

# Ephesians 4 (Part 3): 7-16 • Gifts to Build Up the Church

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We're in Ephesians chapter 4 and we are picking it up in verse 7 and reading down through verse 16. I'm reading from the ESV. Please follow along in your Bibles as I read. Here we go.

*<sup>7</sup> “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” <sup>9</sup> (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

*<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> 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.*

*<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> 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.” (ESV)*

Stop there. Let's pray.

Thank you, Father God, for your Word. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who brings the Word to life in our hearts. We pray that now we would have ears to hear and a heart to receive all that you desire to communicate to us today, and we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

You guys will remember last week we talked about the seven unifying aspects of the body of Christ in our study of the previous verses. In other words, we talked about the things that we have in common, the sameness that we have

regardless of culture, skin color, gender, language, national heritage, whatever. These are things, and we talked about them last week that we all have in common. Now, as the apostle Paul moves on here in Ephesians, he's going to talk about how we're different. Here we talked about unity last time.

Now we're going to talk about diversity and he's talking specifically about diversity of giftings that have been bestowed upon the body of Christ through Jesus Christ, obviously through the agency of the Holy Spirit but Paul's first words in verse 7, if you'll look with me there, we'll read verse 7. It says, *“but grace was given to each of us. According to the measure of Christ's gift,”*

And there are 2 points that I want to bring out from this single verse and the first is that grace has been given to each of us. And when we talk about grace, we're talking about power from God to do, all right? You hear a lot about the grace of God, and it can be used frankly in different contexts with slightly different meanings but now we're talking about power from God to do.

Well, to do what? To do whatever God calls you to do. Power from God to do all right? And so that's the first point that we'll put up on the screen for you. Point number 1 out of this verse.

### **Point #1**

Jesus has given “power from God to DO” to each member of His Body.

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Okay? I think a lot of people secretly wonder if they've been left out on this. Seriously, I think a lot of Christians are concerned, in fact, that maybe they got left out of the process. When we talk about each one of us in the body of Christ has been given a gift.

And obviously there's a lot of people who are wondering about their gift, because I don't know if you've looked at a Christian bookshelf lately, the books that talk about how to find your spiritual gift, there are a ton of them, and everybody's got a new idea. I don't know how many of you have ever taken one of those quizzes to find out your spiritual gift. You know, in 10 questions, we can zero in on your spiritual gift.

And you know, to some degree they might help a little bit to narrow down your thought processes or the leanings of the Lord in your life, but you've got to be careful about those quizzes because you've got to remember they're man made. The gift of the Holy Spirit in you is God made, but those questionnaires are man

made, so you know, they may or may not help you zero in on your understanding of God's gift, but you have all been given. All of you have been given a gift from the Lord.

And here's the next thing that Paul says here, look at the end of verse 7. It says that we've all been given the power to do or the grace "...according to the measure of Christ's gift." Think of measuring out the ingredients for baking or cooking or something like that. We've all been given a different measure of the gift according to the measure that He has given us. And this is the second point that we'll put up on the screen.

### **Point #2**

Jesus has chosen to divide His power and ability to each member of the body as He sees fit.

Get that? As He sees fit. And what that means for you, and I is that He does not give out giftings equally. I always like to let that one sink in, but He doesn't.

Not only does He not give out gifts equally, we find that they are, the response to those gifts, or maybe I should say the fruitfulness of those gifts is also not equal. Remember, Jesus told parables about different servants being given different amounts, different measures, and according to the measure that they'd been given, they brought back a greater or lesser harvest, right or fruitfulness, if you will, according to the measure.

So, isn't it interesting? Inequality in the kingdom of God. I find that parents many times will just bend over backwards to try to just be very equitable with their children, whatever they give one of their kids, they always make sure the other kids have something like of equal value because we don't, we want to make sure that we don't give them one more than other play favorites. God doesn't do it that way. Just saying, with His children.

He'll dole out more to one than the other, and that's just, He does it as He sees fit. We have what we have in the Lord. But whenever we talk about gifts from the Lord, there's always questions that arise in people's hearts, and I want to just address a couple of them here. And one of the biggest questions that I get, I'll put up on the screen here, is,

### **What's the difference between Natural and Spiritual Gifts?**

What's the difference between Natural and Spiritual Gifts?

