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Ephesians 3 – 4

“Body Building”

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There are times when we read the Bible and a verse or a certain passage of Scripture has tremendous personal application; and then there are times when we read the Bible and a passage of Scripture is intended for us on a broader level – for the church corporately. This message, from [Ephesians 4:11–16](#), is one of those passages that speak to the whole church, because the church needs to recognize that God has raised up certain gifts and positions *in* the church for the benefit *of* the church.

This particular passage has been *the* defining passage for what we do and why we do things the way we do at Cornerstone Chapel. It’s probably safe to say that it’s also the defining passage for Calvary Chapel churches around the world.

In [Ephesians 4:11](#), we read that Christ has appointed certain positions and gifts in the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These are often referred to as the “Five-Fold Ministry of the Church.” However, it’s really just four offices. The Granville-Sharp rule¹ of Greek grammar dictates that “pastor and teacher” is really one office – pastor/teacher. Now, each of these is both an “office” and a “gift,” so an apostle has the gift of apostleship and a prophet has the gift of prophecy, etc. It’s important to note that these gifts and offices can work independently. For example, a person may have the gift of teaching but they are not called to be a pastor; a person may have the gift of evangelism but they aren’t called to be an evangelist.

The question is, do these offices and gifts still exist today? “For the most part,” is the short answer to the question. In this study we’ll learn more about how the Bible defines these gifts and offices, in addition to learning about the three things that happen when God’s Word is taught and God’s people are equipped: ministry, unity and maturity.

¹ “Basically, Granville Sharp’s rule states that when you have two nouns, which are not proper names (such as Cephas, or Paul, or Timothy), which are describing a person, and the two nouns are connected by the word ‘and,’ and the first noun has the article (‘the’) while the second does not, both nouns are referring to the same person.” http://www.theopedia.com/Granville_Sharp's_rule

Apostle

1. There are two qualifications in the New Testament for an apostle.
 - a. Must be an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus.
 - i. In [Acts 1:22](#), we read that Peter, when choosing an apostle to replace Judas, said that he must be a “*witness with us of his resurrection.*”
 - ii. Many Bible scholars believe that Paul was God’s choice to replace Judas, not Matthias.
 - iii. Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 15:8](#) that he was one “*abnormally born,*” because he saw the resurrected Lord when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus.
 - b. Must be one who performs signs, wonders and miracles.
 - i. It’s more than just some self-appointed title: “I’m Apostle So-and-So!”
 - c. [2 Corinthians 12:12](#) – “*The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance.*”
2. The gift of apostleship still exists today.
 - a. This gift is for the pioneering or the establishing of new ministries or churches, and is seen in the life of the man who has a real visionary gift for God’s work.

Prophet

3. This gift is for declaring the Word of God – sometimes foretelling what God says (as long as it never contradicts the Word of God), but more often it’s a forthtelling of God’s Word for “*the strengthening, encouragement, and comfort of people.*” ([1 Corinthians 14:3](#))
4. Concerning the office of a prophet, there are many examples in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, including the four daughters of Philip the evangelist in [Acts 21:9](#) and Agabus in [Acts 21:10](#).
5. The Biblical credentials for a prophet were based on whether what he/she said came to pass; and if it didn’t come to pass, he/she was put to death, which should make some people today think a little bit more carefully about self-titling themselves Prophet So-and-So!
 - a. It’s interesting to note that Jesus, when speaking about the signs of the end of the age, warns three times about being aware of “*false prophets.*” ([Matthew 24](#))
6. The gift of prophecy is still available today, however, the office of prophet no longer exists.

Evangelist

7. An evangelist has a special gift of communicating the Gospel and leading people to Christ.
8. The Billy Grahams and the Greg Lauries of the world are men whose ministry gives evidence of the gift of evangelism.

Pastor-Teacher

9. The Greek word for pastor is *poimen*, which means shepherd; one who tends and cares for the sheep, giving oversight to the church.
 - a. **Acts 20:28** – “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”
10. The Greek word for teacher is *didaskalos*, which means one who instructs others in the Word of God, bringing clarity and application.
11. God says in **Ephesians 4:12** that the purpose for these roles and gifts in the church is to “prepare God’s people...”
 - a. The KJV uses “*perfecting of the saints*” and the NKJV uses “*equipping of the saints.*”
 - i. The Greek word means “to complete thoroughly.”
 - b. The Greek word is *katartizo*, which means to complete thoroughly.
 - i. This word is used in the Gospels to describe fishermen repairing fishing nets, so the nets would be useful and purposeful.
 - c. God’s desire is that these roles would equip and repair Christians where they’ve been wounded.
12. The role of every pastor in the local church should be to equip God’s people, and to build him or her up in the faith, which comes through the teaching role – the teaching of God’s Word.
 - a. **2 Timothy 3:16–17** – “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
 - b. This Scripture is the reason Cornerstone Chapel spends significant time studying God’s Word together, because it is the Word of God that will bring people to salvation and equip people in their walk with God; it’s not skits or fancy multimedia or topical lessons or programs, it is the teaching through God’s Word that changes lives.

