

The Growth For Unity

Ephesians 4:12-16

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Let's go back to Ephesians 4:1. This is the beginning of the practical section of the book by the way, Ephesians 4-6, where Paul is dealing with the believer's walk. He says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech," or beg, "you that ye walk worthy," there's the theme, "of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit," there's our theme, "in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," this is the text we haven't gone through yet, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body," the church, "fitly jointed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body," again, a reference to the church, "unto the edifying of itself in love."

Let me just kind of outline these 16 verses before we jump in detail into verses 12-16. First of all, we saw in verse 1 that we are to "walk worthy." A worthy walk is a walk that weighs about the same as Jesus. If we were put on a scale, on one side with us and the other were Christ, we would have the righteousness of Christ lived out in our daily lives. In verses 2-3, we have the graces needed for unity, and he described "...lowliness," which is humility, "and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We need God's graces in our lives to bring unity in the church, the body of Christ.

In verses 4-6, we looked at the ground for unity. The ground for unity was that there is, "One God and Father of all...one faith, one baptism," and it talks about what all Christians have together in unity. In verses 7-11, we looked at the gifts for unity last Wednesday night, and those gifts are given in verse 11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." In verse 7, he said, "...every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We spent quite a bit of time talking about

the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that everyone is given at least one gift, every individual who has been born again has the Holy Spirit, and He's distributed gifts to us. Verse 11, is where we actually have gifted men, so He gifts these men and gives these men as gifts to the church. We went into great detail about the apostles, the prophets, we looked at the evangelist, and talked about the pastors and the teachers.

I want to go back, as I said I would, because we ran out of time a bit. I want to be careful not to get bogged down, but I want to go back to that closing description of, "...pastors and teachers." I pointed out that I believe that apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church. As far as an office of the church, I don't believe we have apostles and prophets any longer. They laid the foundation of the church. The New Testament gives us the apostolic teachings upon which the church is built, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone and the foundation. Today, we do have evangelists and pastors and teachers. I pointed out that evangelists are those who bear good news. They take the gospel to the unbelieving world. I also pointed out that pastors are those who feed the flock, lead the flock, and shepherd the flock. There are two offices in the church, that is, pastor, also called an overseer or a bishop or elder, and then we also have deacons, which means a servant. Those are the only two offices in the church, and I mentioned that they're all in the masculine. They are all describing men that God raises up to pastor, to lead—the deacons and the elders—and that God uses women as well in their roles that are God given.

What's so very important, and I shouldn't have to say this at a congregation like we have here at Revival, is that we realize the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of authority for how we practice and what we believe. Everything we believe and all that we practice and how the church is structured—what a pastor is to be, to do—should all come straight from the Bible, not from modern contemporary culture around us. If we do that, we're in big trouble. We're opening a Pandora's box. God has given us His Word, and He's given us a blueprint of what the church is to be, how the church is to function, what the office roles are, what the qualifications of the leadership are, and we need to make sure that we follow that guideline that God has given to us in His Word.

Coming back to pastor and teachers, it's interesting that even in your English translation, it reads, "...some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors," but it doesn't say, "some teachers." All Greek scholars agree that this phrase, "...pastors and teachers," is actually a reference to one individual. It's actually one individual which could be hyphenated, pastor-teacher. Very simply, and I know I'm repeating myself, but you can be a teacher in a church and have the gift of teaching, that's a gift of the Holy Spirit, but not be a pastor; but you cannot be a pastor without the gift of teaching. If God calls you to pastor, God gives you the gift of teaching.

I've met people who say, "Well, we have a pastor that's really a jolly fella. He's really nice, and he comes to all of our potlucks. He visits us in our homes, and he's loving and prays for us, but he's a horrible, horrible teacher. He can't really teach at all. He can't really preach, but he's just a jolly fellow, and we really like him." That's contrary to God's Word. Part of the gift of being a

pastor is actually that you have the ability to teach God's Word because we're going to see, and we're going to turn to some other verses tonight, that the chief and primary responsibility of a pastor, which means shepherd, is to feed the sheep. How does he feed the sheep? By teaching God's Word, nothing more, nothing less—reading the Scriptures, explaining the Scriptures, and applying the Scripture. His job, and this is what a pastor is supposed to be, this is what a pastor is supposed to do, is to preach and teach God's Word. I want you to understand that. It's so very, very important.

