

Gifted for Unity

Ephesians 4:7-11 - NCBC, August 14, 2022

Main Point: **The victorious Christ unifies and strengthens His church by giving us spiritual gifts.**

- **Christ gives each one of us an unique grace-gift (7a)**
 - Supernatural enablement to minister grace to others
 - Personally given to each believer
- **Christ gives gifts by His own authority (7b-10)**
 - According to His own measure
 - According to His own triumph
 - According to His own goal
- **Christ gives spiritual leaders to His church (11)**
 - Apostles
 - Prophets
 - Evangelists
 - Pastor-Teachers

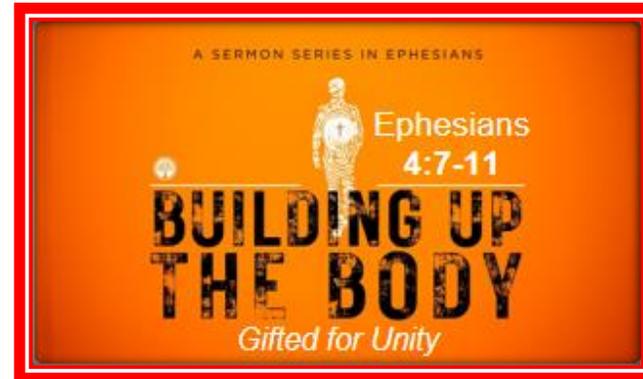
Application: **Faithfully use God's grace to strengthen and unify Christ's church.**

Opening Announcements:

- August is *Life Group Sign-up Month*... so please take time to consider which life group could be a good fit for you, and sign up today! Learn more at <https://myncbc.org/connect/adults/life-groups/>.

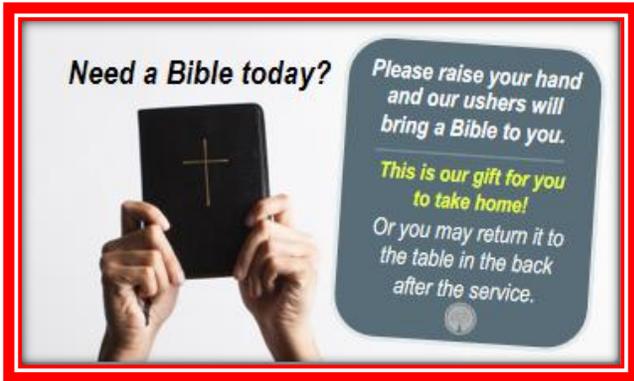
- Today we get to hear a special report from our Global Outreach Partners, K&H. Due to hostility towards Jesus in their field, their report is not live-streamed. Come and participate at 9:30a with us to encourage K&H and be encouraged by their faith!

<<Grace Greater than our Sin>>



Thanks for singing! God's grace is far greater than all our sin, and for that we've gathered to worship Him today.

So let's continue our worship now by opening His Word to **Ephesians chapter 4.**



If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand, as we'd love to give you a Bible to use today or take home as a gift.

Before we read from **Ephesians 4**, just a quick update on our pastoral search for a new Associate Pastor of Care & Discipleship.

Last month our search team had the privilege of interviewing 3 new candidates for this role. After these candidates met with our search team, and then our associate pastors, we invited one candidate to come for an onsite visit and a first interview with our elders.



So last weekend, Josh and Kelli Gerber joined us for worship and successfully completed their first elder interview.

Our elders are now eager to move to the next step in our candidating process which is a public ministry weekend.

So next **Sunday, August 21st**, Pastor Josh will be preaching in both worship services. Then during the 9:30am hour, all of our Adults and Rooted Student Ministry will share a more casual question-answer time with Josh, to better get to know him and his family.

A public ministry visit is a very important aspect of any pastoral search process, so we want to make sure we clearly communicate expectations for everyone.

We are NOT yet presenting Pastor Josh for a vote. Our elders have NOT yet decided whether he should serve as our pastor. Next weekend, along with a second elder interview, is just the next, very important and necessary step in our process of discerning whether God is calling Pastor Josh to join our church family or not.

As you know, we've had other candidates come for a public ministry weekend and then be released from our consideration. So this weekend is still very much a part of our discernment process.

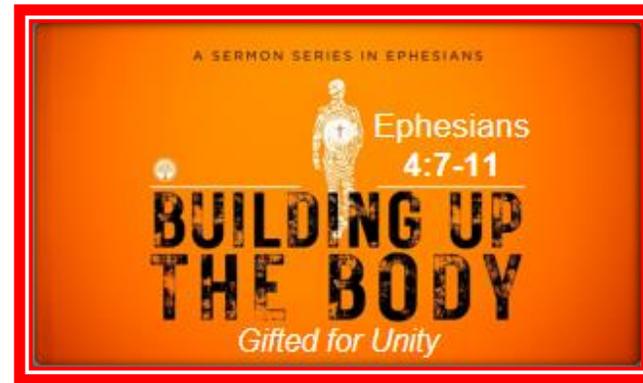
Therefore here's three coaching tips as we look forward to next weekend with the Gerber family.

First, please pray for Josh and Kelli and their children. They're traveling here from Tennessee where Josh currently pastors. Pray for God's favor on their travels and Josh's ministry to us. Pray for God's peace to guard our minds, and the hearts of the Gerbers – especially the children, as the pastor-church-dating-process is never easy on anyone...especially as it gets more public.

