

Let’s suppose we were going to build a new house. And let’s suppose we were all skilled carpenters who had the necessary training and tools to build a house. And suppose we all showed up on Monday morning to build that house, and we all began building...

But suppose one person wanted the house to be a ranch style home. Another preferred a two story farmhouse appearance. Another liked the log cabin approach. Still another the A-frame look.

So we all sawed and hammered away, each constructing the house the way we pictured it in our minds. What would happen? The building project would be a fiasco. Even though we were all experts at carpentry work, and even though we had all the time and resources necessary to accomplish the task, the venture would not succeed.

What’s missing? If you’re going to build something, you need a plan, a blueprint, and if many people are going to participate in that building project you must make sure everybody is using the same blueprint.

And so it is with the church of Jesus Christ. The church is a building project and this morning we’re going to take a close look at the blueprint the Master Architect drafted for His church nearly two thousand years ago.

Later this morning I’ll be sharing with you about a new ministry strategy. I want you to know *there’s a place for you at WBC!* We want you to be involved in the building project.

Many of you are already involved in the building project, and I hope many others will join the building team today. But lest the project become a disorganized fiasco, as in my opening illustration, we’re going to take a careful look at God’s blueprint today—it’s found in Ephesians 4.

Before looking at the blueprint, I want to remind you of the foundation we’ve put in place in our last three studies. Let’s keep in mind some basics we’ve learned from God’s Word.

I. The Foundation: Keep in mind the basics...

We’ve learned three basics thus far...

A. The church is special.

How special? It exists because God sent His Son into the world who gave His life to bring it into existence. Jesus made this promise...

Matthew 16:18 “...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

So many today have a low view of the church. “I’ve got Jesus. I’ve got my Bible. I’ve got Christian radio and television. Do I really need the church?” is the unspoken mentality. Compare that thinking to the way Paul viewed the church...

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:25-26 "...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word..."

Paul gave his life in service to the church. What motivated him? Let that sink in. *Christ loved His church.* He gave His very life for the church. How can we treat as peripheral what was (and is) on the heart of our Savior?

"Okay," you say, "I can see that I ought to view the church as special. But what does that mean in practical terms?"

B. A healthy church is made up of followers of Christ who are committed to three corporate responsibilities.

To put it another way, there are three activities that should be a priority in our weekly schedules if we truly value the church as God intends...

⇒ *Worship: We must faithfully participate in the church's worship services on Sunday.*

The Lord commands followers of Christ to make worship a priority in their lives, both individually on a daily basis (Mark 1:35; Psalm 5:3) and corporately on the Lord's Day (Heb 10:25).

Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

⇒ *Fellowship/Accountability: We must faithfully participate in a small group in the church where meaningful fellowship occurs and where we are missed when absent.*

Beloved, we are part of a Body, Christ's Body. As such, we need our brothers and sisters and they need us (Rom 12:3ff). The Lord commands us to develop the kind of relationships where we are encouraging one another to live for Christ (Heb 10:24) and restoring one another when the need arises (Gal 6:1).

Romans 12:3-6 "...Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others...**"

Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider how we may **spur one another on** toward love and good deeds."

⇒ *Service: We should use our God-given spiritual gifts for the edification of the Body by participating in a primary ministry in the church.*

It's a fact. We must be saved in order to serve, and if we are saved it's so we can serve (Eph 2:10).

This, too, is a fact. The Lord has given us different spiritual gifts and we should serve based on how He has gifted us (1 Peter 4:10-11).

1 Peter 4:10 "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms..."

Spiritual gifts are like tools. A hammer is a great tool. It works well when you drive nails with it. It's terrible for cutting a board—that's what a saw is for. God has given each of us exactly what we need to do the kind of ministries He intends for us.

C. The church exists for the glory of God.

This church isn't mine, although I belong to it and am responsible to serve in it. It's not yours either. It belongs to the One who created it and gave His life to establish it. Never forget that. At the end of this message I will be challenging you to take ownership for your church. But remember, it's His church and the ministries we do are all about HIM.

1 Peter 4:11 "...If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. **To him be the glory** and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Romans 11:36 "For from him and through him and to him are all things. **To him be the glory forever!** Amen."

Now that the foundation is in place, it's time to inspect our God-given blueprint...

