
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPPING MINISTRIES
ITEM Conference on Ministry and Preaching
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THE PASTOR'S PRIORITIES (EPHESIANS 4:12-16)

Ministry Lecture #6

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)

NOTE: Equipping means preparing. Pastors are to prepare the followers of Christ to be involved in service or ministry and this builds the church up spiritually and numerically.

A. The ministry of equipping (4:12a)

1. The evangelist is an equipper (4:11-12a)
 - a. The evangelist leads someone to become a follower of Christ
 - b. He helps them learn the basics of the Christian life.
 - c. Then gathers them and forms a local church.
2. The pastor-teacher is an equipper also
 - a. The pastor teaches the believers the Word of God and sets a godly example.
 - b. He helps them find places of service in the church and the community.
 - c. And he works to bring each follower of Christ to be conformed to the image (the lifestyle) of Christ (Eph 4:13; Col 1:28).
3. There are four things God uses 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 is the fourth thing that helps to make us complete in Christ.
(1 Peter 5:10)

NOTE: The size of your church is NOT the most important thing. The most important thing is how MATURE the Christians in your church are. Jesus said He would increase the numbers in His church (the body of Christ).

- 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 the ministry in the church.
 - 2. The pastor's responsibility is to equip the people in the church to meet the needs in the church and the community so the pastor does not have to do everything.
(Ephesians 4:16).
- 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 *spiritually*. The emphasis is that all of the believers in the church are to be helped to be fruitful in their service.

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

- A. Building up the church (individual believers) has two objectives, which lead to maturity, an understanding of the basic teaching of the church, and to a loving testimony.
 - 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).
 - i. Proper teaching leads an understanding of what the Bible actually teaches. This leads to Christian maturity and a unity around the truths of God's Word. And that all leads to service and a healthy church.

- ii. Only a biblically equipped, faithfully serving, and spiritually maturing church can attain to the real unity the faith.
- 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.
- B. Reaching the two objectives brings spiritual maturity that results in four other things
 - 1. We become more like Christ (Ephesians 4:13c).
 - a. God is in the process of making us more like Jesus. (Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6)
 - b. Christians are to live as Christ lived. (1 John 2:6; Colossians 4:12)
 - 2. Reaching the two objectives also results in the church having sound doctrine and Not being easily tricked by false teachers. (4:14)
 - 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; Romans 16:17–18; 2 Corinthians 11:3–4; Gal. 1:6–7; 3:1; Colossians 2:4–8; 1 Timothy 4:1, 6–7; 2 Timothy 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.

3. Reaching the two objectives leads to a lifestyle of speaking and living the truth in love, which results in the growth of the church (the body of Christ).
(Ephesians 4:15-16)

NOTE: The work of the church goes from evangelism (4:11) to edification (4:12) to evangelism (4:14). (Win people to Christ, then build, and send them out for Christ.)

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

- A. The source of life and power in the church is Christ. (4:15b-16a)
- B. Each member (here they are called “parts” or “ligaments” or “joints”) has an important role to play in the church (4:16b).
- C. As each member does its part, the body is built up. (4:16b)
 1. Each part (member, individual) is important because each one has been given a gift (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12: 6-8).
 2. The growth of the church comes as a result of every member of the church fully 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: Where God’s people have close relationships, and a genuine spiritual ministry, God works. Where they are not intimate with each other and not faithful with their gifts, He cannot work.

The physical body functions properly only when each member, in union with every other member, responds to the direction of the Head (Jesus Christ) to do exactly what each member was designed to do. (Colossians 2:19) What we learn from all of this is that every individual believer is to stay close to Jesus Christ, faithfully use his spiritual gift in close contact with every other believer that he touches, and that through such commitment, and ministry the Lord’s power will flow for the building up of the body in love.