Look at 1 Peter 5 with me real quick in your Bibles. I want to give you a few verses that are so important when it comes to pastoral ministry. In verse 1, Peter says that he's an elder, and he's writing to elders. In all the verses that I'm going to look at with you real quickly, and believe it or not I am going to get back to Ephesians 4:12-16, but I want you to get these really important key verses about a pastor. I think it's important for a congregation to understand biblically what their pastor is supposed to be and do so they don't put any unscriptural demands on that pastor. When you're looking for a church to be a part of, your pastor should be following Scripture in this way. The phrases "elder" and "feeding the sheep" are going to be used kind of for the one individual who is the overseer or the bishop, the pastor.

Notice verse 2. What are the elders supposed to do as Peter exhorts them? "Feed the flock of God." That term "feed" is where we actually get our word shepherd, where we actually get our word pastor. The very same word "feed" means to pastor, to shepherd the flock of God, "which is among you, taking the oversight," that's why they were called overseers, "thereof, not by constraint," not doing it out of obligation, someone forcing you to do it, "but willingly." God calls a man to pastoral ministry and you respond in a willing obedience with a willing heart. "...not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." No man should ever be in pastoral ministry for money. He ought to be taken care of, compensated, and provided for—that's scriptural— but you don't do it with the motivation of, "I want to become a pastor because I know they make lots of money and they hardly ever work, just a couple hours on Sunday morning. They only work one day a week for a couple hours." I've had people ask me that, "What do you do all week? You only work on Sunday mornings." That's what I do, I start laughing. You don't do it because of "filthy lucre," but you do it for "a ready mind."

Verse 3, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples," examples, "to the flock." These are all words for pastors. Don't lord over God's people, you're not their boss, you're their shepherd; but you should be an example to God's people.

Notice verse 4, "And when the chief Shepherd," that is a reference to Jesus Christ, "shall appear," that's His Second Coming, "ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." There's a special crown going to be distributed out to faithful pastors who fed God's people and did what God called them to do. Notice the "Chief Shepherd" reference in verse 4. Every pastor worth his salt should understand that the church belongs to God, they are His people (it's not my church, it's His church; you are His people, He's your Shepherd), and I'm an under shepherd. The other pastors here at Revival Christian Fellowship and I are under shepherds, and Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. What we do, we are doing it as unto Him faithfully, and

from Him we'll receive our reward. Remember Jesus told Peter in John 21, "Peter, if you love Me, feed My sheep." Out of love to Jesus, a faithful pastor feeds the sheep.

I want you to turn to Acts 20. I want to point out a couple of other classic verses about feeding the sheep and being a pastor that tie in with what we just read in Ephesians. Look at Acts 20:27. From verses 17-35, Paul is meeting with a group of pastors. They are meeting outside the city of Ephesus, the very same group of churches which we are studying the letter written to them on Wednesday night. He's going to pray with and instruct them. As he's traveling by he wants to meet with these elders. Look at verse 17, real quick, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders," take note of that, "of the church." This is one of the classic passages in the Bible where you have the word "elders" and you have the word "overseers" and the word "pastors" all used for the same individuals, men what we call quite commonly, pastors. He met with the elders.

Now, jump down to verse 27. Paul finally comes to the point where he's telling these pastors, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." That's the pastor's job is to give all God's Word, to give all the counsel of God. J. Vernon McGee used to say to pastors that if you don't teach the whole Bible, you shouldn't be called a Bible church. I love that. If you're going to be a Bible church, then teach the Bible. Amen? Make that what you preach and what you teach.