Second, please look for ways to encourage this family next weekend. Whether we end up hiring Josh or not, they are our like-minded brothers and sisters, and we want to love them very well for whatever amount of time God gives us together. We sincerely desire for every interaction they have with us to encourage their faith and ministry.

Finally, after Pastor Josh's visit, please share your feedback with our elders. Our elders take these decisions very seriously, and we highly value your prayers and constructive input as part of this process.

We should all receive an email this week introducing us to Pastor Josh. So keep praying church! God is working, and we are very thankful to again be at this place in our search.



Now let's read from **Ephesians chapter 4**, as we continue our series on *Building Up the Body*.

If you're able, please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7-16**, from the ESV translation. Today our focus will be on **verses 7-11**, but I want to read through **verse 16** which finishes Paul's thought. Remember, last week **verses 1-6** grounded us in our supernatural source for our unity, so let's start reading now in **verse 7**:

7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature

manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This is the reading of God's Word. Let's Pray.

Today **Ephesians chapter 4** calls our attention to the important matter of spiritual gifts. And I believe it's possible that this may be one of the most misunderstood teachings in our church today.

Because some immediately get panicky when the topic of spiritual gifts come up...because they haven't yet been able to identify what their gift is, and so they feel embarrassed or self-conscious in any discussion that puts focus on everyone's spiritual gift.

Others get weird and use this topic of spiritual gifts to excuse themselves from certain ministries that they are not "gifted" for, or they use spiritual gifts to call attention to themselves. Some even view spiritual gifts as the God-given measure of spirituality.

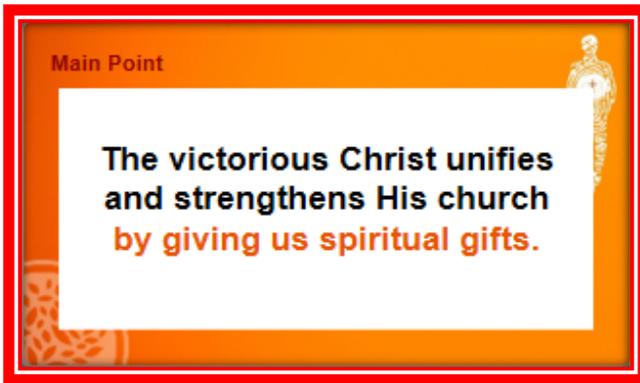
¹ Ephesians 4:1ff

In response, others are quite content to never talk about spiritual gifts at all, since the Holy Spirit and His work is just too freaky, or best left forgotten. They simply dismiss the topic of spiritual gifts as being too controversial or non-essential...and not worth the debate.

So what reaction do you have to spiritual gifts? Is this a favorite topic or a dreaded topic or a mysterious topic or an unimportant topic for you? When's the last time you thought seriously about receiving a spiritual gift from God Himself, and what difference did that have on your daily living as a Christ-follower?

Ephesians 4:7-11 pierces through the fog of all of our fears and confusion surrounding spiritual gifts to refocus our gaze on Jesus as the Sovereign Head of His Church. A worthy walk – living in a manner that evidences our gospel calling¹ – requires rightly understanding and applying our spiritual gifts within Christ's church.

After all the main point of **verses 7-11** is that,

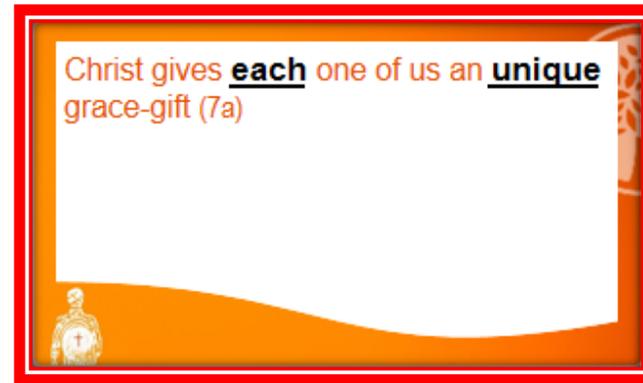


The victorious Christ unifies and strengthens His church by giving us spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts should never be the reason for division or discouragement in Christ's church. Indeed the opposite!

Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to reign supremely over all things as the Head of the Church. And in His conquering triumph, He generously gives spiritual gifts to His children in order to unify us and build us up together as One Body of love.

So look now at **verse 7** where we first learn that,



Christ gives each one of us an unique grace-gift.

After **verses 4-6** reveal the 7-fold grounds of the church's unity, **verse 7** begins with a contrasting conjunction... "but" to make sure we understand that unity in God's church does not look like uniformity.

Yes, every Christian is part of the same body of Christ, and depends on the same Holy Spirit, and shares the same eternal hope. Every true Christian submits to the same Lord, believes the same gospel, and publicly identifies with the same death of Christ for salvation. Every Christian has been adopted by the same Heavenly Father who is actively ruling over, and working through, and dwelling in all those who are truly saved.

"But" **verse 7** clarifies...our unity does NOT mean that every Christian receives the same amount of spiritual gifting for ministry. In fact, spiritual oneness requires great diversity among Christians for the glory of God.

