

How Does the Church Make Disciples, Part 1

Ephesians 4:1-13

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 5, 2017

Well, good morning. You guys hear me okay? It's good to be back in warm, sunny Canada. I was in Los Angeles this week at the Shepherds' Conference... Just out of curiosity, I've talked to several of you – how many of you actually listened or watched the Shepherds' Conference? Part of it? Yeah, a lot of you guys got a chance to catch some of that. Several people were asking me about it, and how many actually attended. I know David attended. All right. So, if you have any questions, David Scott is recently part of our church. Come see him. He has it all figured out. Actually, you had a great...did you have a great time? Yeah. You guys had a near-death experience walking back and forth to the campus, didn't you? Yeah. I did ask Larry if I could share this story, but Larry Nelson and I traveled together, and you can pray for him. He's a wanted fugitive now in Los Angeles. Actually, the house we were staying at, one night, Larry came a little bit later than we did and showed up... Actually, earlier. I'm sorry. And he didn't know which house it was to go into, so he went to the wrong house and started putting the key in the door, and I would never do anything like that myself. And the cops showed up a little bit later on, and so he's a wanted fugitive in Los Angeles. Just kidding. But we had a great time.

Several of you asked for any highlights that we had from the conference. I talked with David, as well about this, and he can give you some highlights. A couple of things I had I thought were very, very helpful, the first night of the conference, John McArthur talked about convictions we have that keep us going in ministry. He said you continue in ministry because you have convictions. And he talked about how you're convicted, that ministry is a mercy, and that the new covenant is better than the old covenant, that results do not depend on us, we're not significant, suffering is a benefit. That was very helpful, I thought. Another thing as well though I really took away: Mark Jones, who is in Vancouver up the road, preached one morning, and if you saw the Grace for your Day through your email, Mark Jones said that God doesn't give you more than you can handle. He gives you way more than you can handle. Otherwise, you wouldn't need God. I thought that was just really well said. That really meant a lot to me. So, anyway, lots of good highlights. It was a wonderful conference. You can catch it online. If you go to shepherdsconference.org, you'll see it there. But thanks for letting me go. David would say thanks as well for praying for us while we were there. It was a blessed, blessed time.

Alright, well let's just have a word of prayer and we'll dive on into our time in this sermon, okay? Heavenly Father, we pray for Your mercy and grace this morning. Help us to hear Your Word. Help me to communicate it accurately in a way that would honor you. I pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

In the closing days of World War II a plot was put together by the German people to kill Adolf Hitler and take over the nation. It was called Operation Valkyrie. The idea was to kill the Fuhrer, fix the country before the Allies came in and throw everybody in jail. It started off with a bomb. They were going to blow Hitler up, and his associates, and then install a new leader over Germany and a new army and bring peace to the nation. But the plot failed. The bomb did not kill Hitler. And it wasn't long before all the conspirators were found out and executed. One of

them, interestingly enough, was a theologian named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His dad was a famous neuroscientist in Germany and he had several uncles who were high-ranking members of the army, but he felt it was his duty as a man of God to put a stop to the Nazis, and he tried to do it with Operation Valkyrie. Now, when it failed, he was thrown into prison, first in Tegel, then in Berlin, then in Buchenwald, Schaumburg. Finally, he was hung in Flossenbug just a few days before Hitler died. He was executed almost in spite, because the war was over. Two years... during that time, he was always in solitary confinement, always by himself, rarely saw other people. And in the last two years of his life, he wrote a book about his experiences called *Life Together*. It was about the need for Christians to spend time with other Christians, not to be alone all the time. And in the book, he said this. He said,

The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. A physical sign of the presence of the triune God. How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who, by God's will, are privileged to live in daily fellowship with other Christians. Let him who has such a privilege thank God on his knees and declare it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live with other believers.

After spending time in solitary confinement for several years, Bonhoeffer said that,

One of the greatest things in the Christian life is fellowship. It is grace and nothing but grace that allows us to be together with other Christians. We take it for granted, but it's the mercy of God that allows us to meet week after week as a church.

