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**INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPPING MINISTRIES**  
**Institute in the Foundations of Church Leadership**  
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**DESCRIBING AN EPHESIANS 4 CHURCH (EPHESIANS 4:12-16)**

Ministry Lecture #1

**Introduction:** The emphasis in Ephesians 4:11-16 is not on the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, but on their role in the church. This passage describes their role and God's plan for church growth. The offices of apostle and prophet ended in the first century. Their instruction was used by God to establish the foundation of the church. (Ephesians 2:20) The task of building up the church was turned over to the evangelists and the pastor-teachers. (Remember, the "pastor and teacher" was the same person in the New Testament church.)

**I. THE PROCESS OF BUILDING UP THE CHURCH (INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS)**  
**(EPH 4:11b-12)**

- NOTE: Equipping prepares Christians to serve, which leads to the church being built up.
  - A. It begins with equipping (4:12a)
    - 1. Equipping begins when the evangelist leads someone to place their faith in Christ, and the new believers are gathered to form a church. Then the pastor-teacher, through the teaching of the Word and by being a godly example, leads them to take on the likeness of their Lord and Savior through continual obedience to His Word. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-7; 1 Peter 5:3).
    - 2. "Equip" means "be made complete." (Here it means "complete in Christ.")
    - 3. God uses four things to equip the saints.
      - a. The Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
      - b. Prayer, as demonstrated by the apostles in Acts 6:4. (The apostles were the predecessors to the pastor-teachers.) (Colossians 4:12-13)
      - c. Testing (trials) also help to bring the believer to maturity in Christ. (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5)
      - d. Suffering also helps to make us complete in Christ. (1 Pet 5:10)
    - 4. Application
      - a. Like the apostles in Jerusalem, the pastor-teacher is to devote himself "to prayer and the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:4)

- b. Like Paul, the pastor should be able to say that he is dedicated and committed to “admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)
  - c. The devoted pastor–teacher is “a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and sound doctrine,” which he then reads publically, prescribes, and teaches to the church. (1 Timothy 4:6, 11, 13)
  - d. He is called to “preach the Word, to be ready in season and out of season, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience and instruction.” (2 Tim 4:2)
  - e. Good organization and administration is not what builds up the church. It is the Word of God and prayer that builds up the church.
  - f. The size of your church is NOT the most important thing. The most important thing is how MATURE are the Christians in your church. The pastor-teacher is to focus on the spiritual maturity of the church, and let God take care of the size of the church.
  - g. Jesus said He would increase the numbers in His church (the body of Christ). The number of people who attend any church is His responsibility. The maturity of the church is the pastor-teacher’s responsibility. Maturity is developed by the preaching of the Word, prayer, trials, and suffering.
- B. Equipping leads to service (Ephesians 4:12b)
- 1. The way this verse is written indicates that it is NOT the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers who do all of the ministry in the church.
  - 2. The pastor’s responsibility, in God’s plan, is not to try to meet all of the needs in the church by himself, but to equip the people in the church to meet many of those needs themselves. (Ephesians 4:16).
    - a. Leaders are to serve also, which means that the entire church is to be involved in the work of the Lord. (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; 4:10–11)
    - b. The pastor is to equip the believers so they can be involved in the work of the Lord, and remember that going to church is not the same as serving the Lord.
- C. Service leads to the church being built up (Ephesians 4:12c)
- 1. Proper equipping, leads to proper service, which leads to the building up of the body of Christ.

2. “Building up” literally refers to the building of a house.
3. Paul is referring to building and developing the church spiritually.
4. The church is built up numerically through evangelism as more believers are added, but the emphasis here is on its being built up numerically. The emphasis is that all of the believers in the church are to be nurtured to fruitful service.

## II. THE PURPOSE OF BUILDING UP THE CHURCH (EPH 4:13-15)

- A. Building up the church (individual believers) has two objectives, according to Paul.
  1. Objective #1: The unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13a)
    - a. The highest priority of the church is the unity of the faith.
    - b. “Faith,” here, does not refer to the act of “trusting God,” but to “the truth” that Christians believe (Christian doctrine). (Ephesians 4:5).
  2. Objective #2: The knowledge of the Son of God (Jesus Christ) (Ephesians 4:13b)
    - a. This is not referring to salvation, but to growing to know Christ better and better. (Philippians 3:8-10, 12)
    - b. A growing relationship with Jesus comes through prayer, reading the Bible, studying the Bible, then obeying the Bible.
  3. Reaching the two objectives brings *spiritual maturity* that makes us more like Christ. (Ephesians 4:13c)
    - a. God is in the process of making us more like Jesus. (Rom 8:29; Phil 1:6)
    - b. Christians are to live as Christ lived. (1 John 2:6; Colossians 4:12)
  4. Reaching the two objectives also results in the church having sound doctrine (4:14).
- NOTE: Mature, spiritually equipped Christians are no longer spiritual children who can be tricked and led away from the truth by false teachers.
  - a. The phrase “trickery and deceitful scheming” means that neither the trickery of men nor the deceitful scheming of the devil will mislead spiritually equipped and mature believers.
  - b. The word “children” refers to those who do not know what the Bible teaches. They listen to and easily believe lies about God and false teaching in general. The New Testament is filled with warnings about this danger. (Acts 20:30–31; Rom 16:17–18; 2 Cor 11:3–4; Gal. 1:6–7; 3:1; Col 2:4–8; 1Tim 4:1, 6–7; 2 Tim 2:15–18; 3:6–9; 4:3; Heb. 13:9; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; 1 John 2:19, 26).

- c. The immature and untaught Christian is easily tricked by false teachers. This is why pastors should teach the church all that God has written in the Bible, book by book, chapter by chapter. That will result in a “unity of the faith” and a unified “knowledge of the Son of God.” (Ephesians 4:13)
- NOTE: When the church is built up in the Word of God, the believers will not be confused by false teachers, and will not go back and forth about what they believe.
  - 5. Reaching the two objectives leads to a lifestyle of speaking and living in the truth in love, which results in the growth of the church (the body of Christ). (Eph 4:15-16)
- Mature believers, whose lives are marked by love, will not be victims of false teaching (v.14-15). But, they will be demonstrating God’s love and sharing the true gospel.

### **III. THE POWER THAT BUILDS UP THE CHURCH (EPH 4:15b-16)**

- A. The source of life and power in the church is Christ. (4:15b-16a)
- B. Each member (they are called “parts” or “ligaments” or “joints”) has a role in the church to fulfill (4:16b).
- C. When each member does its part, the body is built up. (4:16b)
  - 1. Each part (each member, each individual) is important because each one has been given a gift (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
  - 2. The growth of the church is the result of every member of the church using his spiritual gift while working with others in the church.
  - 3. Jesus Christ is the source of the life and power and growth of the church, which He coordinates through each believer’s gifts and individual ministries, working together for the glory of God.

**Conclusion:** The body of Christ functions properly only when each part works properly with every other part and responds to the direction of the Head (Jesus Christ) (Colossians 2:19).