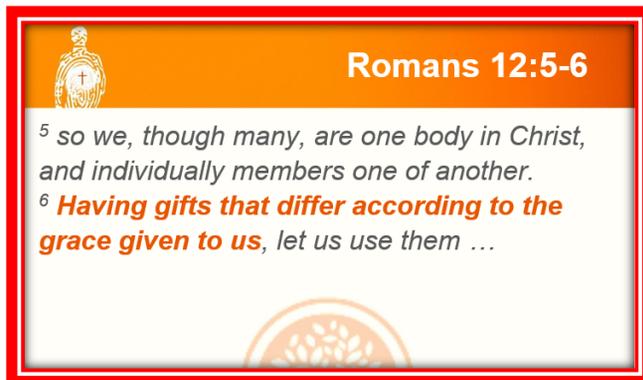
Read again **verse 7**:

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

So first notice – what did every Christian receive from Christ?

A gift of grace. Literally, A grace-gift. We call these “spiritual gifts.” While we sang earlier of the saving grace that rescues us from our sins, every Christian additionally receives a unique spiritual gift of “enabling grace” from Jesus for our ministry together in the church.

Listen to how Paul says this in **Romans chapter 12,**



So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...

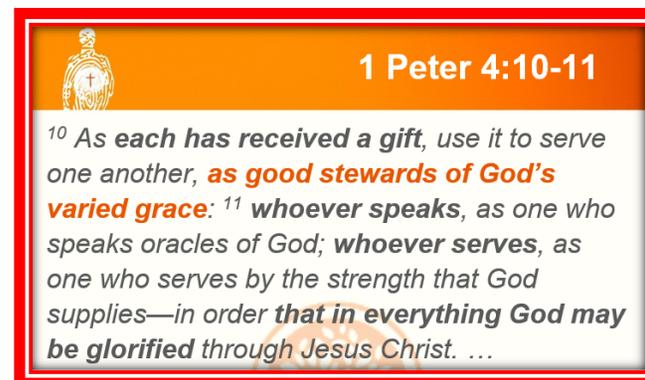
So spiritual gifts are personalized grace-gifts that God intends for His children to use for other's benefit. We see the same truth in **1 Corinthians chapter 12,**



Now there are varieties of gifts, ... but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.

Here spiritual gifts are referred to as “manifestation of the Spirit” that each individual Christian receives for the common good.

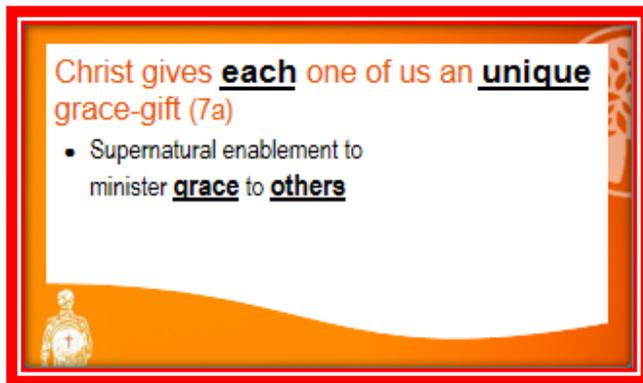
1 Peter chapter 4 teaches the same thing,



As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...

So back in **Ephesians 4:7**.. when Paul teaches that *grace was given to each one of us*...this refers to our spiritual gift.

So before we proceed, let's biblically define spiritual gifts:



From the verses we've considered, it's clear that a spiritual gift is a supernatural enablement to minister grace to others. Like a spiritual fingerprint, every Christian receives a different measure (or quantity) of God's enabling grace for ministry...that we are to use by faith in God for the common good in the church.²

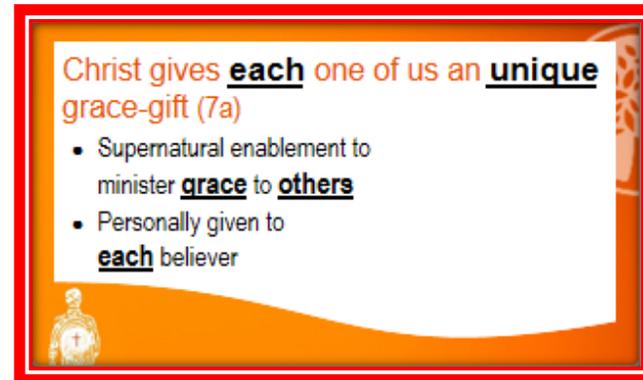
So add this to your notes: a spiritual gift is a supernatural enablement to minister grace to others by faith. Faith is absolutely necessary here, because for any ministry to truly be spiritual, it has to communicate God's grace through faith in God.³ No matter what powerful abilities

² C.f. Ephesians 3:7-8

we have, if we are not relying on God's grace (having faith) and not aiming to help others rely on God's grace (producing faith), our ability is not spiritual, and it is not a spiritual gift.

A spiritual gift is the supernatural grace given by the Holy Spirit to express our faith effectively in ministry for the upbuilding of others' faith in Jesus. Spiritual gifts are therefore God's enabling grace for faith's ministry to others.

Verse 7 emphasizes that this ministry enablement was undeserved and unmerited. No one can boast or brag about their spiritual gift. Because it's all grace...an unearned part of our "gospel benefit package" that is,



Personally given to each believer.