I told you last week that the National Post did an article recently which said that 27% of Canadians live alone. They live all by themselves. And the numbers in America are the same. You can't do that if you call yourself a Christian. You can't stay alone. When I told my family I was moving to Canada, my sister bought me a book called *Into the Wild*. It's true. She did. I said, "Shannon, I'm going to a town, and it's..." Anyway, yeah. Americans have funny ideas about Canadians. But it was about a young man who sold everything he owned and moved to the wilderness of Alaska and died. I said, "It's not that bad." I was like, "It's a nice place." They say it doesn't snow here. You guys told me that. But you do the same thing if you go through life alone. You starve to death. You just wither up and die. Charles Spurgeon said, "Some Christians try to go to heaven alone in solitude, but believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. We are sheep, and sheep love to be together. They hate to be alone. They enjoy going about in flocks and being together and so should Christians." He's right. He's totally right. Listen, you go to heaven one by one. You enter the narrow gate as you personally believe. Someone else cannot believe in Christ for you. You have to do that yourself. You pray alone. You read your Bible alone. You can do those things, but you need to be with other believers.

Let me give you a couple of reasons for this. This is not the outline of my sermon, just a few reasons why Christians should not be alone, why we love to be together in the church. Here's one: the church confronts your sin. That's why we love to be together. How many of you just came here this morning saying, "I can't wait for someone to confront my sin." You should. You know why? Because you have sin, right? It's there. And we can't always see it in ourselves. We need someone else to come in and say where it is. That's one reason we love the church. Here's

another one: we love it because it encourages our holiness. The church encourages us to do the right thing. The church says, "You witness to your neighbour. Way to go. Good job." You won't hear that from the world. I sat on the plane going to Seattle by a lady who said she works for a comic book company. And we got to talking, she asked me what I did for a living. I told her I was a pastor, and she went on to say, "You people are fine if you keep your opinion to yourselves." She was polite with her tone, but I remember thinking, "Boy, you're preaching to me right now. You're telling me to..." Anyway, but you're not going to hear from the world to go witness to your neighbour. You're going to hear that in a church. You need the church.

The church also keeps us from thinking about ourselves. That's another reason we love it. It gets our mind focused on others. It helps us to practice the fruit of the Spirit, like Chris just talked about. You can't practice the fruit of the Spirit alone, doesn't work that way. You can't be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient with yourself. You need others.

Here's one, maybe I'll spend a few minutes on this one: it draws our mind to the things of heaven. Do you realize that in heaven you will always be around other people? You get that? In heaven, you'll never want to be alone, because there's no sin there. There's going to be no annoying or rude people in heaven. There's going to be no Edmonton Oilers fans in heaven. Just kidding. Is that our rival team? I'm trying to relate here. Is that our rival team? Right? Rival enough, alright. Okay, there's going to be Edmonton Oilers fans in heaven. There's going to be no annoying Edmonton Oilers or annoying Canucks fans, because there's going to be no sin. What will it be like to talk to people for eternity who have no sin? And the church reminds us of that. It's just a small foretaste of heaven.

The church reminds you of your commitment to Christ. That's another reason why we love it. Martin Luther's congregation one time said, "Pastor, why do you preach the gospel to us every week?" And he said, "Because you forget it every week." You come here to be reminded of your commitment and love for Christ. It gives you assurance of salvation. That's another reason we love the church. It comforts you in the hard times. It gives you a place to be baptized and take the Lord's Supper and practice the ordinances. And we can go on and on, but you need the church, amen? You need to be around other people, and that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

So, if you will turn with me in your Bibles, Ephesians chapter 4. The book of Ephesians is about how to live as a Christian corporately, together. It's kind of interesting. If you read through the New Testament, pretty much every time — because these letters are written to churches — every time you read about how to live as a Christian, it's in the context of being around other people. The first three chapters of Ephesians talk about how to become a Christian. The last three chapters talk about how to live as a Christian. And they say you are to live together. And Ephesians 4, verse 1 kind of bridges the two sections of the book. If you want to read chapter 4, verse 1 with me, it says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." And how are we to do that, Paul? How do we walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called? If you follow the passage — I'm not going to read it — but verse 2 says we are to be humble and gentle with others. You can't be humble and gentle with yourself. You do it with others. It says we are to be tolerant and patient with others. Verse 3: preserve unity and the bond of peace with others. Verse

4: stay in a body with others. Stay together in the church. This is how you walk in a worthy manner. This is how you pursue the calling with which you have been called. You do it together.

