

God's People Part 2: How We Act
Team Players
Ephesians 4:11-16

Introduction: In Ephesians 3:14-21, we studied a Holy Spirit-inspired prayer by Paul for the believers in Ephesus, which allowed us to see the potential every child of God has been made to be. Paul prayed,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

At the very core of accessing our potential as God's children is the necessity of being rooted and grounded in love (vs. 17). However, that love is not love by any definition we please, but specifically the kind of love that God says He is. It is a selfless and holy love that is as moral, ethical, and just as it is forgiving, merciful, and gracious. It is not a balance to holiness, but rather one and the same as holiness. Without love, there is no holiness, as without holiness, there is no love.

Therefore, to be rooted and grounded in this love, God's love, we must be rooted and grounded in Christ, who is the ultimate testimony of God's love for us! It is only in an abiding relationship with Christ that we truly experience the transforming power of His love, which leads us to increasingly love as He loves because we are increasingly made holy as He is holy.

Now, if you stopped reading Ephesians at that point, you might think Paul's prayer was solely in the context of the individual reading it, in that the thing he is praying to happen is entirely dependent on the individual. However, if you made that conclusion, you would be WRONG!

The central theme of the book of Ephesians is that we are God's people, not simply as individuals who have been rescued out of the curse of sin and into an eternally favored relationship with God, but that we have been saved into a FAMILY that belongs to God. The context of the book of Ephesians is the whole into which all the parts have been redeemed. There is certainly tremendously important information in this letter about us as individuals, but the point in telling us who we are as individuals is so that we will rightly understand who we are in the whole, the Church, the Body of Christ, God's people, the family!! The point is the whole!

This is an increasingly difficult thing for Western culture to grasp: that a person's value and identity as an individual are not at odds with the value and identity of the team, organization, or family they are a part of. As a matter of fact, for love to be love, both must be one and the same. By definition, for love to be the measuring stick, any loss of one is a loss of both.

Therefore, when Paul is praying for the individual believers in Ephesus to be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ so that they can be filled with the fullness of God, he's not saying that in the context of a bunch of individuals gathered together to hear what Paul wants for them as individuals, but rather as a family of individuals, who are necessarily linked together in a way that the health of the individual is affected by the whole and the whole is affected by the individual. The whole can only grow in love when the individual parts grow in His love, but the individual parts can only grow in love as the whole collectively grows in His love.

We can proclaim our independence from the family of God all we want, but the reality is that if we are in Christ, we can no more function independently of the family than a hand can function independently of the body. Likewise, the body can be no healthier than the collective health of its individual parts, meaning the health of the whole is determined by each part being healthy and functioning as it was designed to. A body with a diseased finger is a body whose overall health is affected; a body with a missing hand is a body that can't do what it was designed to do.

Listen to how Paul applies this truth directly to the church. In Ephesians 4:11-16, we read,

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Proposition: Ephesians 4:11-16 gives us three truths about the inseparable nature of individual believers from the whole of the Church.

The first truth about the inseparable nature of believers from the whole of the Church is that,

- (1) Church leaders are meant to EQUIP individuals for the success of the whole. (4:11-12)**

A. 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

B. Let me start off by quickly addressing the different positions mentioned in verse 11.

1. Some believe Paul is speaking of 5 positions, and others 4. Over the years, I've gone back and forth between the arguments, but I believe I have securely landed on there being 4. The best interpretation of the Greek text truly appears to be that shepherds and teachers are one and the same. The lack of the definite article in association with the Greek word translated as "teachers" can't be missed. However, this clearly isn't something to get energetic about defending! As you will see in a minute, the point of the verse isn't the positions themselves anyway!
2. Two of the positions Paul mentions have been at the center of a ton of debate over how they should be understood and treated in the church. I'm not going to explain the debate, but you will see where I stand in a second. In short, the work of the apostles and the prophets that Paul speaks of in verse eleven is authoritatively, officially, and completely codified in the New Testament and thus remains alive and well in the church as long as God's Word is taught.
3. It's my opinion that Paul lists these in order of descending scope. The apostles not only did the unique work of an apostle but also the work of the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. The prophets did NOT do the work of apostles, but in addition to doing the unique work of the prophet, they also did the work of the evangelists, and the shepherds, and teachers. The evangelists did NOT do the work of the apostles or the prophets, but in addition to their unique work, they also did the work of the shepherds and teachers. Finally, the shepherds and teachers were NOT responsible for the unique work of the evangelists, the prophets, or the apostles, but only for their own.
4. So, with that, let me quickly explain the work of each, starting with the one with the smallest scope and working up to the one with the biggest.