Did you notice this grace was given to every believer in **verse 7**? Not just ministry leaders. Not just the outgoing people. Every individual Christian receives a

³ Hebrews 11:6; cf. Romans 12:3

personalized enabling grace from Christ for the building up of His body the church.

Therefore no Christian is a spectator. Every one has a specific role to play in God's church. It doesn't matter if one is a foot or a hand or an ear or an eye⁴... Jesus has purposefully given every believer a personalized measure of His enabling grace for us to use by faith in Him to unify and strengthen His church.

Now, of course, whenever there is diversity there is opportunity for conflict. So some might ask, "How is it fair for one Christian to receive one kind of ministering grace, and other Christian to receive something different?"

So in **verses 8-10** Paul goes on to explain how,



Christ gives gifts by His own sovereign authority.

Spiritual gifts aren't fair since they're not about us. They're all about grace and the supremacy of Jesus!!

⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

No Christian deserves to receive any grace ...but *according to the measure of Christ's gift*, the end of **verse 7** says, each one of us was given a grace gift.

Now what does this mean?



According to His own measure refers to Christ's appointed allotment. The One who is the Head of the Church sovereignly designs every believer's role within His own body, and accordingly distributes a specific portion of his enabling grace to each member.

Spiritual gifts are not permanent, but change over time as the needs of your church family changes. Spiritual gifts aren't limited to lists like those found on a spiritual gift test or in **Romans 12** or **1 Corinthians 12**. Those biblical lists of gifts are merely representative, not restrictive, of

the kinds of speaking and serving graces⁵ that God might gift His children with for His greater glory in the church.⁶

So loved ones, please be humble enough to recognize that you had no more to do with the receipt of your enabling grace for ministry than you did with your electing grace for salvation. Jesus Himself sovereignly determines your unique measure of grace for ministry – like a snowflake – which is all according to His own determination.

Therefore we ought not covet or be jealous of someone else's gift. The difference of the gift never determines a person's value in the church. Rather our value to the body is determined by how we use the grace Jesus gave to us for greater unity in His church.

Now, **verse 8** quotes from **Psalm 68 verse 18**,



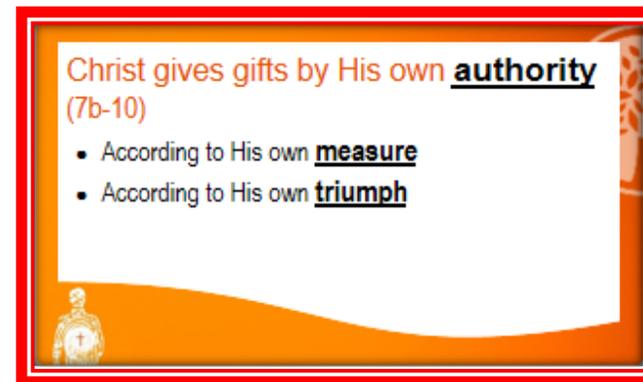
⁵ 1 Peter 4:10-11

⁶ Ephesians 3:21

⁷ C.f. Psalm 68:6 where God leads out the prisoners to prosperity

Where David speaks of God ascending up to Jerusalem with Israel after defeating His rebellious enemies. **Psalm 68** is a victorious celebration of God's triumph over the wicked. In **verse 18** He ascends into His sanctuary in a victory parade that includes all those whom He has conquered and restored under His kingdom rule.⁷ He then receives gifts of tribute and military spoils from people⁸ who celebrate His triumph.

So back in **Ephesians 4**, Paul refers to **Psalm 68** to give scriptural proof for Jesus' right to distribute grace among His redeemed however He sees best.



Jesus distributes spiritual gifts to individual Christians according to His own triumph.

Through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection on earth, Jesus defeated Satan, sin, and death.⁹ That's worth celebrating Church! Satan, sin, and death has been

⁸ C.f. Psalm 68:29

⁹ Colossians 2:15

forever abolished, and Jesus has now ascended as the eternal conqueror King! By His glorious victory, Jesus led captive all those who were formerly enslaved to Satan, sin, and death...but are now returned to God. Since Jesus now owns every one of us, He has the full right and prerogative to lavish us with His grace according to what will bring Him the most glory in His church!

Verses 9-10 offer Paul's further explanation of Christ's triumph. And while there's lots of debate about what is meant by "ascended" and "descended"... it seems best to just take these terms at face value:

The ascension of Christ in **verses 9-10** refer to what happened to Jesus after His resurrection in **Acts chapter 1**, when Jesus ascended up into the heavens and (according to **Ephesians 1:20**) was seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places.

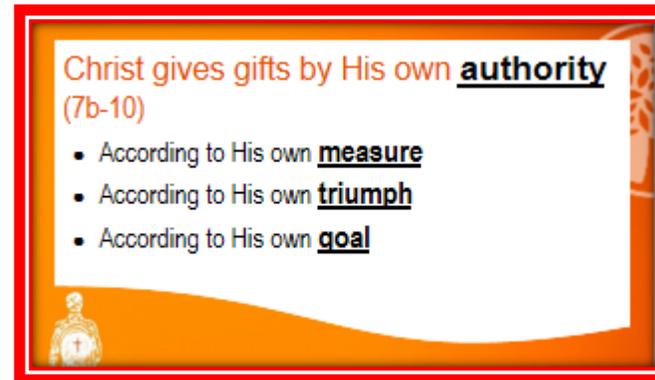
The descension of Christ in **verses 9-10** simply refers to Jesus' incarnation – where He came down from heaven to live among sinners on earth. The "lower regions" is in contrast to the "far above all the heavens" and thus is a synonym for the earth¹⁰ – simply showing both the extreme contrast of Jesus' condensation and exaltation over all!