It goes on to say in verse 7 as he's making his argument, Paul writes, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." In other words, while we focus on others, one thing that helps us to get along is to remember that each one of us has a different gift or gifts, plural. Each one of us has been given different talents from God, and the way Paul says this is interesting. In verses 8 through 10, he quotes from Psalm 68 to show that Jesus conquered sin in order to give us the gifts. When a king won an important battle in the ancient world, he would often return at the head of a parade, and behind him would be all of his soldiers and all the prisoners that he freed in battle. They were referred to as his recaptured captives. They were the king's own soldiers who were captured out of the hands of the enemy. Paul says Jesus did that with us. He recaptured the captives. He freed us from sin in order to give us the gifts.

And just to kind of tie this to what we've been talking about in previous weeks, this is how you make disciples. You teach people how to use their gifts, whatever gift it is. By the way, has anybody ever taken one of those spiritual gifts charts things? Do you guys do that up here? Yeah. I mean, that can be helpful. There's some things in that. But the challenging thing about noticing your gifts is there's an infinite number of variations of them, and one person could have five or six or seven that just kind of combined in a way that's different with someone else. The charts can be kind of hard to pinpoint what your gifts are in that sense. But the gifts could be anything.

Just an example, Amy Carmichael was a missionary in India during the 1800s. She worked with some of the poorest people on earth, and her biggest impact came with orphaned girls who were being used as prostitutes. She would actually go to the brothels and places where the girls were abused and pick them up and bring them home and feed them and clothe them. At one time, she housed around 130 of them at once. But she said, "I'm not a teacher. I can't sing. I can't play the piano. But I can cook breakfast." She said, "I can wash hair and cut toenails for my Lord." In fact, she said she cut the toenails of 1,000 orphans in her lifetime because that was her gift. Now, which gifts were that? Well, there's a variation, lots of them, lots of gifts that she had, spiritual gifts. But it's the church's job to help people learn how to use their gifts. Whatever gift it is, washing hair, cutting toenails, teaching, serving, helping, doing works of administration and evangelism, helping people move, helping people fix their car, helping them balance a budget. It's the church's job to help people learn how to use their gifts. And let's see how we do that.

In this passage, Paul says the church helps people learn how to use their gifts in three main ways. So, if you're taking notes, we could call these the three methods for making disciples. What does the church do? It makes disciples. How does the church do it? Well, here's three methods or three ways. The first one is this: the church equips the saints. As it makes disciples, the church equips the saints and puts them to work with their gifts. If you read on in verses 11 through 12 with me, Paul writes, "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...."

Just to help you see what he's saying here, there are five offices mentioned in this passage that can fit into two categories. Apostles and prophets could fall into the category of a temporary office. They serve a temporary purpose and now it's over. Ephesians 2, verses 19 through 20, just

above this says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." That's the same group he's mentioning here. Paul says the church has been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and everyone knows you only lay a foundation once. You don't keep laying it over and over and over again. So, the apostles gave us the Scriptures. The prophets gave us the Bible once, and now, their job is done. I remember when I was in Georgia, there was a huge sign around the corner from my house that said the apostle so and so. And I remember because he had these ginormous collars on his shirt. I don't know if that's apostolic or not, but these things were a foot and a half tall on the side of his shirt. But he wasn't an apostle. And the foundation has already been laid. That job is over now.

But it leads to a second category in this list, and that's the permanent office. These are the leaders that are permanent. They're still with us today. Paul writes, "And he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and pastors and teachers." Just to tell you what you're reading here, the evangelists are those who share the Gospel with the lost. They tell them how to be saved, and the pastors and teachers take it from there. That's a little simplistic, but the idea is that the evangelist finds them, and the pastors and teachers feed them. They help them once they get saved. Now, notice what this leads to in verse 12. And I'm getting to an application here so just hang in here with me.

Why did the apostles and prophets lay a foundation for the church? Why do evangelists and pastors and teachers minister among us today? Verse 12 says, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service..." This is all done to equip us. It is all done for the work of service. The word "equip" is *katartizo* in Greek, which means "to prepare" or "to complete" in some instances. In regards to medicine, it means "to set a broken bone." We all have doctors in the congregation — and I'm sure all of you have done this — but this word referred to putting a bone back in place, to heal something. The idea here is that people come into the church in a mess, and the church helps to fix them. It's a hospital for sinners, right? They come in with sinful habits, and the church helps them break them. They come in with worldly thinking, and the church helps them to think Biblically. They come in with evil desires, and the church helps them to create Godly desires. It equips them. It fixes their broken bones, and it does it by putting them to work.

