

Intro. Read Eph. 4:1-12. The overwhelming love of God expressed in Christ's death, resurrection and enthronement as Lord is intended to be functionally displayed in our church. Our study today from Ephesians 4:7-12 answers the question of functionality in the church. How does a church function in such a way so that Jesus Christ our Lord is not only pleased but seen in an obvious and clear manner?

You are a rather distinguished people . . . set apart as sons of God, redeemed, forgiven, informed, secure, hopeful and greatly loved by God. Loved by the Father, made one with Christ and indwelt by the Spirit . . . this is the calling, your new identity that defines you and who you are in Christ. God has called you to a close and trusting relationship with himself. With this in mind, live like it. That is the message we have been asking God to burn into our thinking and massage into our daily life and relationships. What an incredible privilege it is to match our behavior to our calling in Christ for the glory of our great and loving God.

The most essential provision of God for our enablement to live according to the calling of God on our lives is the church, the body of Christ. There are many differing opinions concerning how a church should function or what a church should look like. Let me list several to prompt your thinking and identify some of the weak or inappropriate ways we think about our church.

- Church is expected to be a lean and mean organizational structure that is dependent on mission statements, flow charts and job descriptions.
- Church is viewed as operating by a top down line of authority dependent on conformity and loyalty to leadership or tradition.
- Church is understood as a member-owned co-op dependent on the volunteerism and investment of the faithful few.

John Stott, in his book 'One People' identifies dangerous perceptions of the church from the perspective of the relationship between clergy and members – pastors and people. He describes 3 mindsets that have crippled the church from walking in such a way that Christ is seen as Lord of all and fellow believers are built up in the faith.

- Clericalism . . . work of the church is to be done by those who are paid to do it, vocational pastors.
- Anticlericalism . . . in reaction to corrupt and lazy ministers, get rid of them. There is no need or role for vocational pastors.
- Dualism . . . both clergy and laity have a sphere of responsibility and should maintain a separation from each other.

In contrast to these commonly held perspectives, the church is seen in the scriptures as a body made up of people united under the Lordship of Christ dependent on the distinctive and diverse service of each

member. The risen and ascended Christ is building his church. We have a calling and an opportunity to both please him and draw attention to him by how we function as a church. Let's renew our thinking and behavior by developing a model of church unity and functionality that comes from the scriptures here in Ephesians 4:7-12.

Changing your mind about the church involves recognizing three components of the church along with their assigned function.

1. The Lord Christ as triumphant and on mission. 4:7-10

Note the statement that Christ has given grace gifts in verse 7 followed by a detailed description intended to help us remember both the gift and the key role of the giver. Any description or understanding of the church without a clear placement of Christ as Lord and sustainer of the church is unacceptable. In very real and experiential ways, the life of the healthy and vigorous church is about and from Christ.

Two key truths to recognize in our model of how a church functions:

Christ builds his church by giving grace gifts to each one of us. 7, 8, 11

- Grace gifts are given to every member of the body.
- Grace gifts are distributed according to Christ's determination.
- Grace gifts are diverse and distinctive.
- Grace gifts are purposeful.
- Grace gifts are spiritually empowered.

Cmp. Romans 12:6-8

1Cor. 12:1-11

1Peter 4:7

Christ is the focus of his church as exalted Lord who rules over all. 8-10

What mental picture comes to mind when you consider Christ in his current ministry or position? Your answer is critical to your understanding of a healthy church model.

- Christ is the victorious King having defeated sin and death. V.8
- Christ is the ascended and exalted Lord seated at the right hand of the Father. 9-10
- Christ is actively building, ruling over and completing his church. 10b

Cmp. 1:10, 20-23

Phil. 2:1-11

The church functions in real time and space as the body of Christ displaying for all to see the truth of his triumph over sin and death and his rightful exaltation to Lord over all. We function as a message board

1. The Lord Christ as triumphant and on mission. 4:7-10
 that declares both 'Jesus is Lord' and 'Repent and believe! Jesus is Lord!' Any internal or external structures, strategies, values, organization or model that you embrace in your description of church that veils, weakens or assumes Christ as Lord is sinful. Anyone having exposure to our church individually or corporately should clearly see Jesus as both the sustainer and Lord of all.