a. The Pastors and Teachers

- 1) This position is also identified in the New Testament as an overseer, elder, and bishop. Its scope of leadership is a local church.
- 2) As a shepherd does with sheep, the shepherd of a local church manages the local flock for the owner of the flock, which, in the case of the church, is Jesus! The purpose of a shepherd of sheep is to

ensure the sheep are together where they are supposed to be, eating and drinking what they need to be healthy, protected from the things that seek to destroy them, nursed to health when wounded or sick, found when they wander off, and finally, that all get to where they're supposed to be, while doing what they are supposed to be doing, and in the condition the owner of the sheep expects them to be in when they get there.

- 3) "*Pastors and teachers*, therefore, must be taken as a two-fold designation of the same officers, who were at once the guides and instructors of the people."¹
- 4) "The titles "elders" (*presbuteroi*), "bishops" (*episkopoi*), and "pastors" (*poimenas*) all refer to one function and later office (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; and Titus 1:5-7). The term "elder" had an OT background, while the term "bishop" or "overseer" had a Greek city-state background. The Greek syntax (one CONJUNCTION [*de*] and one ARTICLE [*tous*]) links these two titles together as one function, one gifted person who proclaims and explains the gospel to a local situation."²

b. Evangelists

- 1) The evangelist's job is to ensure the spread of the Gospel to places it has not reached. They are what we call missionaries in the modern church. They do the work of the pastor and teacher long enough to get a local church standing up and moving forward, but then move on to the next place that has never heard the Gospel. Notice that the work of the evangelist is not to preach on a street corner and leave, but to lead people to Jesus, where the local church has no influence, and create a local church where none existed. Remember that the entire context of this passage is the equipping of a local church!
- 2) "They were properly missionaries sent to preach the Gospel where it had not been previously known."³
- 3) "They corresponded to what we would call missionaries. Paul writes to Timothy: 'Do the work of an evangelist' (2 Timothy 4:5). They were the bringers of the good news. They did not have the prestige and authority of the apostles who had seen the Lord; they did not have the influence of the Spirit-inspired prophets; they were the

¹ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (p. 227). Robert Carter and Brothers.

² Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#); Vol. Volume 8 (p. 111). Bible Lessons International.

³ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (p. 225). Robert Carter and Brothers.

ordinary missionaries of the Church who took the good news to a world which had never heard it.”⁴

c. Prophets

- 1) The prophet ensured the right understanding and application of what is true. They were inspired truth-tellers with the ability not simply to proclaim truth but to speak it with divine relevance, whether in edification or rebuke. They were not foretellers, but truth-tellers, that God sometimes used to proclaim the truth about the future, but always to proclaim the truth in the relevant context of how it needed to be applied to particular situations. For instance, one of the most prominent roles of the Old Testament prophets was to preach the truth that the Hebrew people had rejected in their sin, calling them to repentance and announcing God’s impending punishments if they didn’t repent. Most importantly, the Old Testament prophets proclaimed the truth about what God was going to do in and through His people to save and redeem His people from the curse of sin and the reign of Satan—Jesus! The New Testament prophets then authoritatively clarified and applied that Gospel as the Apostles officially taught it.
- 2) “*Prophets*, again in the restricted sense (for in a broader sense every believer is a prophet), are *the occasional organs of inspiration*, for example, Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11). Together with the apostles they are described as being “the church’s foundation.” See also on 2:20 and 3:5; and see Acts 13:1; 15:32; and 21:9.”⁵
- 3) “A prophet is one who speaks for another, a spokesman, as Aaron was the prophet of Moses. Those whom God made his organs in speaking to men were prophets, whether their communications were doctrinal, preceptive, or prophetic in the restricted sense of the term. Everyone who spoke by inspiration, was a prophet. The prophets of the New Testament differed from the apostles, in that their inspiration was occasional, and therefore their authority as teachers subordinate. The nature of their office is fully taught in 1 Cor. 14:1–40. As the gift of infallibility was essential to the apostolic office, so the gift of occasional inspiration was essential to the prophetic office. It is inconceivable that God should invest any set of men with the authority claimed and exercised by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, requiring all men to believe their

⁴ Barclay, W. (2002). [*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*](#) (p. 169). Westminster John Knox Press.