Because I think there is some confusion related to them. Natural gifts would include things like musical talent, musical ability. I watched this in my own home. Sue taught piano lessons for years and I saw a lot of kids come through there over the years and some of them just had this natural talent to sit down at the keyboard and just doodly doo and play and the others just really struggled because that natural ability wasn't there and they had to really, they had to work harder than the kids that had the natural ability.

There's just some things you have, naturally have. I think of like guys who have building, carpentry skills and abilities. I've always coveted those. I can barely get a nail into a piece of wood without hurting things and wrecking things, but I watch other guys building and stuff and I'm just, I'm amazed at your ability and your gifting. Mechanical skills. I know enough about a car or a combustion engine to say I think I know what's wrong I have no clue how to fix it or ability to fix it.

I just can't, if you give me a wrench, I'll ruin it, I'll break off a bolt I'll and then I'll get frustrated and then I've got more trouble than if I would just would have taken it to somebody who had the ability to do it. And then of course there's artistic skills and oh man I mean we could go on all day long, but those are all natural abilities. You're born with them. You're born with those abilities.

Now, spiritual gifts, on the other hand, are abilities that are empowered by the Holy Spirit, right? You're not born with them. You are given them by the Spirit, and they are abilities to do what you otherwise could not do.

However, there are sometimes when natural gifts and spiritual gifts can be used together to serve the Lord. Let me give you a quick example. Imagine somebody has a musical gift, like playing music, writing songs, or whatever, but they also have a spiritual gift of evangelism. What do we find? We find them using their gift to write songs, play music, perform in such a way that people's hearts are touched, and they come to faith in Christ. They receive Christ as their Savior.

Here you got somebody using their natural gift, coupling it with a spiritual gift of evangelism, and using it for the Lord and it's beautiful when we see people using their natural gifts, and coupling it with their heart and desire to serve God and giving those things to the Lord.

But, the other huge question, obviously, that is on people's minds is how can I discover my spiritual gift or gifts? And that's why we have all the books out today that are written on this particular topic. And I'm going to give you some

counsel on this that are just my own 5 ways that I think will help you to discover your gift in the Lord or gifts.

### **How can I discover my spiritual gift(s)?**

- Keep growing in the Word

And the first one is to, **Keep growing in Christ and in His Word.**

And the reason I say that is because the more, you know the Word, the more you understand the Word, the more you're going to understand about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the more use you're going to be related to God using you in that spiritual gift because you have a better handle on the Word. There's more of what the Lord, can use from your heart, because it's filled with the Word of God.

### **How can I discover my spiritual gift(s)?**

- Keep growing in the Word
- Ask the Lord to reveal your gift(s)

Make sure that you're growing in Jesus as you're waiting on the **Lord to reveal whatever gift or giftings you have.** And then just come out and ask Him. That's the next thing. Just pray. Lord, what are my spiritual gifts? I think some people don't pray because they're afraid they're not going to get an answer and maybe somehow, they've been left out of the whole process.

But I think it's good to ask the Lord, help me to understand, Lord, what giftings, Your Word says you've given gifts, so I want to know what are the gifts that you've given to me, and then while you're waiting serve the Lord wherever there's a need.

The last thing you want to do when you're waiting on God to show whatever gifting He's given you is to sit on your hands and basically just do nothing. Well, I'm just waiting for the Lord to show me what my gift is so I can do something around here. I find that just getting busy is a great way because I'll tell you one thing, you're going to find out things you're not gifted to do sometimes when you just get out and do it. You do it, you're in the middle of it going, wow, this isn't it. That's okay.

Hey, by the process of elimination, you've helped the journey a little bit. Getting just involved might get you into a situation where you find it and don't think, you might not, you might stumble on your area of gifting because I did with

mine. Sue and I were just new in Christ as far as really walking with the Lord. We'd been married 5 years, didn't attend church the first 5 years of our marriage and then of course, everything fell apart.