So the victorious triumph of our King gives Him the authority to give us different amounts of grace however

¹⁰ "The weight of scholarly evidence agrees that the intent of this phrase [the lower regions, the earth] is not to point to a specific place, such as the inner core of the earth, or to "hell," but simply to refer to the incarnation."

He sees best. And then finally, notice that important phrase at the end of **verse 10**, *that He might fill all things*.

For Christ gives gifts,



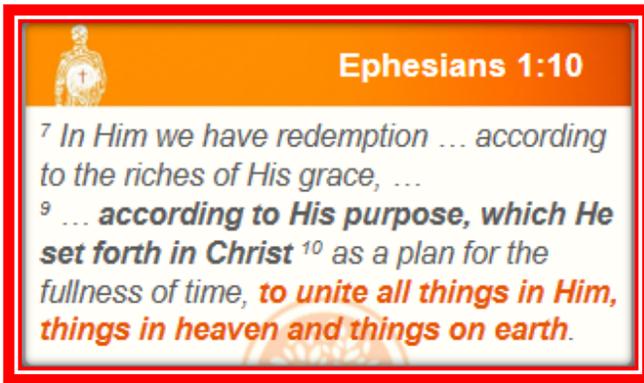
According to His own goal, namely that He might fill all things!

Jesus came to earth to redeem for Himself a bride, He ascended to the throne of heaven to reign as the Head of His church, and so He now gives spiritual gifts to every Christian so that He might fill all things.

Now... this could be an entire sermon by itself...but quickly... ask yourself,

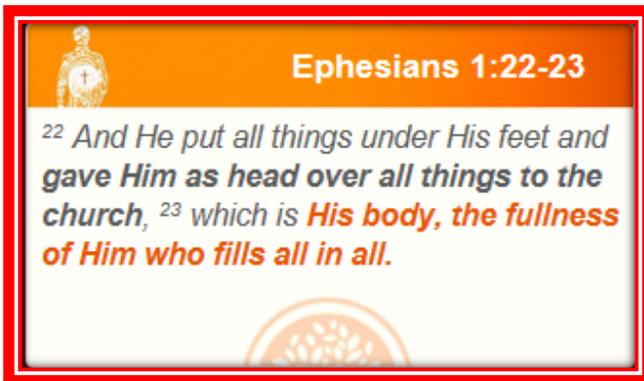
How is the universe filled with the fullness of God?

Holman // "The intent of this phrase is not to point to a specific place, but to refer to the depth of his incarnation." MacArthur



Well, **Ephesians 1:10** taught God's purpose or goal in our redemption was to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

Then **verses 22-23** of **chapter 1** said,



God ...put all things under Jesus' feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, (Now listen), Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

So how is the universe filled with all the fullness of God?

¹¹ C.f. Ephesians 4:13

By Jesus building His church! By the growth and expansion and building up of His body, the church!

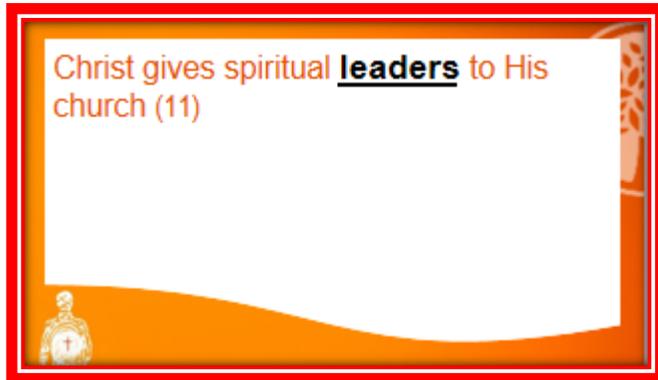
And how is the body of Christ to be strengthened and built up? Through the individual members' exercise of the spiritual gifts that Jesus has sovereignly given.



Church –spiritual gifts are eternally significant. Spiritual gifts are Jesus' church growth strategy.¹¹ The undeserved, personalized, grace-gifts of supernatural empowerment to minister God's grace to others by faith in God's power is the very means that Jesus intends to use to build His church, and thereby eternally fill the entire universe with His glorious presence and rule.

So don't miss God's eternal purpose for your spiritual gift. We must stop focusing so much on which gift we have, and instead begin faithfully using God's grace that He's sovereignly given us for the building up of His church.

Now, in **verse 11**, Paul illustrates how His gifts to His church include spiritually gifted people. After all, a person who receives a grace gift from Jesus, is now a gifted person, right? So in **verse 11**, Paul shows how the unity of His diversely-gifted church is strengthened when,



Christ gives gifted spiritual leaders to His church.

Now too often we become so distracted with the definitions of these leadership offices in **verse 11** that we miss Paul's point.

So just reflect on Paul's argument through **chapter 4** so far.