And I don't think I have to tell you that we live in a very lazy culture. Would anybody say "amen" to that? I think you know that. The idea of working to the glory of God is foreign to most people today. They don't come to church to work. They come to sleep. The hours between 9:15 and 11:00, great time to take a nap during the sermon. That's just a cultural... The biggest event in America is not the presidential election, it's the Super Bowl, right? I mean, millions of people watch that thing. I don't know this but I'm guessing, big even here in Canada, NHL playoffs, right? Not the elections in parliament, because we love to take it easy. We love to sit back and relax. We can't wait for the weekend so we can prop up our feet. But Paul says that Christians don't live for that kind of stuff. We live to work. It's okay to take a holiday every once in a while. It's okay to relax. Nothing wrong with that but we were saved to work.

The famous painter Michelangelo at one point in his career was working himself to death. He was painting the Sistine Chapel in Rome and creating the statue of David and some other projects. He was working 16, 17 hours a day. And his friends told him, "Michelangelo, if you

don't slow down, you're going to die." They said, "If you don't take it easy, you're going to work yourself to death." And Michelangelo replied this way. He said, "What else is life for?" What else is life for? That's the attitude of a Christian. What else is life for? What really matters? You get one shot. You get one crack at life. And what else is it for but to work for your Lord? Nothing is as important as spending yourself for Christ. Nothing matters like giving yourself for Him. What does the poem say? "Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last." Everything else is just shadow and wind. Many of us think life is all about resting and entertainment and fun, but the Bible says you were saved by grace in order to work. You were saved by the mercy of God in order to live like a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And let me just say, this isn't miserable work. Jesus said, "My yolk is easy and My burden," is what? Light. This is a ball. And you don't do it against your will. On the contrary, you do it with your will with a happy heart. But if you're a Christian, God has saved you in order to work.

Which leads me to this question: why are you here? Why did you come here today? Why do you come to Grace Fellowship Church week after week after week? I want to tell you this morning that if you're not here to work, you didn't come for the right reasons. If you're here because the people are nice and the music is great and the coffee tastes real good and you get child care for your kids for about 45 minutes, those are all wrong reasons. None of those things are bad, but that's not why you should come here. Sir John Lawrence, a politician from England during the 1800s, summed it up well when he said, "What does the average church member really want? He wants a building which looks like a church, clergy dressed in the way that he approves, services of the kind he's used to, and to be left alone." Does that describe you this morning? Did you come here to be left alone? When you come to church, do you want a nice building and a nice dressed pastor and services you're used to and for people to just leave you be? If that's what you want, I'm just telling you on the front end here — I've been here for what is my fifth week — so let me just tell you in the front end here, you're going to be disappointed with this church, because we don't intend to leave you alone.

If that's why you've come, you've come to the wrong place. Because we don't want to let you sit in the pew and do nothing, because it doesn't please God. We want to equip you to work. We want to train you up to work for the glory of God here in Grace Fellowship Church. Look at it this way, Paul says here God saved you. He rescued you from your captivity to give you gifts to use them. Your spiritual gifts are worthless, if all you do is come in here and sit. You get no brownie points with God, if you just watch. You need to get to work. Take whatever your gifts are — administration, encouragement, mercy, helps, like Amy Carmichael had — and use them for God's glory.

Look, I understand if you're not able to do manual labor and serve. I'm not good at that either, just ask my wife. I had a friend in Indiana come into our garage and say, "Boy, those tools look really nice, Jeremy. Are those Katie's tools?" I said, "You can leave now. You can go home." Look, I understand if you don't like to be up here on stage. Some of you, man, the worst thing in the world would be to stand up here on stage. I get that. That's okay. But you can pray, can't you? You can write someone a note of encouragement. I heard a story some time ago about an African woman who couldn't see, and she was illiterate. But she got saved, and she wanted to do something for Christ. So, she would sit outside of the local boy's school, and she would have

someone put her finger on John 3:16, and when the boys would walk by, she would say, "Excuse me, young man, could you read this to me?" And when they would read that to her, she would say, "Do you know what that means?" You can do that. But friends, do something. John MacArthur says that discipleship is basically finding someone who knows less about Jesus than you do and telling them what you know. And can anybody in this room not do that? There's someone in this world that knows less about Jesus than you do. It's your job to go find them and tell them. And it's the job of the church to equip you to do that. It's one of the ways the church makes disciples. It equips the saints and puts them to work. I remember one church, you'd walk up to the office steps and you make a turn, as you're walking up the office steps, there was this verse placarded right there, "For the equipping of the saints, for the work of service." That's what this is all about. That's what we're here to do.