We gave our hearts to the Lord, and we started attending church and the church made an announcement on Sunday morning that they were going to be doing on the following Saturday, some construction work in the basement. Knowing nothing about anything we thought, well, let's go get involved and they saw me coming it's like, oh, it's a newbie.

You know what you give the newbies? Hey, this insulation over here needs to be hung. Nobody wants the job of hanging insulation because they know it's a nasty job.

You get little fiberglass stuff all over your body and you can't get it off, but the newbies don't know that, and they're like, okay...and that was us. And so, we went and hung insulation and I will have never done it since because I learned my lesson. But during that very first service time at that church, the pastor called us up into his office and he said, hey, I got a request.

You guys have been coming here for a little while and we got a gal who's leading our youth group, and she's having a hard time keeping order, and stuff like that, and the kids are running around and being crazy, and we need another couple in there to lend some strength to the whole leadership of the youth group. Would you consider helping her out?

And Sue was up for it. She was like, yeah, let's do it. And I was, I don't know. So, we did, she won, and as soon as this gal saw us show up for the youth group, she saw fresh meat and she left. I'm serious, she saw us walk in there and she's like, oh hi, I have other things to do. Here we are, we're brand new in the Lord, we're left with this youth group, and so I knew that I had to start teaching God's Word.

I didn't know God's Word and I was literally learning things and then the next day teaching it to the kids and, but you know what? I discovered my love of teaching, even back then in my 20s and it began to just blossom from there, but it completely blindsided me, and it might blindside you too. Just get involved, see what direction the Lord leads, and take it from there, and just be open to try new things.

### **How can I discover my spiritual gift(s)?**

- Keep growing in the Word
- Ask the Lord to reveal your gift(s)
- Serve wherever there is a need
- Note your passions/burdens

Next, I put on here, **Note your passions and your burdens.**

And what I mean by that is, if there are things that just really, you're passionate about, consider the possibility that passion is from the Lord. Maybe you have a passion to minister to children. You just love being around kindergartners, or junior hires, or senior high kids, or college age, or you just, you have a passion, maybe you have a passion to pray with people, you know?

Sometimes I'll even ask people, well, what do you think the Lord's stirring in your life? Well come to think about it, I was in the grocery store last week and there was this gal that was crying, and I just felt moved to go up and pray with her, you know? I just wanted to pray and encourage her.

Well, there might be something there that you need to look at. You might have a gift of encouragement, you might have a gift of compassion, you might have a gift of intercessory prayer. Look into it. Pray about it. Pursue it. See what the Lord is laying on your heart to go and do, right?

### **How can I discover my spiritual gift(s)?**

- Keep growing in the Word
- Ask the Lord to reveal your gift(s)
- Serve wherever there is a need
- Note your passions/burdens
- Be patient in God's timing

And then lastly, **Be patient in God's timing** because sometimes He'll tell you about things or even make you aware of things or make you passionate about things before the time, and He'll close the doors until a later time. Sue and I started pastoring a church up in Washington, and we had a lovely gentleman come into our fellowship, and he spoke over my wife one time prophetically while we were just praying with him after a service, and he started speaking to her about her teaching ministry.

Well, she was probably 23 at the time and we were having babies. I mean, our two oldest kids were just really small. We were going to have two more after

that. There were a lot of years where Sue's gifting really couldn't be used to the degree that it is today. Those of you who know my wife and you know our women's ministry she's a full blown teacher and frankly, she's more popular on the retreat circuit than I could ever hope to be. I mean, she gets requests all the time to go speak at women's retreats, and stuff like that and I'm proud of her, but you know what?

There was about 30 years between the time that she first received a word from the Lord that she was going to teach, and when she really began to blossom in that, but you know what she had to do in many of the earlier years was just do what she could. In other words, when we first started this fellowship 27 and a half years ago, I needed somebody to work in children's ministry and my wife was it. I mean, there was no one else, and we didn't have classes for different kids, she just did a children's church.

It was like the wee little ones up through like 6th grade, you know, and they all came into one room and she had to teach them all but she was exercising her gift in whatever way she could. Sometimes when you feel a sense to go do this or that, but the doors aren't open at this time in your life to go do this or that in the way that you perceive it or you think well, I want to go do this and I've had many people say that to me over the years.

