

Ephesians 4:12 thru 16

Rhema Bible Study March 3, 2021

Verse 12

For the equipping of the saints. Every Christian needs to be equipped for service to Christ. The previous gifts are given for this purpose. **For the work of the ministry,** When properly equipped, they are able to devote themselves to ministering to the needs of others. In fact, every household of Christians ought to imitate the example of the house of Stephanas, who devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints (I Corinthians 16:15). A preacher is a minister of the gospel (Colossians 1:23; II Corinthians 3:6), but all Christians, not just preachers, are to devote themselves to ministering, which includes both the physical and spiritual needs of people. **For the edifying of the body of Christ.** When the gifts Christ gave to the church are doing their work, and getting Christians to do their work, then the body of Christ is going to be built up, as it grows in numbers, knowledge, piety, and good works.

Question...since it appears that the church is not growing would it be safe to assume that people are not using their gifts for the work of the ministry?

God saved and equipped you for the work of ministry, the work of service, to build up the body. To understand the church all you have to do is understand your body. It's a living organism composed of many parts working in harmony to contribute to the whole. Paul says the church is Christ's body. And the church will only grow and mature when all the parts operate in harmony and unity. If you have a "lone ranger" personality you will be a feeble saint and the body will suffer for it. Our relationship to the corporate body is crucial to our own spiritual development and the development of the church.

Verse 13

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

The ultimate goal or purpose of all these gifts is to lead us to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. Unity of the faith was the goal of the early church and should be the goal of the church today. There can never be unity with a denominational concept of "many faiths," because the unity that God accepts comes only through the knowledge of the Son of God, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). **To a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.** The aim of every faithful Christian is to be more like Christ. The word

“perfect” means full-grown, and suggests maturity. Only by growing into maturity will we no longer be little children. Children are unstable in their thinking, easily tossed to and fro. Christians need the right theological and spiritual foundation to keep from being blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning. We need to be stabilized by maturity, and maturity only comes when we’re connected to each other. The goal as a Christian is to think, act, and talk like Jesus. And the only way to become like Christ is to grow closer to Him. It's not about following a list of "Christian rules". It's about knowing Jesus more intimately. The Christian life begins by receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior and it continues as we get to know Him better.

Question...our religious system is based on denominations so how can we change this system to be more like Paul discusses - one body?

Verse 14

That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive,. Without such special gifts, the saints would remain immature children who would be tossed about like something on the sea (perhaps a small boat or wave) driven by the wind. The wind here represents the various false doctrines of the false teachers, who were crafty and tricky. As one matures on the one true doctrine of Christ, he cannot be fooled by these teachers and their doctrines: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

One thing about infants is that they have no discernment at all. If it's within their reach they will pick it up and they will put it in their mouth. Infants don't think before they put something in their mouth. They don't consider whether it's good for them or bad for them, whether it is food or a rock; something that is edible or something that will kill them. Everything goes in their mouth and a lot of it is bad. Immature Christians are like infants because they'll grab hold of anything that sounds good. They'll accept any teaching, any doctrine that feels good. Some nutty preacher proclaims something totally unscriptural and they will nod their head in agreement; they'll put it in their mouth; they'll accept it.

Question...during the pandemic many Christians took to listening/watching radio and television ministries so they would not lose their spiritual footing. Do you think this was good or bad? How do you know who to or who not to listen to over the airways?

Verse 15

But, speaking the truth in love,,

Truth and love must be joined together. It is possible to speak the truth, but not out of love, and this is very hurtful. Truth without love will repel people. However, true love can never be devoid of the truth. It is not true love to allow someone to go to hell to avoid hurting their feelings. Those who speak the truth “in love” are interested in the ones who are being taught. **May grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—**. No longer children but mature or grown up in Christ Jesus, who is the head of the body. The idea here is not identity but intimacy. As we serve Him, pray unto Him, and learn of Him, we grow into Him. As Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

If you speak the truth without love you rub people the wrong way. If you speak the truth without love you start an argument or turn people off to the truth entirely. If you speak the truth with love you'll still rub haters of truth the wrong way, but seekers of truth will pay attention. If you speak the truth with love those who want truth will receive it.

Question...how does personality relate to speaking the truth in love?

Verse 16

From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

The “from whom” in this verse is Christ. His spiritual body (the church) is totally dependent upon His headship. Here Paul (as in I Corinthians 12) illustrates the church by the make-up and functioning of the human body. Christ, as the head of His body, wants every member of His body joined and knit together in unity. When this happens, His prayer for unity (John 17) is answered, and His spiritual body grows. Each member (or part) is called upon to do its share under the headship of Christ. Unfortunately, this truth is lost on the modern church which places too much emphasis on an office or offices and too little on the work required of every member of the body. The church builds itself up in love when everyone is working to make increase of the body. People who are busy usually have little time for quarreling.

The more a Christian does their part the stronger they become spiritually. As we grow in our knowledge of Jesus, as we read God's word, and as we obey the lord, we become stronger Christians. And the more Christians there are who do those things the stronger the church as a whole becomes.

You can't do anything about your fellow Christian but you can make sure that you are doing your part, and that's true of all of us and that's where God wants us to focus. Focus less on what your neighbor is or is not doing and focus more on what you should be doing.

Some people think of the church as a pyramid, with the pastor at the top. Others think of the church as a bus driven by the pastor, who takes his passive passengers where they should go. *How do you feel about each of these statements?*

God wants us to see the church as a body, where **every part does its share.**