And that leads to a second method for making disciples. And that's this: as the church makes disciples, it equips the saints, and it also builds up the body. The second method for making disciples, it builds up the body. Verse 12 goes on to say, "For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." If you notice as you read this passage, there're four prepositional phrases in verses 12 through 13. Three of them are in verse 12. One of them is in verse 13. And the point of these is for Paul to tell us why Jesus gave leaders to the church. He gave them "for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain until the unity of the faith." That's why God gave leaders to the church. And what we're focusing on right now is the next to last phrase, "To the building up of the body of Christ." Jesus gave apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers to build up His body.

"Body" here is another word for "church." So, just as the body is one, although it has many parts, so the church is one, although it has many parts. It's a living organism. It's a single unit, a body. And it's the job of leadership to build that up. This word "building up" comes from the Greek word for "house". So, just as a builder figures out where to put the doors and the windows and the walls on a house, so the leaders figure out where to put people in the church. They help them figure out where to serve, where to use their gifts. They go to people and say, "I see you're doing a good job at this. Why don't you pursue this ministry? Let's help develop this in your life." And they go to this person and say, "Maybe you shouldn't be doing that. Let's get away from that." One pastor said a young man told him that he was called to preach, and he listened to the young man preach, and he said, "You might be called to preach, but I don't think anybody is going to be called to listen." The job of leaders is to help you with that. I remember asking a music minister one time, "How do you tell people don't get into the music ministry, if they can't sing." And he said, "I record them, and then I play it back for them and let them hear it, and let them tell me what they think." But it's the job of leaders to do that. And it's always fun, let me just tell you, it's always fun to do that. I'm being sarcastic right now. It's not fun to... You ever try to tell someone they can't sing? Let me tell how you shouldn't do this in the church. I'll tell you how we should build up the body in a second, but let me tell you how we should not do this.

You don't build up the body with demographics. What I mean is you don't build up the church by going through the neighbourhood, by going down Riverside Drive around here and taking a survey to find out what people like and then giving it to them. That's not how you do this. You don't see a bunch of cowboys next door and start a cowboy church. You don't see a bunch of

bikers in town and start a biker church complete with Harleys and do-rags and leather jackets. That's not how you apply this verse. Around here, we might try to start a yoga church. The BC yoga church, Tim Horton's church. "Tim Horton's 24 hours a day, come through." You laugh, but people do that, don't they? We're not to do that. And here's why: Because it divides the church. It excludes certain people, because what are you going to do if you're not a cowboy? Can you still come? I mean, are there ministries for you? What do you do if you're not a biker? The church excludes you just by nature of what you're trying to do. What do you do if you don't like yoga? Several years ago, a friend of mine told me about a church he knew of that met in a synagogue, and it focused entirely on Christian Jews. And he asked me what I thought about it, and I said, "Well, I don't think they really realize what synagogues were for." Synagogues were started because of the judgement of God. They were started because the Jews could no longer meet in the temple. And for a Christian to want to meet there, it's just weird. But to add to that, I said, "The church is not exclusively for Jews anymore. The church is for Jew and Gentile." That doesn't mean you might meet somewhere like Israel and have more Jews than Gentiles coming, but the church is not just for one or the other. To divide it up by race is to miss the point of the whole thing, and to divide it up by demographic is to miss the whole point of the church.

This week at Shepherds Conference, Larry Nelson and I stayed with one of my closest friends in all the world who is full-blooded Taiwanese. And the interesting thing about our friendship is that I grew up in a world where there were no Asian people. When I first moved to LA, I was just in a world I'd never lived in before. Now, my best friend is Asian. Why? Because that's the point of the church. The church brings people together from different backgrounds. Not the same background, but different backgrounds. It unites people over the passion of Christ and Christ alone. It doesn't unite people over belt buckles and cowboy hats. It doesn't unite people over do-rags and Harley-Davidsons and yoga. How many different backgrounds do we have in this room? I pray you're all here because of Christ, not because we all dress alike or look-alike or talk alike. We come together because we've all been forgiven by the same Saviour, by the same Lord. And that's for cowboy and non-cowboy alike and that's for biker and non-biker, that's for Jew and Gentile. But to build your church around demographics is to miss the whole point. It's to forget that God works in all types of people, so we don't want to do that. That's not how you build a church.