They're very impatient. I feel like the Lord's called me to do this or to do that, but the doors just aren't open. And I'm like, stop trying to push them open. God will open the doors in His own time. Be patient in the Lord's timing and it will, you'll see this thing come to fruition with time. There's my counsel as it relates to discovering and walking in your spiritual gifts.

Now as we move on in verse 8, Paul goes on to say, "*therefore it says*", and so he's obviously quoting something because he says, "*it says*," He doesn't tell you where he's quoting it but I will in a moment. It says, "*When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.*"<sup>9</sup> (In saying, "*He ascended*," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?")

Now what Paul is doing here is he's actually indirectly quoting a psalm, and it's psalm 68 which is what we call a victory psalm where David literally wrote this psalm about his victory over the Jebusites and it so it was a it was like coming back in victory and that sort of thing. Well, Paul is using it and he's relating it to Jesus, victory over sin and death, who in His victory ascended into heaven and gave gifts to men through the Holy Spirit. Let me show you the passage he's actually quoting from Psalm 68, verse 16.



**Psalm 68:16 (ESV)**

*“You ascended on high leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men even among the rebellious that the Lord God may dwell there.”*

*“You ascended on high leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men even among the rebellious that the Lord God may dwell there.”*

And again, Paul is loosely quoting this and applying it to Jesus Christ, but the whole point of the quotation is victory. Jesus is also the Victor who gives gifts, right? Now, when it goes on in verse 9 and 10, you'll notice it goes on to say in saying, He ascended, da, da da, what does it mean but that He also descended. And do you guys know that a host of semi wacky doctrines have come out of that.

I don't know how many of you were raised in church where you recited the Apostle's Creed, but you might remember reciting a creed that said He died, was buried, He descended into hell, and on the third day he rose again. That's part of the Apostle's Creed, and largely it's taken from a passage like this, but it's a misunderstanding. Jesus didn't go to hell and suffer there, because that's the belief, is that after He suffered on the cross, He descended into hell and there He suffered further for the sins of man, and that's just nowhere given to us in the Word of God.

The last thing Jesus said before he dismissed His Spirit is, *“it is finished,”* meaning it was paid in full. It was done. It was a done deal. The whole idea that the Apostles Creed passed along was based loosely on some of these other ideas, but when Paul writes here, that He descended into the lower regions he's talking about the incarnation. He's saying, the One who had ascended, obviously, after His death, burial, and resurrection, is also the One who previously descended.

He's talking about God coming down to be a man, to the lower regions of the earth. That's where we live, guys, in the lower regions, in case you were wondering about that. And so, this isn't about Jesus descending into hell, it's about His incarnation becoming a man, and there's been a lot of weird things and, that have come out of it. Again, Paul's talking about gifts. He's talking, he's saying Jesus gave gifts. He gave gifts to men. What gifts did He give? Look at verse 11.

He's going to talk here about ministry gifts, okay? It says, “*and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers.* And here's why, verse 12, “*to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*” Alright. Well, you can see here that Paul starts listing ministry gifts.

These are leadership gifts in the body of Christ which he says are to build up the church and we'll put a list on the screen here for you so you can see it.

- Apostle
- Prophet
- Evangelist
- Pastor/Teacher

He lists Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Pastor/Teacher.

And just a quick note, you'll notice I used pastor instead of the ESV's shepherd because it's the Greek word means the exact same thing. Shepherd, teacher, can be translated either way. And some of your Bibles say shepherd, some say pastor, and both of them are correct. But I want to go through these very quickly because I think it's important that you understand, first of all, what they all are.

Apostle very simply means one sent forth with authority and one of the big questions we get is are there still Apostles today? How about even prophet? You know, we know that a prophet basically is one who speaks a message for the Lord, or speaks in the name of the Lord, and gives a message from God. Are those things still functional today? Well, there's no reason why somebody who couldn't be sent out still from the church, and even sent out with authority to go do things, and frankly, giving a prophetic message is very, is simply, just simply saying I have a message from God for you.

