

**Intro.** Read Eph. 3:20- 4:16

Whether it is packing a suitcase, downsizing to a smaller home or trying on a pair of old jeans, sometimes you are convinced that 'all of that is not going to fit in there.' A careful understanding of the text we just read from scripture clearly says that the glory of God is to fit inside the church and be displayed there. Most of our thinking about the church is so small that one of the last places we would expect the beauty, holiness, power and love of God to be seen is by looking at us. We are learning that our commitment to both understanding the truth about church and our functional involvement in the church is vital to promoting the glory of our great God in our families, community and world.

We are learning from our extended study of these verses that God glorifying church growth is dependent on two critical tasks. One, gifted leaders equip the saints. Two, gifted and equipped saints invest that equipping in building up the body of Christ. These are specific and objective tasks all done in the sphere of and influenced by love.

We are to do these tasks 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.

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

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.
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.

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. Here are three reasons why churches do not grow . . .

1. Individualism. *So that we may no longer be children*
2. Misdirection. *Tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine*
3. Deception. *By human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes*

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

This paragraph teaching how the church functions so that God is glorified concludes with a call to significant commitment on the part of each individual member. Every part or person in the body of Christ has a responsibility to order their lives in such a way that God is glorified through the building up of the church in love. Your thinking and behavior as a follower of Jesus Christ should grow out of your commitment to being a part of what God is doing in the world today . . . building his church.

Church membership, at least in the context of Kossuth Street Church, is simply the formalization or formal recognition of 5 biblical commitments found in 4:15-16 that define what God is doing in the world through the building of his church. In many ways, making a formal commitment to each other and God in membership is an expression of your heart that you want to become a person who loves others. You acknowledge that you cannot grow and obey God in this way without a strong connection to a church community.

Glorifying God in the church is all about commitment. If there was a pledge of allegiance for the church it would have to include a statement of your loyalty and devotion to the following five realities. These commitments distinguish you and the church from all those that do not follow Christ or seek to glorify God. Our church and your experience suffer from a lack of dedication . . . a growing and dangerous indifference.

5 Commitments of Church Membership . . . (should be commonly held assumptions)

1. **Love.** Rely on and walk in God's love. 4:15, 16

'In love' appears both with speaking the truth and building up the body in our passage. God's love for us and our understanding of that love is a key theme in this epistle. More than 6 times, we are reminded of God's love and our need to rely on it.

God's love is described by one theologian as *God eternally gives of himself to others – it is his self giving for the benefit of others.*

Note that a key repeated theme that rocks our self-sufficiency is that we are to rely on and live by God's eternal giving of himself to us for our benefit.

Eph. 1:4; 2:4

3:14-19

5:1-2

2. **Truth.** Lovingly teach and receive the truth of the gospel. 4:15

Speaking the truth in love is set in contrast with the immaturity and deception described in the previous verse. Rather than individualism, distraction and deceit, the church member is committed to consistent truth telling of the gospel in a way that benefits themselves and others.

In many ways this loving truth telling is shaped by the questions . . . Is it true and right? And Is it kind and loving?

Galatians 4:16 – example of gospel truth telling

Eph. 6:14 truth a key part of armor

3. **Christ.** Pursue and submit to Christ as Lord. 4:15-16

Note the piling up and interconnection of the phrases describing the dominance of Jesus Christ over and in his church. Without Christ . . . better, without connection to Christ the church becomes a powerless group of people hoping to accomplish something that will make a difference. Note the implications to your commitment to Christ taught in these phrases . . .

1. Love. Rely on and walk in God's love.
2. Truth. Lovingly teach and receive the truth of the gospel.
3. Christ. Pursue and submit to Christ as Lord.

*We are to grow up in every way into him . . .* Christ is the object of your growth in every possible way

*Who is the head . . .* Christ is your authority; he occupies the prominent place in your life

*From whom the whole body . . .* Christ is your power and energizer for ministry

Cmp. Col. 2:19

Eph. 4:13

**4. Each other.** Functionally related to and serving with others. 4:16

*Joined and held together . . .* give us a clear concept of our interconnectedness as church members by use of analogy. As the human body has joints and parts that are interdependent and necessary to proper function, so the body of Christ is a combination of joints and parts that must function together for the body to grow.

Two participles embedded in this phrase point us to two key relational truths . . .

- The body functions through connections/joints . . . no part of the body functions in isolation.
- Energy for growth is carried to the entire body through the connections/joints functioning.

Functional unity means a high level of commitment to loving, developing and intentional relationships within the church.

E 2:21 – being joined together . . . construction analogy

**5. Growth.** Pursuit and celebration of changed lives in the gospel. 4:16

With each part and joint working toward Christ, growth is expected. Growth can be expected in various ways and measurements. Personal godliness, number of conversions, advance of the gospel globally, meeting needs of others, ministry skills, children coming to faith, perseverance in suffering and love for God . . . all are ways growth can be seen and celebrated.

Growth of the body is seen from two perspectives . . .

4:16 the body builds itself up . . . the healthy church grows by the appearance of mutual sacrifice, work and love.

Col. 2:19 the body grows with the growth that God gives . . . the healthy church grows supernaturally in ways that can only be explained as a 'God thing.'

## 5 Commitments of Church Membership . . . (should be commonly held assumptions)

1. Love. Rely on and walk in God's love.
2. Truth. Lovingly teach and receive the truth of the gospel.
3. Christ. Pursue and submit to Christ as Lord.
4. Each other. Functionally related to and serving with others.
5. Growth. Pursuit and celebration of changed lives in the gospel.

### Take Aways

1. Thank God for the joy you experience from being a part of a healthy church family.
2. Make and determine to keep a commitment of saving faith, baptism or church membership today.
3. Renew and refresh your commitment to church membership in a specific way.

### Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 3:20 – 4:16 together as a group. What observations or impressions grab your attention in this reading?
2. In what ways is God's glory displayed at KSBC? Complete the following thought . . . God's glory is displayed in Kossuth Street Baptist Church by . . .
3. Review the notes regarding destinations #1 and #2. What is the point of each?

Using the 3 points under destination #1 as a measurement/standard, how well do you build each other up in your small group? How can you develop this kind of building into each other's lives?

Using the 3 points under destination #2 as a guide, what evidences of immaturity do you recognize in your small group that you need to protect each other from?

4. What do you think about these statements from the intro . . .

*Every part or person in the body of Christ has a responsibility to order their lives in such a way that God is glorified through the building up of the church in love.*

*Church membership, at least in the context of Kossuth Street Church, is simply the formalization or formal recognition of 5 biblical commitments found in 4:15-16 that define what God is doing in the world through the building of his church.*

5. Review each of the 5 commitments from 4:15-16. Which does your heart and experience connect with the most? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? How can your small group help?
6. Pray together for each other using 1Thess. 3:11-13 as a guide for your mutual intercession.