2. Church members as gifted and serving. 4:7, 12

Note the contrast of unity and diversity found in 4-7. There is a profound common core of unity to maintain while there is a highly diversified membership in the body . . . by Christ's design. This is a crucial part of a biblical church model as it settles the issue of who is on the front lines so to speak. Every member of the body has equal status with various functions. In direct contrast to you simply being merely attenders and givers, you have an important role of building up the body of Christ through your service.

You have been grace gifted by Christ.

Discussed/presented under first point above.

Christ has carefully graced you from his position as owner and ruler of all to contribute to the building of his body and advance of his gospel.

Passion	Abilities	Experience	Opportunities	Service
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Your gifts are to be dedicated to serving others with purpose. 12

- You are saved by God to serve in special ways. 2:10
- Your service to God is in response to grace. 4:7
- Your service to God is directed at building up Christ's Body, the church. 4:12

Contrast with inactive, burned out, too busy or uninterested members of Christ's body. Church is something you do because Christ is Lord, he has gifted you and he has determined to build his Kingdom through your work of service to others.

Intro phrases . . . 'serving functionally' and 'involved relationally.'

3. Church Leaders as gifts and equippers. 11-12

What is the role of church leaders? What are your expectations? How you answer this question is absolutely crucial to the health and vitality of our church as we promote the Lordship of Christ.

Christ gives gifted persons/leaders to the church. 4:11

Apostles	prophets	evangelists	shepherds	teachers
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Common characteristics of teaching, influence, guidance, ministry of the word.

Cmp 1Peter 5:1ff not under compulsion, for greedy gain, domineering

Christ assigned gifted leaders to equip members of the Body.

4:12

'equip' means to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something. It is used in another form in Mt. 4:21 to repair a net . . . fix the hole so the net is fully functional for the purpose it was created.

Note the progression of gifted leaders given to the church to equip the saints for their ministry which in turn builds up the body. Cmp. 4:16, 29

Every member ministry. Shape expectations and responses accordingly.

- 1. The Lord Christ as triumphant and on mission.** **4:7-10**
- 2. Church members as gifted and serving.** 4:7, 12
- 3. Church Leaders as gifts and equippers.** **11-12**

Remove/address roadblocks that exist in your thinking . . .

- Pride – you want to be served, build your kingdom, control your life
- Experience – you are burned out, hurt or too busy to promote Christ in the church
- Fear – you are convinced that you have nothing to offer or that you will mess it up

Adjust your current expectations . . .

- Renew your love and passion for Christ's lordship in your life.
- Know yourself . . . your gifts, resources, passions, opportunities.
- Find your niche of effectiveness – serve functionally.
- Expect and receive 'equipping' with joy and humility.
- Expect the challenges that come with growing influence and effectiveness in ministry.

Celebrate and communicate at every opportunity that Jesus is Lord!

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-16 together and comment on observations or questions from reading.
2. Review the various models of church functionality from the introduction. Which do you identify with the most? Are there other models that are not mentioned that come to mind?
3. Review Ephesians 1:10, 20-23; 3:10-11, 21 and 4:10 . . . how do these verses picture/describe Christ? How can our church functionally recognize Christ as Lord and on mission?
4. Review point #2 regarding gifted and serving. What are your questions or concerns regarding this component of a church model? Share some of the roadblocks that keep you from sharpening your gifts and serving more effectively. How can this truth of gifted service be encouraged more in our church?
5. What is 'every member ministry?' Share an experience where you were equipped to serve in a way that you were more effective for Christ. How can we encourage more equipping? What areas do you need or desire to be equipped?