That's prophetic. Now, I don't believe that apostle and prophet are still functionally existing like they did in the first century, and I'll show you why in a moment. That doesn't mean I don't believe in the gifts of the Spirit. I do believe in the present-day activity of the gifts of the Spirit, very much, and I'm talking about those gifts that are listed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

I believe in the baptism of the Spirit, and I believe the gifts are still functional today. I don't see anything in the Word that would say otherwise. And fundamentally, I believe that you could still have an apostle and you could and people still have prophetic giftings, but I don't believe these offices still exist as they did before, and here's why.

We know that they were used very specially in the establishing of the foundation of the Church. In fact, it is earlier in this letter that Paul makes a very important statement, I'll put it on the screen for you, that goes like this. It's from Ephesians 2.

**Ephesians 2:19-20 (ESV)**

*“...the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,”*

*“...the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,”*

He talks about the household of God, and that's another way of referring to the Church, which he says is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself, as the cornerstone. Now you might notice here, he doesn't talk about the church being built upon the foundation of pastors and teachers, or even evangelists. They're used to build up the body, as we'll see here. But the foundational creation of the Church, Jesus used... Apostles and prophets in a very special way to build that foundation.

Well, that foundation has been laid. We're not still laying the foundation of the church, but in the first century they still were. I mean, there was a lot of questions, there was a lot of things they had to work through, and the apostles and prophets, as they were used in the first century, were critical for the laying of that foundation, as Paul says here in Ephesians chapter 2, alright?

And again, now that we go back to our list of the giftings of the Church, as I said before, you can still have an apostle who is sent out, you can still hear people speaking prophetic messages. We've had it here several times at Calvary Chapel. Where somebody just gets up during the worship and says, I feel like the Lord would say to you, and then out comes a message. Well, that's prophecy.

People think that, so many times, people think that prophecy is always predictive. In other words, it always speaks of the future. Well, occasionally, it may. But prophecy is just simply... Listen, if you and I could be on a subway somewhere, and the Lord could speak to my heart and say, Go to that person and tell them I love them. Just go say that. Just go say, God has a message for you. I love you.

Do you know that I just would have given a prophecy? That's a prophecy. Prophecy means speaking forth. To speak forth. I just feel like God's given me a

message for you. Here it is. I just gave you a prophecy. See? So, prophecy is still functioning in the body, but the office of prophet as it was used to establish the foundation of the church, that has changed, okay?

We come to our next gifting here, which is the evangelist.

- Apostle
- Prophet
- Evangelist
- Pastor/Teacher

That's pretty easy. I mean we think of modern-day evangelists like Billy Graham, who recently went to be with the Lord. Obviously, this is a person who is both burdened and gifted to reach the lost with the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I'm always amazed when I listen to people who have a truly evangelistic gifting, just how easy it is for them.

It just, it rolls off their tongue, because there's a spiritual gift going on. You know, I've shared the Gospel many, many times right from this pulpit and other places, but I got to think about it. I got to plan it out I got to really work it through in my brain but evangelists. Man, they're just like it's like breathing let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you what he did for you on the cross and I used to listen to Billy Graham, and I just go he's so simple.

He makes it so simple, and I make things complex, and I think I you know make it so it's yeah, I just love listening to evangelists. Now in a very real sense, we're all called to some aspect of evangelism because the Bible tells you and I either we are to each be prepared to give a reason to anyone who asks us to give the hope, to tell us why about the hope that we have, and so we're all supposed to be prepared to evangelize even though we may not be evangelists. You with me?

In fact I remember talking a number of years ago to a gentleman in our fellowship who was lamenting the fact that he had never prayed with anyone to receive Christ as Savior and he was like, you know I've never closed the deal. Talked to several people about the Lord, but I've just never prayed with somebody to actually receive Jesus and of course my initial thought was well, I guess you're not an evangelist but he was, I didn't say that, but he was genuinely troubled in his heart about not, never having done that, and I think the enemy might even been involved accusing him because of it, you know how the enemy does.

Here's the balance. While we're all supposed to be prepared to share Christ, we're not always going to be the ones who are going to pray with them to receive the Lord, because you see, sharing Christ with unbelievers and praying with them to actually accept Christ are two very different things, and frankly, we're mostly involved with planting and watering. I mean, a few people who have that gift can push through and really make a difference and stuff, but most of us are doing planting.