Notice verse 28. Paul warns the pastors. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," these are pastors, appointed by the Holy Spirit to be overseers. Their job is to oversee. What are they supposed to do? "... feed the church of God, which he," that is, God, "hath purchased with his own blood." So, guard yourselves, "Take heed...unto yourselves," and oversee the church by feeding "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Why should they feed the church? Verse 29, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," because there's false teachers out there, false preachers, who will lead them astray. He says, verse 30, "Also of your own selves," your own midst, "shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore," pastors are to "watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." And then, I love verse 32, and we'll close with that, he says, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace," a reference to Scripture, "which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

This is one of my favorite sections of the book of Acts where Paul met with the elders at Ephesus, pastor to pastor. I love meeting with pastors. They met on the beach. I love meeting on the beach. What could be better than pastors meeting on the beach? I do that. We call them "board meetings" is what we call them. We pray and go out into the waves. They knelt and prayed, and Paul poured out his heart with them and ministered to them. Notice he says, "...feed the church of God," because "...grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." They are to protect the flock, teach sound doctrine, and protect them against wolves.

I want you turn to one more spot; that is, 1 Timothy 4, and then we'll turn to 2 Timothy 4. I'm giving you Paul's "Greatest Hits" to pastors. In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul is writing to young Timothy, Timotheos. His name means one who honors God. He was a young man who got called to be a pastor. Paul says to him, "Let no man despise thy youth," indicating, as I said, he was young, "but be thou an example," like Peter told the pastors, "of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit," that's zeal, "in faith, in purity," that describes a pastor. Then, he said, "Till I come, give attendance," he's telling Timothy what he's supposed to do as a pastor. He's supposed to "give attendance," which means make this a priority, "to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." He's to read the Scriptures, explain the Scriptures, apply the Scriptures. This is a form for what we call expository preaching—you read the text, explain the text, apply the text.

Then, Paul encouraged him, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them," that word in the Greek literally means be up to your eyeballs in your work, be wholly devoted to your work, "that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself," exactly what Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "and unto the doctrine," teaching, "continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Not only is it good for you, young Timothy, but it's good for your congregation that you continue in sound doctrine. It's salvation for you and...it's not talking about salvation from sin, initially knowing God, it's talking about saving your spiritual life and those that listen to you as well.

As I said, one more last verse, 2 Timothy 4. We could do a whole sermon on all these passages, which I have many times. Back up to 2 Timothy 3:16, and we're going to read into 2 Timothy 4:5. He says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," this is why if a pastor preaches the Bible, you get all these things. Then, he says, "That the man of God may be perfect," or mature, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Without skipping a beat, he goes right into 2 Timothy 4:1, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick," living, "and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word," this is Paul's charge to Pastor Timothy, "be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Why? Much like what we just read in the book of Acts, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," that word "sound" is a medical term which means health giving, "but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth," notice that, which is preaching the Word, sound doctrine, "and shall be turned unto fables," or myths.

Verse 5, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry," that's his pastoral ministry. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Go back with me now to Ephesians 4. You say, "You've read all those verses because you read

one statement, pastor-teachers?" The answer is yes. I want you to go back when you get a chance and read, meditate, and study all those verses we just covered and remember that's pastor-teacher. Pastor-teachers are to feed the flock of God, lead the flock of God by example, and they are to protect the flock of God with the Scriptures, the Word of God. There are many false teachers around today. The pastor's job is to protect the sheep from the wolves. Jesus said there will be wolves in sheep's clothing, so it's the shepherd's job to protect the sheep from the wolves. It's also your responsibility to know your Bible and to be discerning about what you believe, who you listen to, and who you follow.

One of the greatest heartbreaks for a pastor is to see one of his sheep follow false teaching or a false teacher. That's a heartbreaking thing. My job, as we're going to see in Ephesians, is to teach the Word in order that you might become mature and that you might then use your gifts, in love, to build up the body for the glory of God.