II. The Master Plan for Ministry: Ephesians 4:7-13

The apostle Paul wrote the letter we call Ephesians while in prison in Rome. The year was about A.D. 60. The city of Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor. The church there was likewise very instrumental. Paul had spent three years there and established an evangelistic base so effective that everyone in Asia Minor heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).

As we inspect this blueprint we find the answer to two key questions. We'll survey the entire epistle to answer the first question, and zero in on Ephesians 4:7-13 to address the other.

A. Who can be a minister?

To put it another way, who can serve in God's church? According to Ephesians, you must meet three criteria. To be used by God you must...

1. You must be in Christ (1:3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, etc).

One of the key phrases in the book is “in Christ.” Over and over you see it in chapters 1-3 (some 25 uses of the phrase): “in Christ,” “with Christ,” “in Him,” and “with Him.” For instance...

Ephesians 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ.**”

Sometimes people say, “I can’t serve in the church. I don’t have what it takes.” Note this guarantee. If you are in Christ God has blessed you with *every spiritual blessing*. You have every spiritual resource you’ll ever need to do what God asks of you. It’s in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4 “For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Ephesians 1:7 “**In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace...”

So if you desire to be a minister in God’s church, for that matter, if you want to be right with God period, you must be *in Christ*. Here’s a second criteria, one that’s often overlooked. To be used by God as God intends...

2. *You must be in the church (1:22; 3:10, 21).*

In Paul’s theology, the church wasn’t some afterthought. It was the climax of God’s redemptive plan, the fulfillment of His eternal plan and the highmark of His work through the ages.

Ephesians 1:22 “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything **for the church...**”

Ephesians 3:10 “His intent was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...”

Ephesians 3:21 “...to him be glory **in the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Camp on that final reference for a moment. Where is it that God receives glory? *In the church*. Where is it that God intends to exalt His Son in this age? *In the church*. Thus, when it comes to ministry the church is God’s playing field. If you want to be in the game, you must be *in the church*.

I won’t take time to review our previous studies, but I will emphasize the conclusion. If a person is committed to Christ, he must demonstrate that commitment by being committed to the local church. How can we say we love Christ and not love His Body, which is the church?

Don't just attend church. Be *in the church*. For some, that means you need to take the necessary steps to join a local church (and we'll be offering our next New Members class starting June 19). Perhaps you are a member of this church, but being *in the church* means you need to be *in it*. You need to make worship, fellowship, and service a priority in your weekly schedule.

To be a minister, you must be in Christ, then in the church.

3. *You must be living a life worthy of your calling (4:1).*

In chapters 1-3 Paul talks about our position (as those who are *in Christ* and *in the church*). A shift occurs in 4:1...

Ephesians 4:1 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to **live a life worthy of the calling** you have received."

What does "living a life worthy of our calling" look like? That's what Paul explains in living color in chapters 4-6. It shows up in at least four areas...

⇒In your relationships at church (4:1-16)

⇒In your personal life (4:17-5:20)

⇒In your family (5:21-6:4)

⇒In your work (6:5-9)

You see, a person can be *in Christ* and *in the church* and NOT be qualified to minister...IF he or she isn't living a holy life. What happens when a person does work for God but isn't living for God? Those who see it mutter under their breath "Hypocrites! That's what those Christians are, *hypocrites!*" don't they?

We are to live worthy of our calling. Just what is our calling? According to 1:4 God chose us to be "holy and blameless in His sight." It's to be *like Christ*.

In order to do ministry *for Christ* a person must be *like Christ*. Remember, it's all about Him.

This is key. It's not enough to say, "I want to get involved in a church ministry." Just because a man leads a successful business does not mean he can lead in the church. And just because a woman is a veteran school teacher doesn't mean she's qualified to teach in the church. God has high standards for His workers. Ephesians emphasizes that a person must be *in Christ*, and *in the church*, and *living a life worthy of their calling* before they can serve.

On the positive note, if those things are true of you, you can serve! You can partner with God in the wonderful mission of the church. There's a place for you in the ministry.

At this point you may be thinking, "Hold on. I can't be a minister because I can't stand up in front of crowds." Who said anything about getting in front of crowds? "Well, isn't that what ministers do?" Not necessarily.

Answer this. How many ministers does a church have? Sadly, many people equate the terms "pastor" and "minister." They're not synonymous. Which brings us to our second question...

B. How does ministry work?

Let's focus on our master-plan text now, Ephesians 4:7-13. It's here we discover that Christ gave two very important things to His church, both essential to ministry.