In fact, the Bible says, *“one-man plants, another man waters, but God gives the increase.”* We're just we're going around planting and watering and you know what you may do that your whole life And you may never, you may never pray with one person to receive the Lord, but you may be involved in several people coming to a saving knowledge of Christ because it was the seed that you planted or the seed that you watered without even knowing that you were watering seed that somebody else had planted.

And so whether it's through your life in the workplace, or in the home, or wherever you may be, just talking about the Lord, talking about what you learned in church, what you learned from your reading of the Word, it's just something that you said, whatever, it's just those day to day things that we're doing where we're really involved in evangelism, in a very real sense.

Occasionally, we get to pray with people to receive Christ, and that's wonderful. I've had some situations where the fruit was so ripe, it fell in my lap, and that's very humbling. I had a guy call me a number of years ago, and he, in fact, I was out of the office, and my secretary called me, and said, this guy called, and he wants a call back right away. Okay, so I called him back right away. He says, hi, my name is so and so. Do you mind if I bring my wife and kids over to your office, and you can tell us how to be saved?

It's literally what he told me. I'm like, yeah! So, I mean, they came over and sat in my office, and I shared the gospel, and they were like, okay. So, I said, you guys want to pray? Yeah, and they did and it was wonderful. But you know, I didn't even work for that. I didn't do any planting. I didn't do any watering. I just sat there and it just fell off the trees, boom, right there, that's fun. But it's fairly rare that something like that takes place.

The final gifting that we have on our list here list is the pastor teacher. And you're looking at that, some of you, and you're thinking, I don't know, there, I think I might see two giftings there, Pastor. Well, you might think so, but the ancient Greek really describes one office with two descriptive titles and the reason I use the word pastor, as I said before, instead of shepherd, is that it's the

same word, but the word shepherd, actually, I like more because it's more descriptive than pastor. If you didn't know what a pastor did and somebody said I'm a pastor, you might go.. okay, but if somebody said I'm a shepherd now, you know what they do now you have you can ask him another follow up question.

Are you talking about animals or people? Because if you're a shepherd you're either got a flock of animals or you've got a flock of people, right? And you know what shepherds do, they take care of their flock. They feed them and protect them and that sort of thing. But what I really want you to see about these ministry giftings that, that Paul talks about here in Ephesians chapter 4 is what God intended them to do.

Look at verse 12, here with me. Again, it says, why did he give these? *“To equip the saints for the work of ministry. For building up the body of Christ.”* There it is guys. That's why those giftings were given to you, the body of Christ, that you might be built up to do the work of the ministry, and as a pastor/teacher this verse tells me that my calling is to equip you to do the work of the ministry.

You're supposed to do the work of the ministry but that's not often what we think, is it when we talk about, or when we think about church stuff. When I was up at the Bar M Ranch here this weekend, I, there was a guy came up to me and we just, he struck up a conversation and he said, are you the Minister of that church? And when anybody ever calls me a minister, I immediately know what their background is, because I was raised in churches where we called the guy that did the preaching and teaching or whatever, we called him the minister.

And that's a really, really common name, although you don't hear it much in evangelical circles. We usually go with the title, pastor because it's more biblical. But as I've thought about that term or that title Minister over the years, I thought, you know what? That's dangerous. It's actually a dangerous title, and I'll tell you why. To assume that someone is the minister is to assume that it's their job to do the work of the ministry. He's the minister. What's the minister do? Well, he does the ministry. That's not hard, right? We hired him, as a matter of fact, to do the work of the ministry.

Minister? Go and minister. So, what's the minister do? Well, he visits people, goes into the hospital when they're sick. He prays over people when they've got issues going on, he counsels them and stuff like that. He does the ministry. And then when we're all together having a meal, we say, minister you want to say the blessing? I hate it when they do that... okay. There's a rebellious part of me that just wants to go, God bless this food amen.