⁵ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of Ephesians*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 196). Baker Book House.

doctrines and submit to their authority, on the pain of perdition, without giving the inward gifts qualifying them for their work.”⁶

d. Apostles

- 1) The Apostle was the highest position of authority in the church's first generation. They were the official witnesses of the resurrection of Christ in that they not only had to be able to give an official eyewitness account of Him being alive, but they were also selected by Christ and acknowledged by the church to be Christ's official voice on all matters. They spoke for Christ because He commissioned them to do so. As such, their job was to officially and authoritatively declare what Jesus taught and, in so doing, distinguish it from all that He did not teach. In doing this, they also did the work of the prophet, the evangelist, and the pastor/teachers. For instance, a basic reading of the New Testament clearly reveals how God fulfilled all four of these roles in the ministries of Paul, Peter, and the other Apostles.
- 2) “No man, therefore, could be an apostle unless—1. He was immediately appointed by Christ. 2. Unless he had seen him after his resurrection and had received the knowledge of the Gospel by immediate revelation. 3. Unless he was rendered infallible by the gift of inspiration. These things constituted the office and were essential to its authority. Those who without these gifts and qualifications claimed the office, are called ‘false apostles.’”⁷
- 3) “The *apostles* were those whose authority ran throughout the whole Church. The apostles included more than the Twelve. Barnabas was an apostle (Acts 14:4, 14). James, the brother of our Lord, was an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). Silvanus was an apostle (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Andronicus and Junias were apostles (Romans 16:7). For an apostle, there were two great qualifications. First, an apostle must have seen Jesus. When Paul is claiming his own rights, faced by the opposition of Corinth, he demands: ‘Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?’ (1 Corinthians 9:1). Second, an apostle had to be a witness of the resurrection and of the risen Lord. When the eleven met to elect a successor to Judas the traitor, the one chosen had to be someone who had been with them throughout the earthly life of Jesus and had been a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21–2). In a sense, the apostles were bound to die out, because before very long those who had actually seen Jesus

⁶ Hodge, C. (1858). [A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians](#) (pp. 223–224). Robert Carter and Brothers.

⁷ Hodge, C. (1858). [A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians](#) (pp. 222–223). Robert Carter and Brothers.

and who had actually witnessed the resurrection would pass from this world.”⁸

- C. Now that the positions are explained, it needs to be clearly understood that the purpose of this passage is not to tell us about those positions! I only did that to give context. The point is not the unique job of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers, but rather their commonality. The unified goal in each of these jobs is **“to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”**

Note: “The term “equip” means to cause something to be ready for its assigned purpose. It is used of (1) broken limbs being healed and made useful again; (2) fishing nets being mended and thereby able to catch fish; (3) ships being fitted with ropes and sails and tacked for sea; and (4) chickens who had grown large enough to be taken to market. Also, notice the goal is not that only some mature, but all (cf. v. 13).”⁹

- D. All too often, the positions of **“the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers”** are considered to be the ones to do the work of the ministry, but the purpose of these positions is to equip the individuals in the body to do the work! **The work of the ministry** is to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), which means to lead people to know and follow Christ, and as such to abide in Him so that they prosper in God’s life and bear the fruit that is only produced by His life being alive within us (John 15, Galatians 5)! What I’m doing in preaching His Word and leading Venture is certainly an essential part of the process of God unlocking His life within others, but not as an end, rather as a means!
- E. It cannot be overemphasized that the direct impact of the work of each of these positions in verse 11 is vitally important not for the direct impact of building up the body of Christ but for the equipping of each individual in the body of Christ for building up the body of Christ. Part of that equipping is the leadership and teaching of the pastors in the body of Christ to inform and ground people in God’s Word, as well as to inspire them on the worthiness of living fully surrendered lives. Still, it’s not the end of the work, rather a fueling of the work! The leaders in Ephesians 4 have an impact on large numbers of people, not as an end in themselves, but as a means of supplying something greater and more impactful than they could ever achieve on their own.
- F. Preachers do not accomplish the mission of Christ; it’s accomplished by His Church, specifically local churches, who faithfully participate in His mission as His Church! For instance, generals and colonels don’t win battles; the soldiers

⁸ Barclay, W. (2002). *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (pp. 167–168). Westminster John Knox Press.

