

To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . A Church Grows

Ephesians 4:12-14

February 27, 2011

Intro. Read Eph. 4:1-16. Where are we going as a church? What is our destination? Today in our passage we are taught what the objective of the church's journey looks like and I believe it may be a bit surprising and perhaps even challenging to your understanding of the church's ultimate direction. Too often our answers will be in the form of numbers, buildings, staff or programs. As important as those factors may be, there are several other more important marks to look for to determine if we are headed in the right direction. Let's review quickly before we learn about the church's direction.

The church is to be the community where people who are saved by Christ are transformed and grow by God's grace. We are learning from these studies of Ephesians 4:1-16 that the way the church works or functions can be understood by tracking the roles and responsibilities of the 3 major characters that make up the church. At the risk of over simplification, a basic flow chart describing the supernatural work of building Christ's church looks like . . .

The Lord Christ gives grace gifts to each believer.

The Lord Christ gives gifted leaders to each church.

Gifted leaders equip the gifted believers.

Equipped gifted believers do the work of ministry.

The church is built up.

Compare how you think and talk about church to these simple functions. The Lord Christ energizes each believer. Christ centered leaders encourage and equip you to serve. You as a member of the body of Christ are gifted and equipped to build up the people of God. The church builds itself up in love.

The implications of this simple description of functionality are staggering to how we view ourselves, our expectations regarding our church leaders and our commitment to our church community . . .

How you view yourself . . . a consumer, spectator, owner, attender or gospel minister?

How you view church leadership . . . ministers, CEO's, owners, speakers or equippers?

How you view your church community . . . religious co-op, a place to learn or the body of Christ?

Christ energizes KSBC in such a way that gifted leaders equip and equipped gifted saints serve with the result that the body of Christ is built up in love. We are to do this according to 4:13 'until we attain to' something. This phrase tells us that there is something we (Christ, leaders, saints) are to do together, for as long as it takes to arrive at a certain destination. The term translated 'attain' points our thinking to travelers arriving at a destination. Leaders who equip saints and equipped saints who work are to serve together in their equipping and serving until certain objectives have been reached or met.

Our first objective described in 4:13 is to build or grow our church community. Our building each other up or causing growth in each other's lives is explained by 3 clauses that all have to do with becoming like Christ.

Destination #1 for KSBC . . . building each other up. 4:13

Note the nuance of our destination or objectives being true positionally, but not practically. Our objectives are measurable but not attainable until we are with Christ. We build each other up in a tension of the now and not yet.

Leaders and saints work together to build into each other's lives with three objectives in mind . . .

1. Unity. You build by aligning life with truth.

the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God

unity . . . granted/created by God 2:11-14 maintained 4:3

unity means to align your life, resources and commitment to what the Spirit is doing in and through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You build the church by helping others align their lives with . . .

a. The teachings of the Bible. 'the faith'

b. Jesus Christ. 'the knowledge of the Son of God' (wwjd?)

This a common thread that runs throughout the church. You habitually encourage our common, united identity as Christians around God's word and God's Son.

This happens in formal and informal teaching, planned and unplanned Bible study, counseling sessions or friendly advice . . . we build by calling each other to align life with truth in countless ways and settings.

2. Maturity. You build by expecting growth and change in each other.

to mature manhood

Maturity is a call to completion or perfection in development as a person saved by God.

This full development is observable and measurable in both the church corporately as well as individual church member's lives.

The opposite of maturity is described in 4:14 with various metaphors.

Maturity is measured by . . .

submitting to God's wisdom rather than human wisdom. 1Cor. 3:1-4

thinking through issues biblically rather than personal preferences. 1Cor. 14:20-25

skilled application of the Bible rather than relying on basic teaching. Heb. 5:11-14

Our destination as a church is the expectation that the hard work of growing and changing is happening at various levels, in relationships and with the help of God's Spirit and each other.

Destination #1 for KSBC . . . building each other up.		4:13
1. Unity.	You build by aligning life with truth.	
2. Maturity.	You build by expecting growth and change in each other.	

3. Lordship. You build by pursuing the standard of Jesus as Lord in community.

to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

Our measurements of what we are building are defined by the stature or dimensions described by the terms 'the fullness of Christ.'

In both of his prayers (2:23; 3:19) included in this letter, Paul prays that we might know and experience the fullness of Christ/God. This fullness has been given to us and is now to be experienced.

The fullness of Christ speaks of his exalted position as Lord over all on earth and in heavenly places. He is far above all things both now and in the coming ages.

Our destination as a church is to build into each other's lives the hot pursuit of living our lives by the standard of the Lordship of Christ. The dimensions we are building to and measuring by are nothing short of submission to the Lordship of Christ.

Lordship . . . pursuing life under the authority of Christ . . . is the objective of leaders and saints in the church as illustrated by . . .

How to live right in challenging and evil settings.	E. 5:10
How to mutually submit to one another.	E. 5:17-21
How to please God in marriage.	E. 5:22ff
How parents train children.	E. 5:1-4
How employees & employers treat each other.	E. 7:8-9

We sing, pray, talk, encourage, teach, remind and with dozens of other ways, that Jesus Christ is our ruling and reigning Lord. We are being equipped to identify when the measurements are off and how to lovingly encourage correction and restoration of the dimensions of lordship.

Destination #2 for KSBC . . . protecting one another. 4:14

Note the three metaphors used in 4:14 to indicate 3 characteristics of immaturity that we tend to embrace or struggle with as followers of Christ. Leaders equipping and equipped saints serving must have as their goal/destination a practical commitment to protect one another from these.

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| 1. Individualism. | Be no longer children. |
| 2. Misdirection. | Tossed to and fro by the wind |
| 3. Deception. | Human cunning, craftiness, schemes. |

Destination #3 for KSBC . . . becoming people who love each other. 4:15-16

We will complete our study of destinations over the next two Sundays, Lord willing.

Destination #1 for KSBC . . . building each other up.

4:13

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|--------------|---|
| 1. Unity. | You build by aligning life with truth. |
| 2. Maturity. | You build by expecting growth and change in each other. |
| 3. Lordship. | You build by pursuing the standard of Jesus as Lord in community. |

Change your mind . . .

1. About Christ . . . become a saint by God's grace through repentance and faith in Christ.
2. About you . . . repent of viewing yourself as anything other than a minister of the gospel.
3. About equipping . . . seek and receive training for you to build into lives of others.
4. About destination . . . rejoice in opportunities to build each other up in Christ.

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-16 together and comment on observations or questions from reading.
2. What does the phrase in 4:13 'until we attain to' mean? How does it influence your thinking about being a member of Christ's church?
3. Review each of the objectives separately (unity, maturity, lordship). Answer these questions about each one:
 - What does this objective mean? Is this what the text of scripture says/means?
 - What are the challenges with you building into each other's lives in this way?
 - Share a story of how this happened in your experience recently.
 - Think of ways you need equipping to do this more effectively.
 - Give permission to members in your group to build into your life in one of these ways.
4. Pray together for God's grace to grow in viewing yourselves as ministers who are gifted and equipped to build into each other's lives. Pray that this will become an observable characteristic of your small group in a deeper and more effective way.