1. Christ gave grace-gifts to His church (7-10).

Ephesians 4:7-10 “But to each one of us **grace has been given** as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and **gave gifts to men.**’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”

Notice verse 7 closely, “But to each one of us **grace has been given** as Christ apportioned it.” To whom did Christ give grace? To *each of us*. What's Paul talking about? For starters...

⇒We need grace for salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...”

No one can merit God's favor. We are sinners who deserve God's judgment. We deserve hell, not heaven. But because of what Christ did, His death on the cross, His triumphant resurrection, God gives sinners what they don't deserve, the gift of eternal life. “To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God... (John 1:12).”

Yes, we need grace for salvation. But that's not what Paul's talking about in chapter 4. This is a different demonstration of God's grace available to us.

⇒We need grace for service.

Ephesians 4:7 “But to each one of us **grace has been given** as Christ apportioned it.”

Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 in verse 8, which says that Christ “led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” Psalm 68 is a song of triumph. There David praises God because he delivered His people, Israel. David probably had in mind an actual battle, perhaps one with the Philistines. God had given Israel victory. There probably was some kind of magnificent, victorious processional as the army returned from battle. They carried booty, the spoils of the battle. And these spoils, these “gifts,” were God's and would be devoted to God. The silver and gold would be placed in the temple of God.

In verses 9-10 Paul says that's what Christ did. He descended to earth on a rescue mission, defeated the great foe, and then ascended back to the

heavens. But He did something else. He “gave gifts” to His people, spiritual gifts, which would enable them to carry on His work until He returned.

Yes, grace has been given. That’s what makes service possible. Whenever Paul did minister he thought of grace...

1 Timothy 1:12-14 “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, **appointing me to his service**. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. **The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly**, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

How could a sinner ever serve the living God? It’s because of grace. Our Savior not only gave us salvation, but grace-gifts for service.

You say, “What are these grace-gifts, and how do they work?” Paul tells us in the next verses...

2. *Christ gave a blueprint to His church (11-16).*

Here’s the blueprint...

Ephesians 4:11-12 “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”

Notice the word “gave” again. Verse 7 says that Christ *gave* grace to each of us in the church. Verse 8 indicates He gave *gifts*. In verse 11 we see one package of the gifts He gave to His church, one category of spiritual gifts. In 1 Peter 4:10 we learn there are two basic categories of spiritual gifts: speaking gifts and serving gifts.

Which does Paul mention here? Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers... What do they have in common? They’re all speaking gifts. Christ gave these offices (or positions) to His church to communicate His Word.

The **apostles** were those men Christ personally selected, men who witnessed His life and saw Him after His resurrection. These men revealed, preached, and wrote down the inspired truth that became the foundation of the early church.

The **prophets** were spokesmen for God in the early church, necessary in the transition time before the NT was completed (from 30-100 AD). They too had direct revelation from God, and through the prophets God revealed to the early church specific, practical and contemporary truth for how to live.

Do these gifts exist today? Not in the strict sense in which they existed in Paul’s day. Not as those who reveal new truth. There’s no need for that. Why not? We have all the revealed truth we need in the Scriptures (2 Pet 1:3).

Christ also gave **evangelists**. What did they do? We're not sure. Some feel they took the gospel to unreached areas, evangelized, and planted new churches. Some feel they were responsible to train Christians in local churches how to evangelize (by example and by word). Perhaps both are true.

One thing is for sure. Christ wanted His church to have an outward focus, and so He gave it a special gift, *evangelists*.

Then Paul mentions **pastor and teachers**, probably referring to one gift, the idea of a teaching shepherd. The Pastor-teacher begins where the evangelist left off. His task is to feed and lead the church. He functions as a shepherd, at times protecting the flock of God from wolves.

All four speaking gifts have one thing in common, the Word of God. Christ gave them to His church to communicate the Word of God.

But there's one important difference. Whereas the apostles and prophets received their messages directly from God, not so the pastor-teacher. He receives His message from studying, meditation, and preparation.

So those are the gifts Paul mentions here, church leaders, specifically those with speaking gifts. What's their job? Simply put, in God's plan there are three steps...

- a. Step #1: Leaders equip the saints (11).
Notice the assignment again...

Ephesians 4:11-12 "... apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people...**"

The KJV says, "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry." The verb is significant...

to prepare = to equip fully, to get something ready for action

The Greek term was used of mending fishing nets and of setting broken bones. That's what a fisherman does—he sews torn nets. Why? So he can use them to catch fish. It's what a doctor does. He sets broken bones. Why? So you can use your arm again.