But the whole point of this, you see, is that Paul says these giftings are to build you up to do the work of the ministry. In other words, if anybody deserves the title minister, it's you. You are to go do it. And you know what? Nothing makes me happier than when I hear that some of the people of Calvary Chapel are out doing the work of the ministry. I love it. I love it. You know what makes my day is when I hear somebody say, Hey, so and so is in the hospital, but so and so over here went and visited and prayed with them. Thank you, Jesus.

Not that I don't want to go, but that they're doing what they're supposed to be doing. And that maybe, just maybe I'm doing something right. Maybe I'm building them up, and that's, again, that's my calling, to build you up with the Word and encouragement to go do the work of the ministry. You want to know what discourages me? Is when people ask me to do things that they should be doing, because then it makes me feel like I've failed. You know?

Hey pastor, my cousin is really close to coming to the Lord, can I bring him by, and have you pray with him to receive the Lord? It's like, you do it. I get that maybe you've never done that before, and if you want me there just as backup, I'd love to do that, but you know what? Everybody's got to do it for the first time. There was a first time I did it, and I probably stumbled my way through it and made all kinds of mistakes.

You'd be shocked how many people get saved, even when nobody knows what they're doing. He's not limited by people being a professional. Or, we need to get the Minister in here. I love it when I'm out having a meal with people and somebody, whoever's hosting, just says, all right, let's pray. And they start praying. I'm like, wow, cool. They're praying. They didn't look to the minister to do it, they understood that they are the minister helping people doing whatever it takes, loving people.

I once had people call me one time and say, hey we were out on vacation or whatever and there was something related to baptism, and they wanted to know if it was okay to take somebody out in the water and baptize them. And I was like, go for it! There's nothing in the Word that says it's only my job to do. Did you know that? Nothing in the Scripture that says that only pastors can baptize people. It's not in the Word. You know?

So, we've just got so many weird wacky ideas that have come from traditions like calling some guy the minister. My job is to equip you to do the ministry. And that's what I want to do. But there's a goal behind it all that is more than just you doing the ministry, and that's told us here in verse 13 and following. Look with me in your Bible. Here's why you are called to do the ministry.

Here's why I am called to build you up to do the work of the ministry so that we can all attain the unity of the faith.

That's what Paul writes here in verse 13, “...and of the knowledge of the Son of God, (that we might grow up, he said) *to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,* <sup>14</sup> *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.*”

Isn't this incredible in these verses? There's this wonderful blessing that is given to us if we will simply understand that we are all called to the ministry, and we go out and start ministering. There's going to be a strengthening of the body of Christ. Did you notice the kind of strength he's talking about? He's talking about maturity and strength that stands against winds of doctrine that are man-made and believe me, we've seen a ton of them go through the church in the last 2,000 years.

And even in the last 50 years, incredible amount of winds of doctrine that had nothing to do with the Word of God, but man, I tell you, they blew through and many people got blown over. Why? Because they weren't strong. Because we hadn't been ministering together as the body of Christ, strengthening one another, and being built up by one another and that's what these ministry gifts are all about.

And then verse 15 and following, he says, “*Rather, speaking the truth in love,* (By the way, that's hard to do, isn't it? We're pretty good at speaking the truth, but we're not often very good at speaking it in love. And that can be very challenging. He says) *we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,* <sup>16</sup> *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, (and when?) when each part is working properly, makes the body grow (look at this, look at this) so that it builds itself up in love.*”

You know what Paul's saying here? A healthy body builds itself up. You know what that means? That means I'm basically trying to work my way out of a job. My job is to build up the body of Christ, to do the work of the ministry, and when they do, the body of Christ will build itself up. That talks about an activity among you, that is moving and touching and challenging and encouraging and teaching and speaking and praying for one another, around one another, to build you up in the things of the Lord, so that the body is built up on its own.



Isn't that amazing? But that's God's purpose. I don't think we've actually done very good, honestly, at fulfilling this purpose for the church, but now we know what it is from Ephesians chapter 4, and we're better prepared to say, He's not the minister, I am. He's the pastor/teacher. He's the evangelist. Okay, sweet. But I'm the minister. And his ministry is to build me up so that I will go out and do the work of the ministry. Ah, I see my calling here. To go out and function in whatever gift the Lord has given me, and to serve the body of Christ, to serve the people of this world, to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.