⁹ Utley, R. J. (1997). *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians): Vol. Volume 8* (p. 112). Bible Lessons International.

do, but the soldiers' ability to win is linked to how well the generals and colonels trained, equipped, outfitted, strategized, and mobilized them for battle. Likewise, in athletics, team owners and coaches don't win games; they equip athletes to do that. However, without team owners and coaches who supply the athletes with what they need to win, including training, strategy, mobilization, and equipment, the athletes can't win. No coach has ever won a championship, but no team has ever won one without a coach who equipped them to win it. This is how God made the universe to work, and the church is no different.

- G. Therefore, and again, this can't be overemphasized, the success of a local church is not entailed in the leaders who lead it, but by the local church that's being led. However, in saying that, neither the role of the leaders of the local church nor that of the individuals in the local church can be diluted; both are equally essential, so much so that a failure of one is a failure of both. More importantly, neither role is successful in and of itself, because the measure of success is not in the performance of the individual, but in the performance of the whole—**“for building up the body of Christ.”**
- H. There is no such thing as a successful coach whose team doesn't win, and there is no such thing as a winning team whose coach isn't considered successful! Therefore, for me and what God has called me to do, success is not measured by me preaching a sermon that's heard by millions, but whether or not my preaching and leadership is equipping the local body of believers known as Venture to be able to do the work of the ministry in a way that builds up the body of Christ in a way that Christ considers it to be built up.
- I. The leaders of the church are not there for the rest of the people in the church to watch and cheer them on as they do the work of the ministry, but to equip all individuals within the church to do the work of the ministry together, which grows the body both numerically (bringing in new followers of Jesus) and in its health (more on that in just a second!). This is why R.C. Sproul wrote,
- J. **“The most effective churches that I know are churches where the ministerial staff devote many hours in training and mobilizing their congregations to be mighty armies of saints, as they minister to a dying world.”**¹⁰

The second truth about the inseparable nature of believers from the whole of the Church is that,

- (2) **The individual work of every believer is intended to impact the SPIRITUAL health and maturity of the whole. (4:13-14)**

¹⁰ Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (p. 103). Christian Focus Publications.

- A. 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**
- B.** Let's take a quick look at some of the details in each of those verses.
- C. 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,**
- 1. "Until we all attain"**
 - a. "The *all* here mentioned is not all men, but all the people of Christ."¹¹
 - b. "This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE which denotes an aspect of contingency. It literally means "to arrive at a destination." Note that "all" speaks of our corporate responsibility. Notice the three aspects of maturity mentioned: (1) unity of the faith, (2) knowledge of the Son of God; unto a (3) Christlike maturity. Also, notice the goal is not that some mature, but all!"¹²
 - c. Paul is spelling out what each individual in the church is laboring to accomplish with the rest of the local church. It clearly won't be finished until Christ returns, but it's nonetheless the things we are trying to progress everyone in the church towards! The first one is,
 - 2. "to the unity of the faith"**
 - a. "Unity" is actually the accusative case, and "faith" is genitive, meaning what we are trying to attain is "the unity" that belongs to "the faith," not simply in having faith but very specifically in "the" faith.
 - b. So first off, understand that no matter how it's used, "faith" is not belief that facts are true, but submission to something or someone because you believe the facts about that something or someone are true. "The Faith" that the Bible speaks of is then the full submission to Christ as our Lord and Savior because we believe the facts about who He is, what He did, and will do (Romans 10:9-10)!

¹¹ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (p. 230). Robert Carter and Brothers.

¹² Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#): Vol. Volume 8 (p. 112). Bible Lessons International.

- c. We are therefore striving to help each other live in full glad submission to the Jesus of the Bible, and as such, living as He told us to live. He makes this abundantly clear in the next phrase!