What's the pastor-teacher to do? He's supposed to equip the saints, to get them ready for action. What kind of action?

- b. Step #2: Saints minister (12).

Ephesians 4:12 "...to prepare God's people for works of service..."

The local church is supposed to be a training center where Christians come to get training so they can use their gifts in ministry. Please note...

****God never intended His church to be a place where the saints would come to watch the professionals perform.**

If you come to church merely to “hear a good sermon,” or “get a good feeling for the week,” the church is in trouble. I have failed you as a pastor if I fail to equip you and instead try to do your ministry for you.

Leroy Eims tells the following fictitious story. The Marines were in a battle zone next to a dense forest. They received orders from the top that the enemy was in the forest, holding hostages, and their job was to rescue them. The troops huddled around their sergeant, patted him on the back, and sent him into the forest...*alone*. And they sat down to rest. A week later he returned, worn out, battered from the battle. He shared accounts with them about hostages in the grasp of the enemy. The fighting was fierce. The need was great for backup. The next day, the sergeant headed into the forest, again alone. Seven days later he returned to the cheers of his men.

Of course, that could never happen in the Marines. But sadly, it happens all the time in churches across America.

On the other hand, what happens when leaders equip, and saints minister?

c. Step #3: The church grows (13-16).

Ephesians 4:13-16 “...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 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 men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Next week, we’ll look more carefully at this section. But for now, notice that when God’s people use their gifts properly in ministry, there are four results...

⇒The Body will be built up (12b).

Ephesians 4:12 “...so that the body of Christ **may be built up...**”

⇒There will be unity (13a).

Ephesians 4:13 “...**until we all reach unity** in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God...”

⇒There will be maturity into Christlikeness (13b).

Ephesians 4:13 “...**and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

⇒There will be growth (14-16):

Ephesians 4:14-16 “Then...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ...”

What kind of growth? Paul mentions three kinds...

- ...growth in discernment (14)
- ...growth in communication (15)
- ...growth in size (16)

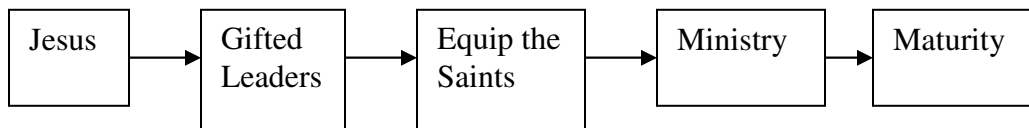
We’ll develop this more fully next time, but for now I call your attention to the final statement in our blueprint. In verse 16 we discover...

**The Key Mark of a Maturing Church: Each part does its work (16)

Ephesians 4:16 “...the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as **each part does its work.**”

A church that pleases God is a church where each part of the church is contributing to the ministry of the whole. Leaders equip. Saints minister. The church then grows.

Here’s a flowchart that says it graphically...



Notice something vital. Our ultimate goal in the church is maturity (i.e. edification), not ministry. Ministry is an intermediate goal, a means to an end. When someone says, “Hey, I’m involved in ministry. . . What more could you want?” Ask this: “Are you building up the body?”

The fact is, some church ministers tear down more than they build up. They’re involved, sure, but what they do doesn’t lead to the maturity of the body.

Now, it’s time to stop talking theory and start talking practice...

III. Putting It Into Practice at WBC: Every Member a Minister

A. Some conclusions about ministry at WBC...

I'll put five on the table...

1. Every Christian has a God-given spiritual gift.

That includes me. That includes you if you know Christ. You have a Spirit-given endowment which enables you to provide a vital ministry in your local church.

2. Every Christian should use that spiritual giftedness for the good of the church and the glory of God.

The church is a team...

“It takes ten hands to put the ball in the basket.”

–Coach John Wooden

What God gives us He expects us to use for the good of the team.

3. Every Christian is most fulfilled when serving in the area of his or her giftedness.

One of the reasons people get burned out is because they try to do ministries for which God hasn't gifted them. When I use my gift in the ministry, I'll experience joy. Sure there will be challenges and dry seasons, but even then there will be a sense of fulfillment, knowing I am doing what God intended me to do.

4. Every Christian needs accountability.

God never intended for us to serve Him isolated from His body. Remember, we are but ONE part of the body. My severed arm does me no good, but connected to my body it serves a vital purpose.