In **verses 1-6**, Paul calls all Christians to respond to our gospel calling with a worthy living – expressed first in Gospel-driven heart attitudes and then in a doctrinal conviction of the Gospel realities which unite all Christians together into one new humanity in Christ.

¹² Luke 6:40

Then in **verses 7-10** Paul introduces Christ-appointed diversity, and explains how every believer has received a grace gift grounded in the eternal triumph of Jesus. The victorious Christ unifies and strengthens His church by giving spiritual gifts... until He supremely fills all through His church.

Now **verse 11** continues the thought of **verse 7**, highlighting how Jesus gave grace-gifted leaders to His church so that the church could be organized and stabilized by the truth of His gospel, instead of the childish philosophies of the world mentioned in **verse 14**.

So notice: What do all grace-gifted apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers have in common? All of these people minister the truth of God's gospel to God's church in some way. They are all teachers!

And this is no accident. The same Jesus who came to earth to die, and ascended to heaven as Victor over sin and death is the one who gave *some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and teachers*. Because Jesus knows that when a disciple is fully trained, he will be like his teacher.¹² The greatest need of God's church is to know Jesus Himself, and the only way we can know Him as He truly is is through His Divine revelation. Only God's Word reveals this mystery of our Gospel unity as Christ's body.

Therefore, those who have been gifted by God's grace to speak God's Word – and not those who have decrees in management or organizational leadership—are the ones

Jesus calls to lead His church since God's church is a living creature of God's Word!¹³

Christians are born again by the living and imperishable word of God.¹⁴ We are sanctified by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word of God.¹⁵ We are trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work by the Word of God.¹⁶ We are comforted and encouraged to wait for the Lord's appearing by the Word of God.¹⁷

The Word of God is the life-blood of the church because Jesus is the Head of Church. Therefore all spiritual leaders in God's church must first be gifted to reveal and teach what God has already said.¹⁸

Now unfortunately we don't time in this message to explain all four of these gifted leaders in detail, but please just notice that **verse 11** describes four different kinds of spiritual leaders:



Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. (The Greek grammar connects “shepherds” and “teachers” together so we know both words are actually describing the same person, and not two different people.¹⁹)

Interestingly, the apostles and New Testament prophets were already referred to back in **chapter 2**,

¹³ C.f. the excellent recommended book: *Creature of the Word* by Geiger, Patterson, & Chandler.

¹⁴ Psalm 19:7; 1 Peter 1:23

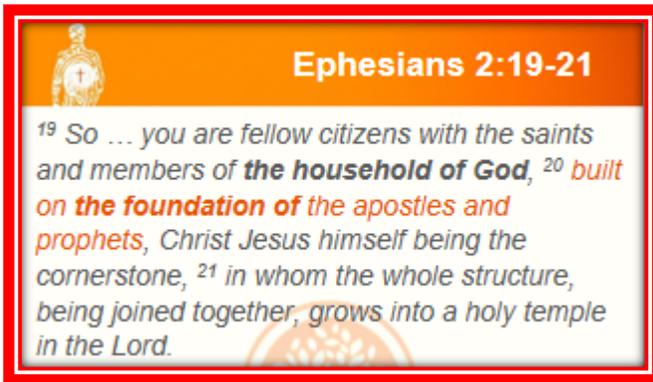
¹⁵ John 17:17; 1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 1:4

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Ephesians 4:12-15

¹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 2 Peter 3:13

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 4:2

¹⁹ The fact that one article is used for both nouns, along with the fact that the word “some” is not repeated for “teachers” indicates that Paul is describing one kind of person with two ministries, not two different people. Wallace suggests that “pastors” is subordinate to “teachers” and therefore “all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors.” C.f. 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9 which require all elders or overseers to be able to teach.



When Paul taught that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets...

So 2:20, along with chapter 3 verse 5, reveals that the apostles and New Testament prophets were responsible to lay the New Testament foundation of the church²⁰ by receiving and declaring the revelation of God's Word,²¹ and confirming its authenticity with "signs and wonders and miracles."²²

²⁰ Ephesians 2:20; c.f. 1 Corinthians 12:28

²¹ Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11;

²² Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4

²³ Revelation 22:18

²⁴ Technically speaking, an apostle was someone who was an eye-witness to the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:2-3, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:7-9) who had received a specific commissioning from Christ Himself (Acts 1:24-26, 26:16-17; Romans 1:1; 1 Timothy 2:7; Galatians 1:1) and whose revelatory ministry was authenticated by miracles (2 Corinthians 12:11-12). Revelation 21:14 only lists 12 apostles in the foundation of the heavenly city. Therefore, Apostles are no longer given to Christ's church. Similarly New Testament prophets were those who were given spiritual understanding of "all mysteries and knowledge" (1 Corinthians 13:2), which referred to the Gospel truths of the New Testament. Since the early church did not have written copies of the Scripture for themselves, the New Testament prophets were responsible to speak God's truth for "edification,

I have provided supporting Scripture references in today's footnotes, but once the canon of Scripture was closed²³ the church no longer needed these foundational leaders,²⁴ and now Jesus' church is led by gifted evangelists and pastor-teachers.