3. “and of the knowledge of the Son of God”

- a. “... he adds to this unity of faith, ‘and of the knowledge of the Son of God’; true and full unity of faith is then found, when all thoroughly know Christ, the object of faith, alike, and that in His highest dignity as the Son of God.”¹³
- b. “The word “knowledge” is *epignōsis* (ἐπιγνωσις), “full knowledge, precise and correct knowledge.”¹⁴
- c. **“the knowledge’** This is the compound Greek term (*epiginōskō*), which implies a full experiential knowledge. This was an obvious rejection of the gnostic false teachers’ emphasis on secret, exclusive knowledge. The believers’ knowledge is complete in Christ. This may be a play on the Hebrew concept of “know” as personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5; Phil. 3:8, 10) versus the Greek concept known as cognitive information. Both are needed for a mature Christianity.”¹⁵
- d. “The Son of God is the object both of the faith and of the knowledge here spoken of. Many commentators understand knowledge and faith as equivalent, and therefore make the latter member of the clause explanatory of the former: ‘to the unity of the faith, that is, to the knowledge of the Son of God.’ But this overlooks the καὶ [(and)]. The apostle says, “faith *and* knowledge.” Thus distinguishing the one from the other. And they are in fact different, however intimately related, and however often the one term may be used for the other. Faith is a form of knowledge, and therefore may be expressed by that word. But knowledge is not a form of faith, and therefore cannot be expressed by it. Knowledge is an element of faith; but faith, in its distinctive sense, is not an element of knowledge.”¹⁶
- e. So we are all supposed to be helping each other live in full glad submission to Jesus. But it is only true submission if we are also helping each other rightly understand who Jesus actually is!

¹³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 4, p. 102). Eerdmans.

¹⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 4, p. 102). Eerdmans.

¹⁵ Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#): Vol. Volume 8 (p. 112). Bible Lessons International.

¹⁶ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (p. 231). Robert Carter and Brothers.

f. He then adds another word picture of what we are trying to do.

4. “to mature manhood”

- a. “This is in contrast to 'children' of verse 14.”¹⁷
- b. Again, the effort is that the work of every person in the church is to help everybody in the church grow up as a child of God, and to illustrate this, he uses not just the word “manhood” but “mature manhood.” This gives the image of being spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and relationally mature as a man. A mature man is emotionally intelligent enough to make wise decisions. A mature man is committed to living an ethical and moral life. A mature man takes responsibility. A mature man puts the interests of others in front of his own.
- c. Paul then takes this illustration of how we should influence each other until Christ returns to the ultimate level. He writes,

5. “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

- a. This is the fourth time Paul has used the word “fullness” in this letter and the third time to refer directly to the character of God.
 - b. “If the phrase 'fulness of Christ be explained according to the analogy of the phrases' fulness of God, fulness of the Godhead,' &c., it must mean the plenitude of excellence which Christ possesses or which he bestows.”¹⁸
 - c. “The aim of the Church is that its members should reach a stature which can be measured by the fullness of Christ. The aim of the Church is nothing less than to produce men and women who have in them the reflection of Jesus Christ himself.”¹⁹
 - d. In short, we are to work together to help everybody in the church grow up in the moral character of God, that is, His holiness and love, and to grow up in it in a way that defines who we are, not as a performance but as a genuine testimony of our character.
6. Verse 14 then tells what will happen, or more importantly, NOT happen if we all work together to help each other continually grow and mature in this manner.

¹⁷ Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#): Vol. Volume 8 (p. 112). Bible Lessons International.

¹⁸ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (p. 234). Robert Carter and Brothers.

¹⁹ Barclay, W. (2002). [*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*](#) (p. 172). Westminster John Knox Press.