In our text tonight, it's very simple, we only have two sections. In verses 12-13, we have the reasons for the gifts; in verses 14-16, we have the results of the gifts. God's graces, or the fruit of the Spirit, will bring unity, then God's gifts will bring unity, and then we see the growth, a maturity, that will bring unity to the body of Christ. If you have a flock or a church that's growing in their walk with God, you'll see unity, harmony, and God glorified in that fellowship.

In verses 12-13 Paul says why we have them. He first tells us what we have—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers, and now he tells us—listen carefully—why they are given to the church, what their purpose is. It says, verse 12, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man," which means fully mature in Christ, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Again, we finally got to our text, and I'm going to try to keep it as simple as I can and not get bogged down, but he tells us here why God has given both His gifts and His gifted leaders to the church, which indicates what a pastor's job is. The pastor's job is not primarily going to the hospital and praying with people. The pastor's job is not meeting with people for lunch. The pastor's job is not necessarily counseling, that's teaching the Word as well. The pastor's job is to teach the Word, to feed the sheep so that they can be built up, that they can be mature, so that then they can do the work of the ministry.

This passage is a classic passage on how a church grows—not necessarily numerically, God will take care of that, but spiritually. This runs counter to a lot of popular church philosophy today which is sometimes called "seeker sensitive" or "user friendly" where they actually try to water down the gospel and make church cool, hip, and exciting so that they can reach unbelievers and make it palatable. They don't preach on hell or repentance or sin. They would never mention adultery or controversial things. It's always positive, happy, and life situational. I could go on and on. This movement was birthed by a church called Willow Creek many years ago in Illinois. It's come across the United States and has been around a long time. It's taken on and morphed into different ways and shapes.

A lot of even mainline denominations have fallen away from a biblical philosophy of ministry and developed a secular, non-biblical philosophy of “user friendly,” “seeker sensitive” kind of church where their pragmatic purpose is growth. Number one on their minds is growth or getting a big church. What Jesus said was, “I would build My church,” and then “the gates of hell would not prevail against them.” If we’re walking in the Spirit, doing God’s will God’s way, and doing church the way the Scriptures prescribe, then Jesus will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Amen? It’s Christ’s job to add souls to the church, and we just have to be faithful to what He’s prescribed for us to do in our ministries.

Let me point these out. I believe that some of these points will be appearing on the screen. I want to give you the list here in verses 12-13 of the reasons for these gifted men and for gifted individuals in the church, that God has given these gifts. The first is to equip God’s people for works of service. If you’re taking notes, write that down. I know that’s kind of a long statement for that point, but that’s really a summary of what’s being said in verse 12. Go back there with me, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Something very important for you to know that you can’t discover very easily that is in your English translation, if you consult other translations, you might find or discover it, but the statement in verse 12 is that the job of the pastor-teacher is to perfect the saints. Stop right there. This is what the Greek is conveying: There is one primary job and responsibility, the perfecting of the saints. What does that mean? What it means simply is that the pastor’s job is to bring the people of God to full maturity, spiritually speaking. This maturity has nothing to do with your age. I’ve known young Christians that are super spiritually mature; I’ve known older Christians and older people that are very immature. It doesn’t have anything to do with your age. Timothy was a young pastor.

I started pastoring in my early twenties. I was very young, but evidently God felt that it was okay to call me to pastoral ministry. I had a lot to learn, but maturity isn’t a matter of your physical age, it’s a matter of your spiritual growth in Christ. My job, by preaching and teaching the Bible, is to get you to grow. If someone comes to me and says, “Pastor John, sitting under your ministry, I have grown tremendously,” and I get that a lot. That’s one of the things that blesses my heart the most is that I’m doing my job. The Holy Spirit is the one who uses the Word of God to transform the child of God into the image of the Son of God. I can’t grow you, only the Spirit of God can do that. He does it through the Bible. If you’re in a church where the Bible is not being taught, you’re not going to grow, at least not because of your pastor, you might grow in spite of your pastor. I know how often that happens where people go to a church where they don’t get fed and they don’t get taught, so they study on their own. They just go to the church for the social interaction, but they’re not getting taught the Word in church.