Now, let's talk about how you should do this, and it's very simple. Matter of fact, it's so simple that I almost hate to say it, but it needs to be said. This is very, very simple. If you get saved and become a part of our church or you come from somewhere else and you're already a believer and you come up to me or one of the leaders and say, "Pastor Jeremy, I'd like to get involved at Grace Fellowship. But where do I start? I don't know what to do. What do I get involved in? How do I use my gifts?" I would say, "I don't know because I don't know what you're good at. Unless I've seen you in ministry, I don't know where to put you, because I don't know where the Lord has gifted you. But what I can tell you is that you need to step up and serve somewhere, and as you do that, you'll find out where your gifts are." Does that make sense? It's almost too simple to say it, but you've got to say simple things nowadays. If you get involved and work hard in ministry, anywhere in ministry, your gifts are going to come flying to the surface. They're going to be obvious for all to see, but the only way to find out is to step up and serve. You can't find out where your gifts are if you do nothing. You have to get involved. There's no magical formula to this stuff. There's no hocus pocus. You don't wake up some morning and get a warm fuzzy,

and that's how you find out where your gifts are. You just get involved, and as you do, you'll discover where you're gifted. If we need help in the evangelism ministry here, go help and see what you're good at. It's simple as that. Someone may say, "Boy, you really have a gift at opening doors in conversation and talking to strangers about Christ. Okay, keep doing it. Praise God." If there's a need in our hospitality ministry, get involved in that. You may find that you love helping people. You may find you don't. You just got to try. If there's a need in the music ministry, go see Dave. Make sure you can sing first, alright? You tape them. Yeah, you tape them, Dave. Yeah, let me know how that goes. If you like working with children, see Brent Nelson, get involved in Sunday school but get involved. That's how you tell where your gifts are. That's how you build up the body of Christ.

By the way, this relates to the church as a whole. As a pastor, people come up and ask me questions like, "Well, what kind of ministries are we going to have here in 10 or 20 years?" Some of you may be wondering that. Well, I don't know who's going to be here in 10 or 20 years, and I don't know where the Lord is going to gift us. In 10 years, we may have a bunch of teachers and be really strong in that area, and the Lord will gift us with that. In 10 years, we may gain a bunch of people that love to serve and help and have gifts of mercy, and we'll be gifted in that. We may have administrators, helpers, counsellors, encouragers, evangelists. I don't know. It's in God's hands, but that's how the Lord builds His church. He builds it by gifting His servants and putting them to work. That's how He builds up the body.

So the first method for making disciples is to equip the saints, second, to build up the body. Let me give you a third method for making disciples. And that is this: as the church makes disciples, it unites the believers. There might be a clearer way to say that, but it unites the believers. Pastors and teachers and evangelists equip the saints and build them up in order to unite them. They don't try to split them up into a Jewish church and a cowboy church and a yoga church. They try to make a church full of everyone, where all the gifts are being used. We're right back where we started at the front of this chapter, by the way, talking about unity. Verses 4 through 6 say that, "There is one body and one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." If you notice the word "one" appears seven times in those verses, and the word "all" appears four times, because God wanted us all to be one. And Jesus prayed in John 17, "That they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You." And He meant that unity is very important to the heart of God.

With that in mind, verse 13 going along in our passage... We can start in verse 11 if we like,

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.

If you notice, Paul doesn't say "one" here, but he does mention "the faith." Not a faith but the faith at the front of the verse. That's another way of saying the Christian faith, the Christian religion. It's the job of leaders to unite everyone under the Christian religion. He also mentions

