



EACH PART WORKING PROPERLY  
EPH. 4:11-16

This is one sentence! **Apostle Stephen?** God gives gifts to the church in the form of individuals that he gifts for a certain purpose. Specifically 5 groups of people:

**11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,** Is this still a thing? Rome says yes. Apostle Carey down the street. I don't think so. 3 uses (1) The Twelve (2) Paul (3) Barnabas, Apollos, brother of James—people associating with church planting Gospel expansion movements. None of them ever refer to themselves as apostles. Today we might call them missionaries. Same with prophets. We have Blue Ridge School of the Prophets in Rocky Mount! No Jeremiahs speaking Scripture quality words. There are people who are gifted as speaking truth at the right time in the right way. Whether or not that counts as “prophecy” is debated. All that to say, Eph. 2:20 tells us that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets not the continuation of the apostles and prophets. And we should be quick to celebrate the fact that Christ still rules his church through the apostles and prophets teaching—the Scriptures.

Third he lists evangelists—people uniquely gifted to proclaim the Gospel message. Had one pastor tell me that because God gave the church evangelists, it's the job of church leadership to evangelize. No, some are uniquely gifted, but we all have that responsibility. Last he mentions shepherds and teachers. Some translations say pastors and teachers. Only use of pastor in NT as a noun. “I'm shepherd Chase”—awkward. Both pastors or shepherds and teachers are those who have been entrusted with most of the teaching ministry. Teachers do word ministry in the church. Pastors do word ministry as those over the church. They are both teaching, in fact if you look at all five gifts here, they are all geared toward teaching. Why? What has God given the church these various teachers? Why pastors? What am I hear for?

**12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,** Now, if you are reading the KJV, you have a comma in that phrase that changes the entire meaning. The KJV says, **“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...”** That makes it all on the church leadership!!! Problem is those commas—none of them—are in the original language. They've been inserted, in this case improperly, by the translator. And fortunately the NKJV corrects this mistake and takes that comma out and even changes “perfecting” to equipping. So that job of pastors and teachers is not to do all the work of ministry. It is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

This is different from what many of us have grown up thinking about the role of pastors. Isn't that what we pay you for? If you're trying to equip us to do the ministry aren't you sort of asking us to do your job? In many people's minds—even many church's minds—this is a pastor's job. Highly talented, smooth communicator, elite few grow and build up the church through their exceptional talents. It's not biblical and it's not me. **I can't draw the crowds.** **“What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The traditional model is that of the pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a little pope in his own church, while the laity are arrayed beneath him in [...] ranks of inferiority. It is a totally unbiblical image, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a docile flock but both a plural oversight and an every-member ministry.”**

The goal of every member ministry is body building. That's what I'm trying to equip us to do. That word equipping is important—**Not** trying to entertain the saints. I do try hard to be engaging. Elder retreat—we focus on needs. **Not** therapeutic. **Not** be everyone's best friend. Give you what you need to do ministry work. That word ministry is *diakonias* it means service. I'm outfitting your spiritual arsenal that you most effectively perform your specific works of service. When you think of a pastor, is this what you think of? As a church member, is that what you're looking for? Do you come looking to be equipped? Why is all this important? Because we need more volunteers no? vs. 12 for the building up of the body. We do the works of ministry for the purpose of body building...

And in three really quick prepositional phrases, Paul gives us a picture of what a body that's being built of through the saints work of ministry looks like... For the building up of the body... **13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,** What does this mean? It means we grow closer to each other on account of the hope that we share not our common interests or preferences. **Traffic cone**—as we grow up we grow in! **to mature manhood,** Complete (or perfect) person. Where everyone is growing into a spiritual adult. In Peter Pan it's cool to intentionally be a kid forever, but not in real life and certainly not in God's family. **to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,** Same word used to describe Zacchaeus—he was small of stature. Or as you might fondly remember him—the wee little man. Don't sing the song. Same word here. Until we're as tall as Christ. This is a result of every member ministry: A body where people are increasingly united not by their common interests or preferences but by their common hope in Christ, as they become spiritual adults, and grow as tall as Jesus.

Now why is this body building so important? Is this just something God has given us to do so we're not bored? Why should we be about body building? **14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.** A body that's not being built is uniquely vulnerable to being led astray by bad doctrine (i.e. the teaching). And this is particularly true of the individual members of the body. It's a much well known truth that the modern church suffers from biblical illiteracy. By this I mean, people don't know the books of the Bible, or the or the Ten Commandments, or the names of the apostles. Bible facts. And this is a problem, but there is bigger problem. And it's the problem Paul is wanting to guard against here.

And it crystallized for me as I was reading a book for a seminar and this one sentence just said nailed it. Charles Quarles **Although biblical illiteracy is a serious concern and the church must take steps to address it doctrinal anemia is far more frightening.** He argues that doctrinal illiteracy is more of a threat to the church than biblical illiteracy. That not knowing what atonement is and why it matters is way more important than know the name of the apostle who replaced Judas. That it's a bigger problem for a someone to not understand sanctification than it is if they don't know the I Am Statements in John. It's a bigger problem to not understand repentance and grace, than it is if they don't know that Luke wrote Acts. Now both are important I want to be clear. But understanding the facts and stories isn't as important as the conclusions you draw from them that shape your worldview and the way you apply the Gospel to life. But don't take my word for it. Look at Paul. Over and over again, is talking about doctrine.