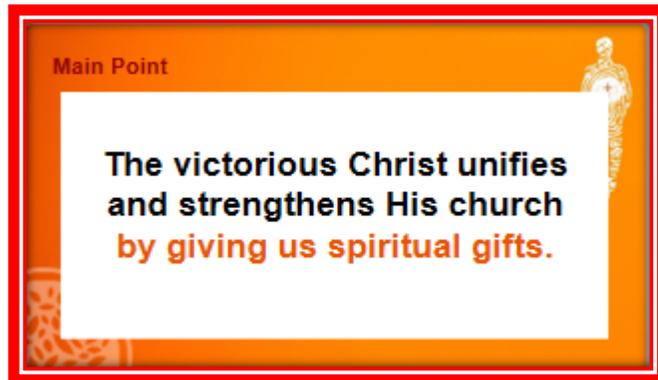
The evangelists²⁵ are those gifted by God's grace to spread the good news or preach the Gospel. The pastor-teacher is also referred to as an elder or an overseer²⁶ in

encouragement, and consolation" (1 Corinthians 14:3). Sometimes the New Testament prophets spoke revelation directly from God (Acts 11:21-28) and sometimes they simply expounded or taught revelation that was already given (implied in Acts 13:1). NT prophets always spoke for God but did not always give a newly revealed message from God (1 Corinthians 14:31). The prophets were second to the apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28) and the teaching of NT prophets was always to be subjected to the judgment of the apostles (1 Corinthians 14:37). But again, once the canon of Scripture was revealed and recognized, and the eye-witnesses of Jesus' resurrection had passed away, the spiritual leadership of the church transitioned from these foundational "apostles and prophets" to evangelists and pastor-teachers.

²⁵ The technical term for "evangelist" only occurs 2 other times in the NT: first as a designation for Philip in Acts 21:8, and second as a kind of ministry that Paul exhorted the young pastor Timothy to perform in Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:5).

²⁶ Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; c.f. Hebrews 13:7, 17

the New Testament, and is gifted by God's grace to feed the flock the food of God's Word – teaching²⁷ and leading²⁸ and nourishing and protecting God's people with the very words of God Himself.²⁹

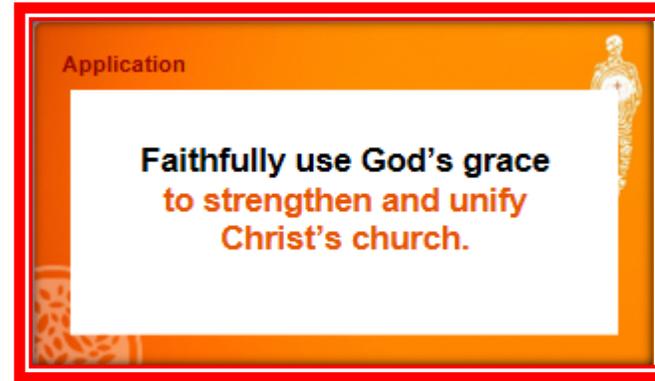


And in this way, the victorious Christ unifies and strengthens His church by giving us spiritual gifts. Gifted evangelists and pastor-teachers equip gifted saints for the work of the ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. But we'll have to wait until next time to dig deeper into Jesus' building campaign of love for His church.

For now, let me exhort you to respond in faith and obedience to what we've learned so far from **verses 7-11**,

²⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9

²⁸ Acts 15:22, 20:28; Titus 1:5



And faithfully use God's grace to strengthen and unify Christ's church. We must all reject the spectator mindset. We must get off the proverbial couch of selfishness, and push away from the proverbial table of consumerism.

Jesus has lavishly poured out His grace upon each of us for the building up of His church – never for our own personal gain or pride.

So let me ask you some application questions:

First, have you been captivated by Jesus? I'm not asking if you attend church or call yourself a Christian. I'm seriously asking you to consider whether you have ever repented of your sins and truly trusted that Jesus came down from heaven to conquer Satan, sin, and death in your place and then rose up to live as Your Lord and King forever?

²⁹ 1 Timothy 5:17

If you're not yet living as a slave to Christ, then this message is a gospel invitation to you. You must submit to God's gospel calling before you will ever experience gospel conduct. Trust Jesus today for your salvation, and you will receive both the grace unto salvation and grace to serve.

Next, ask yourself, am I presently serving in the supernatural ministry of my local church as God would have me to serve in this present season of my life?

Because the best way to begin using God's grace for ministry is not actually to take a spiritual gifts test...but rather to cultivate a spiritual character of love that actually desires to build up God's body and strengthen others in their faith.

Let me say it this way: those who most faithfully use God's grace for ministry are those who focus more on their spiritual character rather than their spiritual gifts. Because only those who are filled with the Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit – which is love.³⁰ And since all spiritual gifts aim at producing love (not selfish entitlement) and faith (not self-confidence),³¹ then our focus must first be on living under the control of God's Spirit in all my relationships with others.³²

Never mistake the operation of a spiritual gift for spiritual maturity or spiritual fruit. Pastor Tim Keller once said,

³⁰ Galatians 5:22-23

³¹ 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:16

³² Ephesians 5:18

“Gifts without fruit is like a tire without air. You will eventually collapse.”

So if you're not cultivating your prayer life, or walking in the Spirit, but your feverishly busy in all kinds of ministry.. you're cruising for a bruise!

You must first let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.³³ This is the character of faith that necessarily undergirds all spiritual ministry in Christ's church.

