

# ***Made for More***

## ***4. Missionaries***

March 14, 2021

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Welcome to week 4 of the Made for More spiritual growth campaign! We're so glad you've joined us. We are looking at what the book of Ephesians says about our life purpose and calling.

In case you are just joining us, here is a quick recap of where we've been: Ephesians 1: **Purpose** = do life WITH God. (Identity), Ephesians 2: **Calling** = good works God prepared, and Ephesians 3: Do all with **Love**.

The first week we saw that Ephesians 1 tells us we are adopted as children into God's family. That is our identity; we are children of God. So our **Purpose** in life is to live each day WITH God our Father. We are not made primarily to do things FOR God, we are made to do our lives WITH God. Everyone has that same purpose. We don't have to work at fulfilling it, we simply embrace it once we've chosen to follow Jesus.

The second week we learned that Ephesians 2:10 says that God has set up good works in advance for us to do. When we do those things, we are fulfilling our **Calling**. Each of us will have a different calling, because we have different gifts, passions, and stories. It is too easy to make our jobs or our calling our identity, but confusing our calling with our identity robs us of the joy and fullness of life God wants for us.

Then last week, Pastor Jonathan taught from Ephesians 3 on the importance of **Love**, because no matter what calling we have, nothing we do matters if we don't do it with love.

Today we are going to see how God prepares us to fulfill our calling, because we won't automatically know *how* to go about fulfilling our calling even when we know what it is. We need to be equipped.

When Paul McCartney was a boy, he auditioned for a place in the Liverpool cathedral choir. The choirmaster turned him down because he concluded that Paul didn't have much of a voice. John Lennon was raised by his Aunt Mimi. He spent most of his spare time in his bedroom playing guitar. Mimi looked at him one day and said, "John, it's all very well playing your guitar, but you'll never make a living out of it." When Lennon made his first million, he gave Mimi a silver plaque with her words inscribed on it. Those two boys ended up changing our culture but no one saw or encouraged their potential.

That makes me wonder how many followers of Jesus have been discouraged from pursuing their true calling from God because those around them didn't see their gifts and potential. How many future artists, politicians, teachers, pastors, or social

workers did not step into the roles God intended for them because they were discouraged from pursuing it?

Sometimes churches do this without intending to because they assume that pastors and leaders are the ones who do the spiritual God-stuff, and the church members live in the real world and help out at the church as they can. But the Bible says the exact opposite. The Bible says that God planned a chain-reaction of equipping for us. That “chain reaction” is when one person equips another person, who equips another person, who equips another... and so on. We see this in **2 Timothy 2:2** where Paul tells Timothy: *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.* There is the chain reaction: From Paul, to Timothy, to reliable people, to others...

A pastor friend of mine was given a framed chart that shows his spiritual lineage. It lists the bishop who ordained him, and then the bishop who ordained that bishop, and the one who ordained him, all the way back to John Wesley, who was the founder of the Methodist Church. John Wesley could trace his lineage all the way back to the original 12 apostles, who were commissioned by Jesus. A chain reaction. You may not be ordained, but you also have a chain reaction of equipping that goes all the way back to Jesus and the apostles!

Here’s how God designed the chain reaction to work. First, **pastors equip people for their calling.** *Ephesians 4:11-12 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* Verses 11-12 give us the job description of church leaders: equip the saints.

Over 20 years ago I was asked to be part of a panel about church vitality. I gave a brief talk titled “A pastor shouldn’t do that.” I said, “There are pastors all across our land who are loved and respected by their congregations, but unbeknownst to the people, they are doing things that they shouldn’t be doing. The members of the church think that the pastor is doing a wonderful job, but they don’t realize that the pastor is actually doing things that are outside the will of God.”

People assumed I was referring to some secret immoral behavior, and they were looking at me wide-eyed. Then I told them, “Here is what those pastors are doing wrong: they are doing most of the ministry of the church themselves. They’re doing all the care, they’re doing the administration, they’re doing all the evangelism and teaching all of the new believers. That’s against the will of God. Ephesians 4 says pastors and teachers are to equip God’s people to do the work of the ministry, not to do it all themselves.” Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and teachers are to equip God’s people to do the work of ministry.

I have never referred to myself as a “minister” because that is a generic title that applies to all believers in Jesus. Crossroads Church has a few pastors, but thousands of ministers. My wife gave me this T-shirt that reads: “Pastor – because hardcore devil-stomping ninja isn’t an official job title.”

Most believers are not called to vocational ministry, but all are called to minister in some form. The ministry staff of our church knows that they are not hired to do ministry; their job is to recruit, train, and develop the people to do the work of the ministry. They also do some ministry just because they are disciples, but their job is to equip others. Because the Holy Spirit fills you, you can do anything I can do, except for Communion and Baptism (since we need to honor our denomination’s guidelines), but you can help with those things, too!

Verse 11 tells us how God arranged his church to equip his people. It says that God provides Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers. Every church needs all of these roles operating. I don’t have time to dive into the meaning of each role, but someone summed up the 5-functions this way: **Apostle Governs, Prophet Guides, Evangelist Gathers, Pastor Guards, and a Teacher Grounds in the truth.** Ephesians 4 says when of all 5 roles are working together, the result is a mature church.