D. 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

1. “‘Tossed to and fro’ is *kludōnizō* (κλυδωνίζω), a nautical term meaning, ‘to be tossed by the waves,’ metaphorically, ‘to be agitated mentally,’ like the waves. ‘Carried about’ is *peripherō* (περιφέρω), ‘to carry around.’ The verb has the idea of carrying about in circles.”²⁰
2. “This obviously refers to the false teachers, who seem to be a combination of Greek philosophers and Jewish legalists. This phrase refers both to human deception (the false teachers) and angelic deception (craftiness in deceitful scheming). Behind these false teachers lay the activity of the fallen angelic levels (cf. 6:10–12; 1 Cor. 10:20; Dan. 10). God’s people are tricked, manipulated and deceived because they have not matured in Christ. There is a spiritual battle even after conversion. The goal of the Christian is not just heaven when they die but Christlikeness and ministry now (cf. v. 15; Rom. 8:28–30; Gal. 4:19)!”²¹
3. “The characteristic of children here presented is their instability and their liability to be deceived and led astray. The former is expressed by comparing them to a ship without a rudder, tossed to and fro by the waves, and driven about by every wind ... or to two unstable things, a restless wave, and something driven by the wind. In the use of much the same figure the apostle in Heb. 13:9 exhorts believers not “to be carried away with diverse and strange doctrines.” And the apostle James compares the unstable to “a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,” 1:6. One of the principal elements of the perfection spoken of in v. 13, is stability in the truth; and, therefore, the state of imperfection as contrasted with it is described as one of instability and liability to be driven about by every wind of doctrine.”²²
4. “... In this passage the apostle attributes departure from the truth to the cunning and deceit which are characteristic of error, or of false teachers. In Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Cor. 2:17; 11:13; Gal. 2:4; Col. 2:8, 18, the same character is given of those who seduce men from the faith. Error, therefore, can never be harmless, nor false teachers innocent. Two considerations however should secure moderation and meekness in applying these principles. The one is, that though error implies sin, orthodoxy does not always imply holiness. It is possible ‘to hold the truth in unrighteousness;’ to have speculative faith without love. The character most offensive to God and man is that of a

²⁰ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 4, p. 103). Eerdmans.

²¹ Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#); Vol. Volume 8 (p. 112). Bible Lessons International.

²² Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (pp. 236–237). Robert Carter and Brothers.

malignant zealot for the truth. The other consideration is, that men are often much better than their creed. That is, the doctrines on which they live are much nearer the truth, than those which they profess. They deceive themselves by attaching wrong meaning to words, and seem to reject truth when in fact they only reject their own misconceptions. It is a common remark that men's prayers are more orthodox than their creeds."²³

- E. Now, left to the first two truths, one might think that Paul is recommending the optimal way for the church to be healthy and mature, but the final truth shows us that it's not the optimal way for us to properly be the body of Christ; it's the only way! The Body of Christ can't be and do what it's supposed to do unless every individual part is doing what it was designed to do in the body. Specifically,

The third truth about the inseparable nature of believers from the whole of the Church is that,

(3) The success of the whole is inseparably linked to the success of EVERY individual in the whole. (4:15-16)

- A. **15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**
- B. Verse 15 shows us that once again, the right knowledge about who God is and what He has done, is doing, and will do in and through Christ is at the center of the work we are to do with one another. We are all meant to speak truth to one another, and that includes confronting one another about areas the truth confronts. All of this is to be done in the sphere of love, meaning there is never to be an intention of speaking truth for a purpose other than the purpose of love—to see a person grow up and prosper in a relationship with Christ, His life, and with all who are in Christ! It's all about everyone growing up into mature manhood in Christ; into the fullness of Christ, which only happens as we live in an abiding, fully submitted relationship with Christ.
- C. Now, verse 16 is where we see things get real! There is a growing belief that a person can have a mature relationship with Christ without being part of a local church, and consequently that the local church can be a healthy, growing family without them being a healthy, committed part of it. Paul makes it very clear that the body builds itself up in love, **“when each part is working properly.”**
- D. Working properly is doing what we are actually gifted at and doing it with excellence, in our motivation (out of our love of God and others and not for

²³ Hodge, C. (1858). [*A commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*](#) (pp. 238–239). Robert Carter and Brothers.

ourselves), our purpose (laser-focused on that which builds the body of Christ), and our performance (doing what we do with excellence)!