Rom 16:7 "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the **doctrine** that you have been taught." Tit. 1:9 an elder must "be able to give instruction in sound **doctrine** and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Tit. 2:1, "But as for you, teach what accords with sound **doctrine**." 1 Tim. 4:6, "If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good **doctrine** that you have followed." 1 Tim. 4:16 "Watch your life and **doctrine** closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (NIV) I remember Piper on this text said something that hit my like a ton of

bricks. The biggest failure isn't moral failure, but doctrinal failure. Would that I commit adultery than preach a false Gospel for 20 years.

You know what the Nicene Creed is? Apostles Creed? Doctrine. You how the church has disciplined disciple new converts—catechism? You what that is doctrinal training through Q and A? New City. And I just don't feel like the emphasis is there like it needs to be. And as a result, I think many believers today and church bodies, are uniquely vulnerable to bad doctrine. Sometimes due to deceitful people like this text mentions. Raphael Warnock GA Senator and Pastor of New Ebenezer Baptist tweeted, "The meaning of Easter is more transcendent than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whether you are Christian or not, through a commitment to helping others we are able to save ourselves." But if I'm being honest, it's the more subtle forms of doctrinal error that worry me. There's a male example, here's a female example.

"You are meant to be the hero of your own story." Rachel Hollis, *Girl Wash Your Face. Nope.* Christians love this stuff and Paul says they are like children tossed by the waves. It's not because people reading this stuff don't know Bible stories and facts, it's that they don't know doctrine. They don't know how it all fits together. If asked people to raise their hand and tell me what God created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Very few people would be able to articulate what it means to be made in the image of God. If I asked you to raise your hand if you know who Nicodemus was, you'd raise your hand. But if I asked you to explain regeneration you might not. But what good is it? We have to know it. Maybe it's because theology and doctrine has bad marketing. Maybe it's viewed as for pastors. Maybe think of doctrine as conceptual and intellectual but not "practical". Nothing could be more practical. Take atonement. Your understanding of atonement determines how you fight feelings of guilt and shame. Otherwise you'll turn to self-esteem. And it won't work. Please understand this is not a call for Bible studies to sit down, this is a call for doctrinal studies to stand up. **Book shelf.** Because I don't want us tossed to and fro by the waves and tossed around. I want us anchored, immovable in sound doctrine. And that's what God wants for us. So we're doing the works of ministry that the body is built up and not tossed around like little kids by poor doctrine. And Paul pivots and gives us the alternative...

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" Now what's interesting is that the verb speaking isn't in this phrase. Its inserted to help us understand. The word "truthing" *in love*. Based on the warning Paul just gave us, it would seem that this includes speech but it's limited to speech. Believing truth, obeying the truth, loving the truth. And for Paul, one of the ways a body being built grows into Christ is by members truthing one another. And of course, speaking it—look inside and discover who you really are. Believe in yourself bc your so strong. You deserve to be happy. We tell the truth. And we do it *in love*. "I call a spade a spade." I've hurt people. Some people aren't truthing. We all have to...

And when we do vs. 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now he already mentioned doing the works of ministry, and he hits it one more time but from a different angle. We already said that we're supposed to do the works of ministry, but here, we learn that each part of the body designed to work properly. The idea here is not everyone is doing the same thing but everyone is doing their thing. And if this isn't happening, there are two very real consequences:

First, the body isn't built up. Notice that the body is only build growing and being built when each part is working properly. Individual dysfunction leads to corporate illness. Not just between you and the Lord. Think of a football team. Imagine a guy who sits down—the team suffers because he's not doing anything. But the team also suffers if he tries to do everything. If a quarterback tries to pass, block, and run, he's going to have a losing team. In the same way when a part of the church body isn't doing their role, the whole body suffers. We all work differently—gifted differently: teachings kids service—and that body

flourishes not when everyone does everything but when everyone does their thing. So, if each part doesn't work properly, the body suffers.

But there's another problem, and that's that the individual suffers. We said earlier that there's a misconception that the pastors should do all the work of ministry and it's not just a misconception in the pew, for many pastors it's a church growth strategy. If you ask people to do, they'll leave. The strange irony of the pastor does everything model, is that in trying to do each part's work, he hurts the parts because they no longer feel a need to function properly. You end up with a weak church being pushed around in wheelchairs by professional Christians who were afraid to call them do the work they were supposed to be equipping them to do.

**Beauty and the Beast** Life is so unnerving For a servant who's not serving. He's not whole without a soul to wait upon. Ah, those good old days when we were useful. Suddenly those good old days are gone. Ten years we've been rusting. Needing so much more than dusting. Needing exercise, a chance to use our skills Most days we just lay around the castle. Flabby, fat and lazy. You walked in and oops-a-daisy. Prosper when we function according to our design.

And so it's appropriate to ask are you working properly? Here's a test: If you disappeared, would your absence make a meaningful difference in the life of our church? Are you bodybuilding? Talking about youth with body of Christ an had a youth say, "I'm the appendix because I don't do anything." Don't be the appendix. We're called to build the body of Christ.

I'm exhausted. Not like working out. 15 "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"

Unbeliever—Called to be a part of something bigger than yourself, but you have to join Christ first.