The Church is criticized a lot these days, and sometimes with good reason. We’ve seen leadership failures, believers acting just like the rest of the world, division over secondary issues, problems with sexuality, money, and power and gullible believers who don’t adopt biblical values. The cure for that is found in **Ephesians 13-15**, that we follow God’s equipping plan: *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.* We’ll become mature. That’s the goal! We won’t be swayed by the world’s changing values or beliefs. We’ll speak the truth in love. We’ll reflect Jesus to the world.

That’s our aim at Crossroads Church: we are about making disciples who know their purpose and how to fulfill their calling. Our goal is not to attract an audience. We are equipping an army for the Kingdom of God. We want to develop everyday missionaries who will influence people toward Jesus where they live, work, learn, and play. That is why we’ve developed the Equipping Track that will include the “Calling Lab” and “Movement Makers” in the fall. This information can be found on the church website Equipping Track page.

So let me ask you, “Where are you on the path? Are you ready to take another step?” When we keep growing, we not only grow mature ourselves, we then get to help others grow.

Biologically, a creature is mature when it can reproduce. Spiritually, we are mature when we can help reproduce the life of Jesus in someone else. In other words, we can equip others to live for Jesus and serve him. That's the way the chain reaction of disciple-making and equipping continues.

So the chain reaction starts when Church leaders equip the people. Secondly, then, **God's people equip one another.** A. I've mentioned before that I was 25 years old when I became senior pastor of my first church. When I was there, some of the young adults asked me to set up a young adult Sunday School class. (If you are not familiar with Sunday school, it's sort of like a Life Group that meets on Sunday mornings in the church building.) So, I arranged for the room and selected the curriculum. All I needed was a teacher. I thought "This will be simple. I'll just ask one of the older saints to teach the younger adults. That's biblical." So I asked one of the older members. He said, "Oh no, I couldn't do that." "Why not?" I asked. "I don't know enough about the Bible" he said. So I asked another member of the class, "Would you be willing to teach the young adults?" "Oh no, I couldn't." "Why not?" "I'm not qualified. I don't know enough about the Bible or God."

I thought to myself, "You've been in this class for more than 40 years; when are you going to be ready to teach someone else?" I didn't say that, of course. I might have been young, but I wasn't stupid. To be fair, even back then I knew that those adult classes were not designed to equip people to develop others. But praise God, we are rediscovering that! God's plan is for those who are a few steps ahead to show the way to those that are newer.

If you have never considered doing this, here are two simple ways to do this: first, **Share your example.** I'm not a skilled handyman. When I needed to replace the inner mechanism on our toilet, I went to YouTube. I didn't want to read directions, I wanted to see someone do it. I needed an example.

I learned to follow Jesus the same way: through the example of others. I first learned to value reading the Bible from the example of the leaders of the Youth Group I was part of. I learned to pray by listening to my college roommates pray. I learned to share my faith by listening to a professor do it, and then being given a chance to do it myself. I learned to confess my sin by watching others humble themselves.

Here's how the Apostle Paul equipped other disciples to follow Jesus:  
**Philippians 4:9** *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.* That is the power of Example. And here Paul boils it down even more simply: **1 Corinthians 11:1** *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* There it is: follow my example – do what I do.

It can sound intimidating to think that we are to be the visual demonstration to others on how to follow Christ, but that is God's model! We are examples all the time,

whether we realize it or not. This is especially true in the family, whether we like it or not! Parents are the most profound discipling influence on their children by the power of their example. Parents are called to be intentional about apprenticing their children:

**Proverbs 22:6** *Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. (NLT)*

Parents, you are shaping your kids in powerful ways when you let them see you reading your Bible. *imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.* The child who has heard their parents' voices speaking to God is blessed. *imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.* The way you relate to your spouse teaches them how to love and grow. *imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.* Thankfully, you don't have to be perfect to be effective in discipling your children. In fact, a perfect parent wouldn't help them much because they won't be perfect. They need to know how a regular, imperfect person follows Jesus, because that is what they will be.

So, we equip others to follow Jesus by our example, and we equip others to serve another way: **Share your ministry.** I preached my first sermon in a church because my father-in-law was a pastor and he invited me to speak at his church. I don't think he expected much, and I fulfilled that expectation: it wasn't very good. But he shared the ministry with me because he wanted to help me develop.

If you are serving in a ministry, here is a simple way to apprentice someone else to do what you do: Never do ministry alone! If you are teaching kids, invite someone to watch you do it. If you are driving a mission trip, invite someone along. We say to Life Group leaders: "Don't do everything yourself, ask others to lead sections of the meeting, or to plan the social event, or to organize the outreach project. A key part of your ministry is to replicate yourself. And the easiest way to do that is to invite someone to watch you and then to help you.

We all have been created with a purpose: to do life with God. We each have a calling to serve the Kingdom purpose in some way or another. To do that, we need to see an example and to *be* an example.

Imagine if everyone who was following Jesus at Crossroads was sharing their experience with someone who wasn't a believer for as long as they had been? We would leap ahead in maturity!

Imagine the leaders we can multiply if everyone who is serving is sharing their role with someone else. What kingdom advancement! Let's take a moment now to be quiet before the Lord and ask him to speak to us.