“a man,” which is singular. Not many men but one man. The church is to be so united that it looks like one man. He also adds to this when he says, “A mature man.” A man who doesn't need to grow up anymore. His measure is full. And this is why the job of leadership, the job of ministry, the job of the church is never done, because you could never accomplish this in your lifetime. How many of you would raise your hand and say, “I am a mature Christian, and I have the fullness of Christ?” Nobody, right? The job is never over. I heard Al Mohler say that preachers don't make chairs. So, you don't get to stop at the end of the day and say, “Look at what I did. Look at how many disciples I made.” It doesn't work that way. You don't get to see a finished product. I heard one pastor say he likes to cut his grass because at least he knows he did something that day. It just feels like it's never over. Well, it's never over. James Montgomery Boice said you teach them and you teach them and you teach them some more. That's your job. It's what you do, and you're never done at it. You're always teaching. That's what the church says. We're always making disciples. That's what Christians do. We're always making followers of Jesus Christ, which is wonderful job security if you think about it. As long as people keep sinning, you have a job to do. You've got employment. Sitting around the house, “What do I do today?” Well, if someone is sinning, okay, you have a job to do.

But you can look at verse 13 from another angle. And that's this: Show me a unified church, and I will show you a mature church. Show me a disunified church — a church that's fighting — and I'll show you an immature one. My friends, Grace Fellowship Church may be a new work of God. We may be only a year old now, but that's not how you determine maturity. You determine maturity by your unity, not your age. You determine maturity by how well you love each other, not by whether you have elders and deacons already. You determine maturity by how you practice the fruit of the Spirit with one another, not by whether you have multiple staff. Look, a church can be a year old and mature, and it can be 50 years old and immature. It all depends on your unity.

It's a sad fact that there's probably nothing more common in churches today than fighting. Would you agree? Are churches in Canada that way? In the States, man, it's like putting a bunch of wet cats together. I mean, it's just fighting all the time. Certain people are mad because they don't like the music or they don't like the nursery or the missions committee. They don't like the short pastor with his glasses. So, they're going to leave. They're going to take their ball and go home, and they're going to take people with them. And when they do that, they show themselves to be immature Christians. Now, I'm not saying there's not a time to break off and start a new church. There definitely is. And I'm not saying there's not a time to fight. There's a place for that too. Paul fought with people in the church. Jesus did, for that matter, if you want to think about it that way. I'm simply saying that that should never be the goal. The goal is peace. The goal is unity. That's the way you make disciples, with peace, not war.

In his book *A Wardrobe from the King*, Berit Kjos tells the following story. He says,

Long ago, a man sought the perfect picture of peace. And not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally, the great day of revelation arrived, and the judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another while the viewers clapped and cheered. The tensions grew because only two pictures remained. As

a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Surely, this was the perfect picture of peace. The man who was uncovering the paintings then turned and uncovered the second painting. The crowd gasped in horror. A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice. The crowd could almost feel its cold penetrating spray. Stormy gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind, and rain. In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters, as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power. And on the branch sat a little bird in the nest, content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested perfect peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.

This world is a crazy place, isn't it? It's full of wind and rain and lightning. The church is supposed to be a calm amidst the storm. This is supposed to be the place where people come for peace. And we need to do everything we can to keep it that way. As we make disciples, let us seek the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. So, how does the church make disciples? How do we make followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, here Paul gives us three methods. The church makes disciples as it equips the saints for the work of service, it builds up the body of Christ, and it unites the believers until we all attain to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ and we all have peace. You're here to work, and that's your calling. You're here to get busy. And as one commentator put it, "There's no room in the church for drones but only for busy bees." You're here to be a busy bee and to use your gifts for the body. Let's all be thinking about how to do that this morning.

Next week, we're going to have the installation service, and Carl Hargrove and Hohn Cho will be with us for that. They wish you greetings, by the way. They wanted me to tell you that. And they look forward to seeing you next week. So come back next week at 9:15 to be ready and blessed, be encouraged and blessed. But for this week, let's close in a word of prayer and ask God to put us to work, to seek peace with each other, and to equip one another for works of service. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, while we pray for Your grace and mercy and putting what this passage teaches us to practice, there's not a one of us in this room who doesn't struggle with sloth and laziness. There's not a one of us that doesn't have days where we just don't feel like doing anything spiritual. And yet, Your servant, the Apostle Paul, showed us by his life and by these words that our job is to get busy and get to work. And we pray for grace and help in doing that. Lord, I thank You for a church full of servants. I thank You for Grace Fellowship Church. I know these dear people want to serve, and they want to get busy doing things that please You. I pray for Your grace as we develop that and cultivate it. Thank you for Christ, Lord, and how He did recapture the captives, and how He sends us out now to use our gifts for Your glory. We pray this all in Jesus' name, amen.