie." I don't wear a tie. "You are too short." What do you do? Do you give up? No. Why? Because you're being held together by Christ. It's all about Him. Maybe to say it this way, when you get dressed in the morning, you don't put makeup on your toes, you put it on your head. When you come to church, you don't exalt your foot, you exalt Christ. It's all about Him.

That phrase "building up of itself in love" is a beautiful one, because it shows the real motive behind all this. You don't make soup for yourself, you do it for others. You do it in love. So when someone insults your recipe, it's okay; you can be patient with them. The motive of love helps you to persevere with other believers. A Godly woman was once praised by her husband for her patience with the children. And he said, "You know that's amazing. You told our child the same thing 20 different times," to which she replied, "If I only told him 19 times, he wouldn't have gotten it." Friends, it takes time for people to get it. It takes time for people to get on board with the church. Sometimes you have to tell them 20 or 30 or even 40 times. Sometimes you have to put up with their insults 20 or 30 or 40 times, but you do it to make peace.

I don't have to tell you that the church is facing difficult times today. These are stormy days, there's a lot of bouncing around here and there. Some of you got the email from a nearby church saying they were being picketed over the homosexual agenda. I think if we spread the net even further and ask other churches, I bet there are some lawsuits going on over that. And you can add to this, that British Columbia is a dark place spiritually. There's not a lot of Bible in the Bible Belt. I went to a store that sold used Christian books couple weeks ago. I almost wept over the stuff that was in there. It was like trying to eat your lunch in a trash can. That's the world we live in. That's the stuff we're being exposed to, but we can get through it if we all stick together. And Benjamin Franklin said, "We need to all hang together or we will all hang separately." We can do it if we stay as a body.

Listen, I know you we were encouraged by the service last week. But the butter has been scrapped off. The challenge has been given, and we've accepted it. But it will all mean nothing if we don't persevere. We have to hang together. You got to be willing to tell somebody something 20 times 30 times 40 times. You have to be willing to be being built up in love. Not built up once and it's done. It's a continual building process. Every time somebody new walks through that front door, it's a continual building process. And you have to be willing to do that. We're a new church. Let me just say it's going to take time. Rome wasn't built in a day. This church won't be either, but we can do it if we're patient with one another. We can do it if we build each other up in love, and pray, and strive for peace.

Let's pray for that now. Heavenly Father, we pray for Your grace and Your mercy in this. This is not an easy thing to talk about, and this is not an easy thing to do. I'm guessing because this is a room full of people, that there probably are some relationship in here that are strained. And there are people here that are struggling with some offense, maybe even some unforgiveness. Lord, I pray that some of these challenges from Paul's epistle here would ring true to us that we need to be forgiving and showing peace toward one another. Lord, I don't know where everybody is at on the issue of discernment and the issue of being stable, but Lord, I pray that this would be a church that loves the Scriptures and loves one another. Lord, help us to have discernment in a dark place. Help us to have grace in a dark place. Lord, we pray that you would help us to make disciples as well, and as we do that, to do it peacefully. We want to be a church that's one. We want to be a church that's unified. And we pray for Your grace in doing that, Father. Thank you for last week, and all that it represents. We pray for Your help in moving forward with that wonderful challenge, and giving You all the glory as we do so. We pray it in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen.