

Life Together - Part 8
Mature and Strong – Ephesians 4:12-14
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Oct. 31st, 2021

Intro

- I deeply appreciate the message we received from the word through Lee last Sunday. He is a seasoned and mature “wordworker” that rightly and skillfully handles the word of truth, holding it in high honor and communicating it with clarity and conviction to benefit our congregation in love.
- This morning, we will continue our series “life together” as we turn back to Ephesians chapter four. My aim is that we would continue to broaden and deepen our understanding and love of the church and actively engage our part in God’s plan. My hope is that you and I will be more in love with our savior and more committed to loving what He loves, which is His family, the church. That we together will see and participate in displaying the grace, wisdom, and glory of God in this place, for His name’s sake, among the nations; that our gratitude and joy will continue to grow through the presence of His Spirit working among us, building us up, binding us together, and fulfilling His purpose in and through us.
- When Christ ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to each one of His children. He also called some to be “wordworkers” in His family, the church – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers who have specific functions within the church to help us all. This morning, we are going to see what God does through His church so that you will view and value the church as much as He does, and you will have hope, strength, and encouragement to continue to persevere and make a difference in this world.

The church is the place to be equipped for service

Ephesians 4:11-12a NIV

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service,

- We see again that it is Christ who gifts and calls people into various acts of service. People can identify and affirm this call, but only Christ can give the call. If you are called to one of these “wordworking” positions in the church, you must know that you have been called by Christ to this work for the church, not to fill a need in your world or in your heart.
- The primary responsibility of wordworkers is to equip His people, the children of God, for works of service. It is like being on a coaching staff of a team. They are to prepare individual people, units of people, and the team as a whole to get them ready to be in the game for their calling and work of service. This requires attention to the whole person and the whole team, spiritual, mental, relational, physical preparation, fit and fitfulness. It is both preparing for the future and repairing from the past (healing is not an end to itself, it is a means to an end). This means setting the direction, laying out the goals, setting the tone, creating the culture, being the example, having the right people in the right places on the team and on the staff, encouraging, correcting, coaching, mediating, calling plays, etc.

- The church is where you are equipped, formed, fashioned, coached, and belong. These are the things that happen in the church, and God gives us wordworking coaches who help us to get in the game, be successful, and move the ball forward.

The church is the place to utilize your gifts

Ephesians 4:12b

so that the body of Christ may be built up

- The goal of all this coaching and equipping (which is done based in and built upon the word) is that the body of Christ may be built up, so that each individual is stronger, the unit is stronger, and the team is stronger in every way. God gives this cast of wordworking coaches to build up the body of Christ so that we can respond to the owner of the team to do what He wants us to do, so we are ready and fit to do so, and so that we can successfully fulfill the calling and vision of God for us as a body, a team, a church. Even evangelists do this by getting new people on God's team (like recruiters). They save them from sure eternal destruction and guide them to a place to heal, grow and be trained and engaged.
- When we are a part of a church, we get the reward of being on a team, the fellowship of being connected together in the trenches, and the joy of celebrating our victories both as individuals and as a team. We get to show love, help each other, and join our forces to move the ball forward and stop the other team from moving forward. We are "built-up" so that we represent the Father well and successfully accomplish His will for our team, this church. Our ultimate goal is to hear the "well done" from the Lord, and we will be able to enjoy our eternal reward of what He accomplished in us and through us. You never "age out" of a team but switch roles and at time focuses.
- The church is the place where we are brought together to use our gifts, and together we make a difference in the lives of people, for His name's sake that continues into eternity.

The church is the place to be unified in faith

Ephesians 4:13a

until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God

- One of the critical components of any team is that they are unified. For the church, it is the unity that comes through God Himself, one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, so that we all understand the faith, embody the faith, represent the faith, and are connected and built up in it. The church is the place where these things can be shaped and shared, lived out in the context of real-life with real people.
- The primary goal is that we know the Son of God, who is Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Acts 3:15, Heb 12:2), the life and light of all humankind (John 1:4), the one the entire scriptures talk about (Luke 24:27). Our goal is to know Him and becoming like Him because of our relationship with Him.

The church is the place to be strengthened to maturity

Ephesians 4:13b

and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

- If you want to know what maturity looks like, focus on Christ. He is the standard and the model of what maturity looks like. He is the model of our faith, and He is the one the Holy Spirit is shaping us to look like (Rom. 8:29). Maturity is Christlikeness—thinking, and living like Him—and this is a lifelong process.

Ephesians 4:14

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

- When we are mature, we will no longer be infants, being vulnerable to all kinds of things . . . and being “tossed back and forth by the waves” and “blown here and there by every wind of teaching.” There are plenty of platforms for teaching, from cable TV to YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, to the place down the road, to the people that you know. Always, always, always check what is being taught against what is taught in scripture—this is why I tell you to know the word of God, *know the word of God, to understand the mind of God, and capture of the heart of God, to become like the Son of God through the power of the Spirit of God.* Then you will be solid and mature, stable and strong—not blown around or blown off course or being lost at sea—which does happen to people. You will follow His will and be connected to His church.
- Not everyone who is a “pastor, or a preacher or a teacher or a prophet or a self-proclaimed apostle” teaches what is true in accordance with the Bible. Not all of them are motivated to coach you into Christ. There are cunning, crafty, and deceitful people who want to use you to fill their pockets and make their name great instead of exulting the one whose name is truly great. These are people who have loaded the dice, rigging the game so they will profit. They are the “wolf’s in sheep’s clothing.” Jesus told us to **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.”** (Matt 7:15-16 ESV) We have been warned about people like this. We are to expose them and have nothing to do with them (Matt. 7:15-20, Acts 20:29-30, Eph. 5:6-12, 2 Tim 3:1-9, 2 Tim 4:3-4).

Conclusion

- The doctrine of the church is vitally important. You are not going to be equipped for ministry, you will not build up the body of Christ, you will not be unified in faith and understanding of who Jesus is, you will not be mature, making you susceptible to being deceived and blown about by the winds of doctrine if you are not participating in the local church, the body of Christ, the place where you are to know and be known.
- You can’t say you are in the game when you are not on a team. The church needs a “u” and “u” need the church. Get connected. It is fine if you are online if there are medical concerns, or physical limitations, transportation issues, etc. but get connected, be physically connected, not just virtually, or theologically or financially. Do everything you can do to show up and be a part.
- Time of Prayer