- E. Furthermore, if you can't do it with increasing excellence, you probably aren't gifted to do it! If you keep doing something that you can't grow in the excellence in which you do it, then you are very likely NOT doing it out of your love of God and others, but rather out of your love for what you're doing/getting from what you're doing.
- F. In addition, if you're doing something you're not gifted to do, then the body isn't benefiting from what you are gifted to do. If a foot insists on spending its time trying to be a hand, it will find ways to do the things a hand can do, but never as well as the hand can do it. Additionally, it will not only get in the way of the hands that are actually made to do that work with excellence, but it will also rob the body of the help it would provide if it had instead been focused on doing the work of the foot with excellence!
- G. Now let's be clear, this doesn't mean that I never do things that aren't in my primary gifting or abilities, it just means the goal is to get everybody in a situation where they can do the things that they are most gifted at doing to directly impact the spiritual health of the body and our ability to lead those far from God to repent and believe in Jesus and be a part of the body!
- H. "As *head* Christ causes his *body, the church, to live and to grow* (cf. Col. 2:19). He is its *Organic Head*. As head he also exercises authority over the church; in fact, over all things in the interest of the church (Eph. 1:20–23). He is its *Ruling Head*. It is doubtful whether either of these two ideas is ever completely absent when Christ is called head of the church, though sometimes one connotation and then again the other receives the greater emphasis, as the context indicates."²⁴
- I. "We have heard it said many times, 'Brother, I want to speak the truth in love to you.' It is important that when we are engaged in admonition or exhortation or confrontation with a brother who is overcome in sin, we call attention to the truth in an extraordinarily compassionate and tender and loving spirit. Unfortunately, the people who most often preface comments by saying, 'Brother, I want to speak the truth in love,' are the ones who are the most insensitive and the most injurious in violating other people by acid and destructive criticism. But when we speak the truth in love, **we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ** (verse 15). To grow up into Christ, no longer to be children or adolescents in our faith but to grow up into all aspects of Christ, that is the goal."²⁵

²⁴ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Ephesians* (Vol. 7, p. 203). Baker Book House.

²⁵ Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (p. 107). Christian Focus Publications.

- J. “Paul uses the analogy of a human head and a human body to illustrate the relation of the Lord Jesus as the Head to His Body, the Church, each saint being a member of that body. He, as the Head, is the source of growth and well-being for each member. “Fityly joined together” is in the Greek text a present participle. This process is still going on. ... The Greek here is “through the intermediate agency of every joint of supply.” That is, the joints of supply are the bonds that bind the members of the Body together, and are the channels through which the source of supply of life from the Head, Jesus Christ, is brought to the various members, this divine energy joining closely together the members and causing them to grow into an organic union.”²⁶
- K. This by no means implies that everybody does the same work within the ministry, but it absolutely means that everybody does work that impacts the spiritual maturity and health of others in the body!

Now, to wrap this up, I want to focus on one aspect of the illustration Paul used. Not every part of the body is directly connected to every other part of the body. Yes, my foot is part of the same body as my hand, but my foot is connected to my leg, and my hand is connected to my arm. My point in saying that is, no matter how big or small the local church is you are a part of, you can't be directly connected to everybody, as a matter of fact, it would be a very deformed body if every part was equally connected to every other part! The body would be a big, smashed-up ball that couldn't accomplish anything! But if you're not connected to “somebodies,” then you aren't connected to the body at all! Every part of the body is connected to some other part of the body, or it ain't a part of the body! So!!

Let me challenge you with three questions:

Challenge:

- (1) Who are the people you're connected to in the church that you are allowing to connect with you?**
- (2) In that connection, is there an intentional effort to influence them and be influenced by them to mature in Christ?**
- (3) In that connection, are you helping Venture fulfill Christ's mission?**

At Venture, we keep our approach to ministry pretty simple. We basically do two things.

- (1) Worship gatherings that feed the soul! We work hard for these gatherings to clearly, relevantly, and passionately teach the Bible and the Gospel it's about, as well as to inspire people to live fully surrendered to Jesus.

²⁶ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 4, pp. 104–105). Eerdmans.

Note: We currently offer five different opportunities on Sunday AM to be a part of a worship gathering, and it's also available online for those who can't be here in person. In addition, we provide age-specific gatherings on Sunday mornings for elementary-age kids and preschoolers. Finally, on Wed nights, we have an age-specific gathering for high school and middle school students.

- (2) Groups where people can connect with each other, help each other abide in Christ to be fruit-bearing Christians, and serve together with their gifts in the mission of Christ. From children to adults, we are trying to get everybody connected to “somebodies” that they put their talents to work with in the Body as they grow up in Christ together!