Ministry

13. **Ephesians 4:12** indicates that the teaching of the Word prepares people for “*works of service.*”
 - a. The Greek word in the KJV (*diakonias*) means for the “*work of the ministry.*”
14. When people are equipped in their faith, they want to serve and minister to others, so they start looking for ways they can use the gifts God has given them to benefit the church and others around them.
15. There is no ministry role that is more important than another, although some ministry roles are more visible, however, there are other roles that will make people more accountable to God.
 - a. **James 3:1** – “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

- b. **1 Corinthians 12:21–22** – “*The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...*”
- c. There shouldn’t be a time when a Christian speaks condescendingly to another believer because they believe they have a more prominent gift for ministry or a more prominent role in ministry.
 - i. **Matthew 20:28** – “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’*”

Unity

- 16. **Ephesians 4:13a** speaks of Christians being unified “*in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.*”
- 17. The idea is that as people are equipped with the Word of God, there will be a unity among them as they share a common faith in Jesus and a common knowledge of who he is.
- 18. Christ is our common bond, and no matter what our personal differences are, our unity is in Jesus – it’s always 100% about Jesus.
- 19. An equipping Church is about bringing people into faith and knowledge of Jesus as he is revealed in Scripture; not the Mormon Jesus (they believe Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer) or the Muslim Jesus (they believe Jesus was a prophet who was inferior to Muhammad²) or the Jehovah’s Witness Jesus (they believe Jesus was actually created as the archangel Michael), but the Jesus of the Bible.
 - a. It’s the Jesus of the Bible who is God in the flesh.
 - b. It’s Jesus who came to earth and lived a sinless life, only to die on the cross for our sins.
 - c. It’s Jesus who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.
 - d. It’s Jesus who is coming again!
 - e. It’s Jesus who offers forgiveness for sin, a new life, with the promise of Heaven for all who believe!

Maturity

- 20. **Ephesians 4:13b** speaks of Christians becoming “*mature.*”
- 21. Becoming mature in Christ doesn’t mean that you become sinless, but it means that you “sin less.”

² Muslims don’t believe Jesus was crucified: “And for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah, and they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain: Nay, Allah exalted him in His presence. And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise.” [Qur'an. Surah 4:157-158]

22. Becoming mature in Christ means:
- a. You love God more, and you love God's Word more.
 - b. You love the lost more.
 - c. You're more conscious of sin, and you're more convicted about sin.
 - d. You're more controlled by the Holy Spirit.
23. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a prominent pastor in the 19th century said, "We are not yet what we want to be, and we are not what we shall be; but we are not what we used to be."

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Ephesians 4:11-16](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow time for people to share a brief account of the ministry/ministries they're involved in at Cornerstone or in the community, etc.
4. Spend time talking about examples of ways the people in your group see ministry in action in the church, the community, etc.
5. How do you know whether or not there is a unity within the church?
 - a. What does unity in the church look like?
 - b. What are some examples of churches or denominations that have experienced disunity?
 - c. Do you think churches that don't make and keep the Bible the focus of their ministry are more prone to disunity than those that do?
6. Are you maturing in the faith?
 - a. Describe the life of someone you know that you consider to be a mature Christian.
 - i. What are some of the characteristics that define a mature Christian?
 - ii. It's true that you aren't sinless, however, the question is, "Are you sinning less?"
 - iii. Do see evidence in your life that you're relying more and more on the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?
7. Read and discuss Charles Haddon Spurgeon's quote. (#23 above)
 - a. Several people in your group may want to share their thoughts about where they are in this process.
8. Close your time in prayer by: asking the Holy Spirit to speak to them about their ministry in the church and their sphere of influence; asking the Holy Spirit to help them understand the importance of unity in the church, which is based completely on the Word of God; asking the Holy Spirit to continue the process of maturing them in the faith.