I think it’s important, and it’s biblical, that when you come to church, you are taught God’s Word, you are instructed in God’s Word. You cannot mature or be perfected apart from the teaching of God’s Word. You’re not going to mature by awesome worship—you’re not going to know how to worship if you’re not being taught. You’re not going to mature by emotional worship or fervent

worship. You're not going to be maturing because there's really awesome lights and they have really neat LED screens and it's just a really cool setting and they blow fog during worship—which is fine if you want to blow fog. Maybe there'll be fog in heaven. They'll have fog machines when David is leading us in worship on his harp plugged into a Fender amp. I don't know. That doesn't grow a Christian. It's all through God's Word. That's the means, the method, by which God has ordained biblically for God's people to grow and mature.

Over the years, I can't tell you how many people I've had say, "You know, I was in this church for twenty years. I've grown more in five years under your preaching than I had in my former church in twenty years." That's why I teach the Bible because it's what God has called me to do. I don't do it because that's what you want. I pray that that's what people want, but I do it because that's what God has called me to do. Even if there's no people wanting that, I must obey God rather than man. I must do what God has called me to do because He's the Chief Shepherd. He's the One I'm going to answer to, so I don't adopt a philosophy created by the world for pragmatic reasons to grow the church, I find in the Bible what God has called me to do and seek to do that faithfully. My job, verse 12, is "the perfecting of the saints." Now, remember when you're a Christian, you're a saint. These aren't the super-duper Christians, these are Christians, and "the perfecting" literally means to mature you. It's a cool word that conveys the idea of fruitfully ripe.

Don't you love fruit? Don't you love fruit when it's picked right off the tree ripe and CRUNCH! right to your mouth? Wash it first, but I'm telling you. I love plums. You get me a good plum that tastes like a plum off a plum tree ready to go, I'm stoked! I wash it, and then I rub it on my lips. Mmm! I love the feel. I smell it, SNIFF! "Ah!" I just kind of play with it for a while. Then I savor it. It's mature. It's perfect.

A Christian is not going to be sinless, but as you grow into perfection, you sin less and less and less until you go to heaven; and then you'll be sinless because you'll be with Christ in a new body. This is what's called sanctification. Salvation results in sanctification, which is a lifelong process. There's nothing more important than to be under good Bible teaching so that you can grow in your relationship to Christ, and then you put it into practice by studying the Word of God on your own. It's to equip God's people.

I haven't finished the verse. Notice verse 12, "For the perfecting of the saints," now, here's where some people misinterpret this verse based on the English translation. It says, "...for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Actually, there's a comma after "saints," and then there's a comma after "ministry." They think that there are three things a pastor is to do: perfect the saints, to do the work of ministry, and to bring edification of the body of Christ. That's not what the verse is saying. What the verse is saying—listen carefully or you'll miss probably the most important point of the night—is the pastor is to perfect the saints by teaching the Word, bringing them to maturity, in order that they, the saints, do the work of the ministry, in order that they, doing the work of the ministry, might build up the body of Christ. It's not saying the pastor does everything. This is an overemphasis on laity—that the pastor does everything and that the laity does nothing. The truth is every member of a church is to be a

minister. My job is just the first point, perfect the saints. Your job is to do the work of ministry.

The word “ministry” here doesn’t mean pastoral ministry in the official office of a pastor, it means acts of service. Whatever gift God has given to you, you do it as a service to the body of Christ. What it’s saying there is every member of the church is to be a ministry. This is lay ministry. The clergy’s job, so to speak, to use that term, is to perfect the saints so that then they are equipped to do the work of the ministry, thus they build up or edify the body of Christ. This is what is often called body life, where the pastor teaches, the people are perfected and are then equipped and ready to do the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ. This is why my first point is to equip God’s people for the work of service.