Here's another reason I need accountability...

“If we do a ministry for Christ, it ought to be done with excellence.”

God's not interested in our leftovers. He who gave His life for us is worthy of us giving our best back to Him.

That's one of the reasons why I'm encouraging every person in this church to plug into ONE primary ministry. It's not that you won't do other ministries, but do your primary ministry in such a way that people say, “Wow! You must really love Jesus to do that ministry that well!”

In fact, if one person tries to do five ministries the quality of ministry suffers somewhere. God intends for each member to minister.

There's plenty for all to do, but not too much when we're doing what the Head of the Body wants done.

5. Every ministry needs a leader.

Everything rises or falls with leadership. That's one of the reasons we have restructured our ministries at WBC. There are now 14 Ministry Teams, each with a capable, gifted leader who will be building that team. You'll be meeting them shortly in our Ministry Fair.

B. The Bottom Line: Every minister needs a ministry.

I'm not talking to the person sitting next to you. I am talking to *you*, to every person in this room. *Every* minister needs a ministry, one that they are doing in an excellent way for our excellent Savior.

But let me remind you of God's qualifications...

If you are...

...in Christ

...in the church

...living a life worthy of your calling

Then...

You can be a minister!

An Opportunity for You...

Today is "Celebrating the Church" Sunday, but it's not the climax. It's merely the day in which we break the huddle and play the game. To play the game you need to be on team. Well, here are the teams! As I introduce them I'd like each team leader to stand.

The Ministry Teams at Wheelersburg Baptist Church for 2005

Building & Grounds Team

Purpose: The purpose of the BG team is to provide excellent care (that reflects well on our excellent Savior) for the properties the Lord has provided for the church (including church facility, parsonage, van).

Children's Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the CM team is to assist parents in making disciples of children.

Personnel includes: Awana workers, SS teachers, etc.

Fellowship, Care, & Hospitality Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the FCH team is to help WBC function as a caring and loving church family.

Finance Team

Purpose: The FT is responsible to insure the financial integrity of the church

Greeting Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the GM team is to make a great first impression on visitors, to develop ways to make sure visitors return to the church (if God wills), and to help everyone who attends WBC feel welcome at our services.

Missions Team

Purpose: The purpose of the MT is to encourage every person at WBC to take ownership for our world-wide mission and to provide support and care for our missionaries.

Nursery Team

Purpose: The purpose of the NT is to provide quality care for babies and toddlers (through age 2) during our services, as well as to encourage their parents to fulfill their God-given purpose.

Outreach Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the OM team is to mobilize the church to evangelize the lost and demonstrate Christ-like compassion to those in need in our community.

Counseling /Restoration Team

Purpose: The purpose of the CR team is to provide biblical hope and help for those struggling with the problems of life.

Senior Adult Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the SAM team is to encourage senior citizens by helping them invest their golden years in service to Christ and His church.

Small Group Ministries Team: Sunday School, Discipleship, Growth Group

Purpose: The purpose of the SGM team is to make sure every person at WBC is part of a small group in the church where they are:

- a) receiving biblical instruction in a discussion-oriented setting
- b) experiencing accountability for change
- c) developing loving relationships with others in the church family

Technology Team (Computer/Sound/Video)

Purpose: The purpose of the TT is to obtain, maintain, and operate equipment that facilitates quality, Christ-honoring ministries at WBC in a technological age

Worship Team

Purpose: The purpose of the WT is to help the people of WBC participate in Christ-exalting, Scripture-based, joy-producing corporate worship services.

Youth Ministries Team

Purpose: The purpose of the YM team is to assist parents in making mature disciples of teens and young adults.

In a few moments our Ministry Fair will begin and you will have opportunity to talk with the team leaders and find out about ministry opportunities on the various teams.

The purpose of the Ministry Fair is to get information about our ministries. During the week I urge you to pray about which team God would have you serve with. Next Sunday evening will be our Ministry Team Kickoff service and you will be meeting with your team leaders and members for prayer and planning.

Note: I encourage you to visit each ministry display. You'll find a listing of the teams on the bulletin handout. At each station you will receive a sticker. Put your name on it and enter it in the drawing at lunch. There will be 10 winners of \$10 gift certificates to Praises Bookstore.

Note: We'll be taking a church family picture right after the service in front of the church, after which the Ministry Fair will begin.