Then, simply start by serving prayerfully in the opportunities that are already around you in your local church. As one pastor said, “It's much easier to discover your gift through ministry, than to try to discover your ministry through your gift.”³⁴

So simply pray and listen and look to see what needs to be done. Ask yourself,

Who is someone whose faith I could strengthen? How could I express my faith in Jesus in a way that would encourage others to have greater faith in Jesus?

And then start humbly ministering to others with your words and your works. When you speak, make sure you are communicating God's Words, not your words. When you serve, make sure you are serving by the strength that God supplies, and not your own.³⁵ And when you notice that Jesus is being glorified and your church is

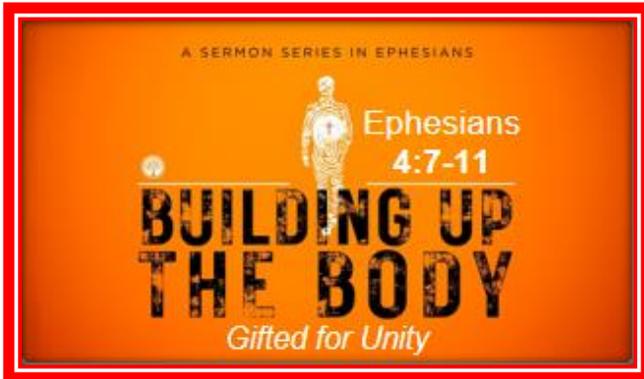
³³ Colossians 3:16

³⁴ Rick Warren

³⁵ 1 Peter 4:10-11

becoming stronger and more unified because of your ministry, then you've discovered your spiritual gift!

So church... let's demystify and defreak spiritual gifts. Our victorious Christ had given every one of us a personalized allotment of His enabling grace, so that His church might be better unified and strengthened.



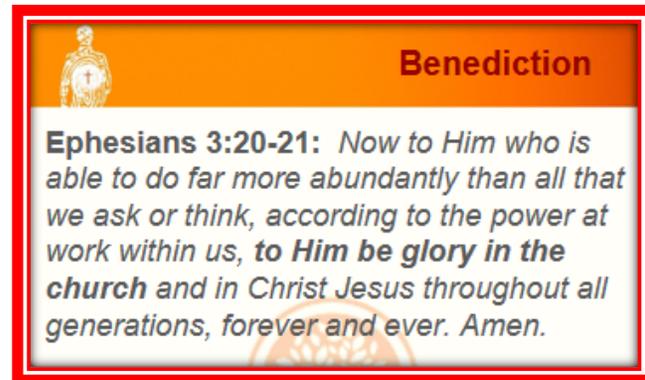
We've truly been gifted for unity. May we never neglect to use what Jesus has so graciously given to us.

Let's pray.

<<Take My Life and Let it Be>>



<<Exit Offering for K&H today>>



Let's pray aloud our benediction from **Ephesians 3:20-21**:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Recommended Resources on Ephesians 4:1-11:

- Psalm 68:17-18
- Romans 12:6-8; 14:19; 15:2-3
- 1 Corinthians 4:7; 12:1-31; 14:12, 26, 40
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- 1 Timothy 4:14
- Hebrews 13:20-21
- 1 Peter 4:10-11

- <https://myncbc.org/about/beliefs-values-mission/> “What do we teach regarding spiritual gifts?”
- “The Expectant Church-Part 2” sermon on 1 Peter 4:7-11 at NCBC on Sept 16, 2018 - <https://myncbc.org/media/the-expectant-church-part-2/>
- “Supernatural Church” sermon on 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 at Bethany Baptist on July 31, 2011 - <https://www.bethanycentral.org/sermons/supernatural-church/>

- *Spiritual Gifts*, Thomas Schreiner
- *Old Paths, New Power*, Daniel Henderson
- *Life in the Father’s House*, Wayne Mack
- *Creature of the Word*, Geiger, Patterson, & Chandler

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Ephesians 4:7. Why is it foolish to compare yourself with others, or hoard the grace God has given you for the benefit of others? (c.f. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26) Has Jesus short-changed any believer with the grace that they need?

2. Review Ephesians 4:7. What is the definition of a “spiritual gift”? (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10).
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. What spiritual gift of God’s grace have you received for the building up of your local church? Generally speaking, is it a grace-gift to speak or serve? From 1 Peter 4:10-11, how can you discern whether you are practicing your spiritual gift or just some other natural ability or proficiency?
4. Read Psalm 68:17-18 and Ephesians 4:8-10. Why does Paul insert this thought about Christ’s victorious triumph after Ephesians 4:7? How does Jesus “fill all things” in light of 1:23?
5. Read 1 Peter 4:10 and 1 Corinthians 12:7. What is God’s purpose for His bestowal of an unique manifestation of grace upon every believer? Do you think of God’s spiritual gifts as a privilege or a responsibility, and how come?
6. Do you believe you are involved in the ministry of your local church as God would have you to be at this season of your life? Share and explain your answers. Pray God will help you all make whatever adjustments are necessary in order for you all to be able to joyfully answer “yes” to this question.
7. Review Ephesians 4:11. Why are apostles and prophets no longer active in the church today (Acts 1:2-3; Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 12:12; Rev 21:14)? What do all four of these spiritual guides have in common?