Secondly, if you want to write it down, verse 12, we already pointed this out, is to build up the church. It’s the building up of the body of Christ. He does that by maturing God’s people. Here’s my third point, verse 13, to unify the church. Look at the first part of verse 13, “Till we all come,” this is a time frame. There’s a time period when we do this, until the Lord comes and until “we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,” that’s the mature man, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It’s basically laying out how the church works—pastor-teachers perfect the saints, the perfected saints, mature saints, do the work of the ministry, and as a result, the body is built up or edified. That’s important to note. We keep doing that, verse 13, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith,” so we are to unify the church, bringing unity in the church, through this ministry.

Then, verse 13, we bring them to “...the knowledge of the Son of God,” or the full and accurate and true knowledge of Christ. Again, how is that done but what through the teaching and the preaching of God’s Word. Paul said in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know him,” so we come to know Him by teaching and preaching His Word, so “...we all come in the unity of the faith,” remember earlier in our chapter we talked about the unity, that we have “...one Spirit...One Lord, one faith, one baptism...one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” He wants us to experience unity and harmony in the church “...and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” that’s a full experiential knowledge and we are brought to that mature “perfecting of the saints,” “unto a perfect man,” not sinlessly perfect but mature, which is described here. What does it mean to mature? It means you arrive “...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

The question is: How much like Jesus are you? That’s the pastor’s job, bring the congregation to Christlikeness. That’s why you hear me often pray, “That the Spirit of God, takes the Word of God, transforming the child of God, into the image of the Son of God.” You should be becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. So, to equip God’s people for works of service, build up the church, verse 12, to unify the church, and fourthly, to bring the knowledge of Christ, full accurate knowledge.

Lastly, fifthly, it is to mature the church. This is what I pointed out in verse 12. He comes back to it again in verse 13 at the end of the verse, “...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

In closing, verses 14-16, Paul actually tells us what the results will be. This is really good. There are only two, and the two results of doing what he described in verses 12-13 are: there will be doctrinal stability and “truthing it” in love, or speaking the truth in love. Look at verse 14. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible (you probably won’t believe me when I say that, but it is). Notice the word “that.” He just talked about needing to “...come in the unity of the faith,” have “the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect,” mature, “man,” which is, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” and here’s the reason, “That we henceforth be no more children,” the opposite of maturity is childlike living, immaturity. We’re children. And children...and he uses this imagery of being out in the ocean tossed by the waves, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” he then uses the imagery of “the sleight of men,” which literally means the throwing of dice, and describes them as “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

One of the reasons I read all those other passages about the pastor feeding the flock and teaching the Bible is because they all made reference to false teachers and that they needed to be protected from them. This is what we have here in Ephesians. If the pastor does his job, the people are matured, they do the work in the ministry, the body is built up, the body is unified, and they have stability doctrinally. They have doctrinal stability. They’re able to discern truth from error. They’re not being “tossed to and fro...with every wind of doctrine.”

Verse 14 is near and dear to my heart because in the church I grew up in, orthodox in its main theology and doctrine, but there were doctrines that were taught, practices that were going on, that weren’t biblical or scriptural. When I became a Christian and began to study God’s Word, I began to discover that things were going on in the church that weren’t biblical, weren’t scriptural, and I had to discern truth from error. I had to grow, and I had to grow in maturity. As a pastor for these many years, one of my concerns has been that people learn to be discerning, to know truth from error, to not be gullible Christians, to not be baby Christians, not to be immature Christians. An immature, baby Christian can be easily deceived and led astray, and they lose their footing and don’t have stability.

In verse 14, Paul presents it in the negative; in verse 15, he presents it in the positive. In the negative, he doesn’t want us “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” this is why it’s near to my heart because I saw, growing up in the denomination I was raised in, a lot of Christians following all kinds of doctrinal error and deceitful teachings. They were like tumbleweeds blown here, blown there, blown here and blown there. They had no roots, no stability. They didn’t grow, they didn’t bear fruit. They backslid frequently and had to come back again to get saved, according to their doctrine. They were unstable, and they weren’t discerning. Any new fad, new movement, new teaching that came along, they were always under the influence of the last person they spoke with, the last preacher, or the last Holy Ghost meeting. They were bouncing around from church to church trying to find a new high or new spiritual fix. They weren’t maturing and growing in God’s Word.

