

Ephesians Chapter 4

Week 6, v.11-13

How did Chapter 4 of Ephesians begin? How is your walk? How have you seen God working in your life in the areas of humility, gentleness, patience and showing forbearance to one another in love? In what ways have you had opportunities to encourage the unity of the body of Christ? How have you been able to promote peace within the church?

Eph 4:11-13 And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11 lists special gifts given to followers of Christ. There are additional gifts mentioned in [1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30](#); [Rom 12:6-8](#); and [1 Pet 4:11](#). Some of the gifts mentioned were specific to the church at the time they were in place. For example, the apostles were specifically appointed by Christ to build a foundation for the early church. Valley Bible Church holds the view that prophecy and tongues are no longer in use (see VBC Position Papers on tongues, 2001). What we will focus on here is that each one of God's elect has been given a gift or gifts for equipping the church.

What can we do if we do not know what our gifts are?

First, since it is clear that Christ is the One who bestows gifts, we need to have a relationship with Him. We must understand His grace, our sin and the penalty we owe. God is perfect in judgment and love. Christ paid the debt we owe when he was crucified. He conquered sins hold on us when He arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. If we have placed our faith and trust in these truths alone, we are His child and take part in His blessings. His blessings include special gifts to be used for His church.

Second, we can look at what the Bible says about gifts and the purpose of them. There are many examples in the Bible of how God uses His children.

Third, evaluate what things you are good at (realistically). Ask yourself what kinds of things you enjoy and how that can be used to benefit the body of Christ. Ask other Christians where they see your strengths.

Fourth, PRAY! Because God wants you to use your gifts for Him, trust that He will guide you to areas within the church body where you can serve. Be willing to say yes to whatever opportunities are presented. You may be surprised where God places you.

Something also important to mention here is that while it is evident that some individuals may have strengths in certain areas, this does not exclude our responsibility to evangelize, teach, encourage, etc. In other words, we may not be placed in a forum where we are running a crusade for thousands but we do need to share the gospel with those that God puts in our path. We may not be standing in a pulpit preaching a sermon but we are commanded to make disciples. We may not be a pastor shepherding an entire church body but we are to care for one another. We may not be teaching a Sunday school class but each of us needs to be able to explain the hope we have to those we come in contact with – our family, children, neighbors, co-workers, etc.

If we look back on the sections of scripture that list special gifts given to believers, the same purpose for all gifts is clear.

1 Cor 12:7 *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

Ro 12:13 *contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

1Pe 4:10 *As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Eph 4:12 *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

According to the verse above, why has Christ given each of His follower's special gifts?

- for the equipping of the saints

“for” is a preposition that denotes direction. In this case, it would mean with a view towards. You could ask, ‘what is the goal’?

In the KJV, equipping is translated “perfecting” <katartismos> meaning complete furnishing.

What appliances do you have in your kitchen? Would your stove be very useful if you had no pot or pan?

We live in an area where aerospace is a major industry. Do some of you remember the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in 1986? Out of all the billions of components that were put together to accomplish earlier successful launches, it took only one simple part to not perform its intended purpose for a weakness to occur. This led to disaster.

Each person and each gift represented in Christ’s church is purposed for the church to be complete. The church is in the process of being completed or perfected as God calls each of His children to Himself.

To make something complete means it is whole. The definition of complete says ‘having every necessary part’. It also goes on to define the word complete as absolute – being the greatest degree of something or perfect – having all the necessary qualities or abilities for a particular role. Completing something means to finish something or bring it to an end.

What good would it be to throw a winning pass in football if it was not successfully caught?

Ephesians 5:27 speaks of the completed church with no defect, completely pure: that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

To completely furnish something means to supply or equip, to provide what is needed for a particular activity or purpose, with the appropriate tools, supplies, parts, etc. Nothing more needs to be added, nothing has been left out, and it is perfect.

How is each of us to use our gifts in the church body?

- for the work of service

For doing, for laboring as a servant. All the unique gifts that are given to each of God's children are necessary for serving the body.

What ministries are you involved in? What would it be like if you were by yourself doing everything? How effective would you be?

Think of a factory assembly line. Within one building, there are many different stations. Each is necessary to produce a completed product. One person running to each station trying to take care of every step on their own, would greatly affect the quantity and quality of the result.

- to the building up of the body of Christ

How do you build something? (you need all the right tools)

Who knows best what is needed to build up the body of the church?

The gifts we are given are to be used by Him and for Him. How do we know if we are doing this? What questions can we ask ourselves? (Who will benefit? Who is promoted?)

Eph 2:19-21 gives us an illustration of the church: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone], in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord".

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

How long are we to use our gifts to serve the body?

Notice the word all in verse 13. This means every one of us – all of God's elect. The body of Christ is in a continuing process of becoming unified and fully equipped. Paul continues to emphasize oneness: "until we all attain to the unity of the faith".

The description of a 'mature man' is contrasted in verse 14 (as opposed to children). Compare the understanding that a child has with the understanding

of an adult. An adults understanding is more complete. In what ways has your understanding of Christ and the church matured since you became a believer?

Our goal, our standard, is the fullness of Christ. We cannot attain this in our flesh but we can and should aim at becoming more and more like Christ.

Php 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained [it], or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of [it] yet; but one thing [I do]: forgetting what [lies] behind and reaching forward to what [lies] ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Application Questions
Week 6, Eph 4:11-13

Small group prayer: take 5 minutes and quietly think about the study this morning. What is God saying to you personally? What one area do you need to focus on?

We discussed one major theme today, which might help formulate your prayers. All God's children are blessed with gifts, which are to be used for serving the church.

You will have an opportunity in your small group to pray about your personal application following ACTS. Your leader will begin each section with scripture.

Adoration – "I praise You for..."

Confession – "Forgive me for..."

Thanksgiving – "Thank you for..."

Supplication – "I pray for..."

If your group is done before 12noon please use the time to quietly work on your memory verses or begin to work on the life application questions below. Visiting time begins at noon.

This week: Read Ephesians 4 and use the "Apply It" bookmark to guide you in personal application. Pray for the concerns of those in your small group. Work on memorization – Eph 4: 1-7, 12-16 – and pray for growth in the areas God has brought to your attention.

Have you committed your life to Christ? If yes, how has He changed you? If no, please take the time to sincerely consider the gift He is offering you. Will you accept it?

Carefully read Eph 4:1-6.

Are you striving to walk worthy? How? In Whose strength?

Do you care about the unity of the church or are you complacent in this area? In what specific ways are you encouraging oneness within the body of Christ?

Carefully read Eph 4:7-13

What special gifts has God blessed you with? How are they being used for Him?

Are you more concerned with building your kingdom rather than His? Where is most of your time and energy spent? Promoting self or service?