Someone said they are at the mercy of the latest fashions in the church. How true that is. They are always under the influence of the last person they talk to. They have no biblical stability, no

discernment. They don't know Bible doctrine. They listen to preachers and teachers that are heretical, and they don't even discern that. I'm convinced that a large portion of people that are Christians in the church today don't even know what to look for in good preaching or biblical preaching because there's so much stuff that isn't really truly biblical preaching. I'm going to describe that in just a moment.

When Paul told Timothy, 2 Timothy 4, "Preach the Word," he used the Greek word *kerysso*, which means to proclaim or herald. He said to proclaim the Word—nothing more, nothing less. Don't add to it, don't take away from it; don't substitute it, don't change it. Just preach the unadulterated Word of God. I believe that God's Word calls pastors to do what is called expositional preaching, which means to explain the text in its historical, grammatical, theological context, and then apply it to the listener. Expositional preaching gets to a text to find out the authorial intent, what the author meant by what he said, and the true first meaning of the text before it's put into application.

Many preachers read a verse, jump right to application, and they don't explain or exegete the text. Application must always come after interpretation, and interpretation must be historically accurate to the meaning of the text. You can't make a verse mean what it doesn't mean. God said what He meant and meant what He said. The preacher is bound by the text. The text is master. I don't pick my themes. I don't concoct my themes. I can pick a different text, it might be what I want to preach on, but I must preach the meaning of the text. That's expositional preaching.

Some people say, "Well, that's boring," and "It's not exciting," and "It's not really that great." I disagree. It can be done boring, and sadly sometimes it is. I'm sure sometimes I've done it boringly, but the Word of God is alive, isn't it? The Word of God is powerful, and the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. If the man of God is preaching the Word of God in the Spirit of God, God's Spirit will speak to your heart and transform your life. Amen? What happens, then, you become an oak tree, not a tumbleweed. God doesn't want tumbleweed Christianity—Hoooooollly rollin everywhere we go! Woohoo! It's not how high you jump when the Spirit touches you, it's how straight you walk when you hit the ground that matters. Amen? Don't be like tumbleweeds, blown in the wind, and he uses the image of the waves of the sea.

Then, there's the false teachers with their "...cunning craftiness." Notice it says, verse 14, "...by the sleight of men," that literally means the throwing of dice. "Cunning craftiness," means they're tricky. I've listened to some smooth-talking preachers that are so tricky, and I've often said to myself, "That's not even what the verse means. That's not what it says, that's not what it means, and that's not how it's applied," but they're using the Bible as a pretext. Biblical preaching does not do that. It's preaching that will build up the believer, but they will not do that.

Here's what we need to do, verse 15, and it's the second result. The first result is doctrinal stability. It brings maturity, stability, and unity. The second is that we speak the truth in love, and I'll just wrap this up because we have communion and I've gone much longer than I wanted to tonight. "But speaking the truth in love," agape, "may grow up into him in all things, which is

the head, even Christ,” Christ the head of the church, the body, “From whom,” and I believe verse 16 is a summary, “From whom the whole body,” this is the local church, “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase,” that’s building up, “of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Paul ends with love. He gets into the doctrine and then ends in love. It’s not just having sound, orthodox doctrine or theology, it’s speaking that truth, living that truth, in love. In verse 15, when he says, “But speaking the truth in love,” that phrase, “speaking the truth” means more than just your words. It includes your words, but it actually involves your life. Actually, it’s almost impossible to grammatically properly translate from the Greek. If you were going to do it, it would actually be “truthing it” in love. I like that concept. Everything you say, everything you do should be in love. We do it, we’re “truthing it,” in love. Truth without love is brutality; love without truth is hypocrisy. Love and truth together, you grow up. Amen? So our whole lives are to be “truthing it” in love. Gifted leadership, doing discipleship, leads to corporate maturity, and that results in “truthing it” in love. How important that is! Let’s pray.