

For West Side

Equipping the Saints

Introduction

I've been thinking about the recent past here at West Side, since COVID and some before and reflecting on that time. While our numbers have gone down about half as a result of COVID, we have experienced some good teaching here. I look at the list of class materials for Sunday & Wednesday and all the sermons since 2020 that we have on our website and say, "we have a lot to offer." We are continuing to learn more about the truth presented in the scriptures.

Just a quick glimpse of our Education web page shows the many lessons and sermons taught:

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| The Elementary Teachings | A Study of Romans | A Study of Peter |
| Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit | Types & Antitypes | Jesus, "I will build My church" & the building/builder metaphor |
| Study of Hebrews | The Angel of the Lord, God | The Sermon on the Mount |
| Christian Apologetics | The Sons of Thunder | The Cursed Fig Tree |
| The Blessings of Obedience | The Curses of Disobedience | Do not sell your inheritance |
| Working out our salvation | Ezek 18 - the soul who sins dies | The church Jesus built |
| Forgiveness & remission of sins | The Atoning sacrifice | Jacob |
| Hebrews, faith to endure | Balaam's folly | Satan's toolbox |
| Cain & Abel | Know that Jesus was resurrected | David & Saul, David & Goliath, David & Jonathan, David & Absalom, and David & Solomon |
| The seven woes | Jesus is the tabernacle | Parable of the marriage feast |
| The lamb of God | Spiritual surveillance | Moses' bronze serpent |
| The trip to the afterlife | The Great I AM | Mystery of redemption |
| An expanse in the midst | No one knows the day or the hour | Mercy |
| Parable of the mustard seed | The Rock of ages | As Iron sharpens iron |
| The master of storms | Is there a balm in Gilead? | Paul goes to Corinth |
| I AM the light of the world | Christ is my banner | By faith Moses |
| The amazing spider silk | Psalm 23 | The resurrection & the life |
| I AM the door | Perfect peace | Spiritual warfare |

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| Seven threats of our time | Victory in Christ | The Rise of the scoffer |
| I AM the good shepherd, | I AM the way | Satisfied with the Lord |
| God is so good | Rise of malevolent compassion | I AM the true vine |
| Loss of the noble male | Lessons from King Saul | Massive Earthly power |
| What do you rely on? | Rise of a demonic worldview | There is none like our God |
| Who is on the Lord's side? | We fear not death | The attack upon the biblical family |
| God is merciful | Understanding our times | The Father of lights |
| Precious promises | Do people rise from the dead? | Keep moving forward |

And soon we will be going over Del Tackets', The Truth Project & The Engagement Project

We've studied a lot and we presented a lot. We know a lot. We have a lot to offer the lost.

We have all the pieces. More accurately, we've always had all of the pieces in the scriptures, we just need to discover and put the pieces together that will help us carry out the work God has for us to do.

With this in mind...

I would like us to look at Ephesians 4:11-13

Read Ephesians 4:11-16, overall

Let's go back to verse 11 and begin our study

Ephesians 4:11-13

And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists (NKJV), the shepherds and teachers (ESV),¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (NASB), 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,

The Saints have a purpose and they need to be prepared.

Notice that God gave us leaders "to equip the saints..." The apostles and prophets and evangelist, shepherds, and teachers have a responsibility, to equip the saints. For the purpose that God intends, it is necessary that the saints be prepared to perform that purpose. And the whole of the church leadership positions, all of them, have been designed and given to the church to carry out this preparing or equipping of the saints.

- **"For the work of service"** (NASB),

I like the NASB translation using the word, "service." Other translations say: *ministry*. The work of *ministry*. David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd in their commentary on the book of Ephesians say, "Preaching is the prominent idea connected with the work of ministry **at the present day**. The Preacher is the *minister*..."

David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd continue: "There are two different words used in the Greek to designate the work of serving and the work of preaching the gospel... The term used here, translated *ministering* (ASV) is the one which designates work of service or ministering to the wants of the afflicted—first of the household of faith; secondly of all the suffering mortals of the earth."

Now let me ask you, does it make sense that God would supply the various church leader positions, one of which **IS** the *evangelist* (*the preacher*), to prepare the saints to all be evangelists, one of the church leadership positions? Or would it make more sense to supply the leaders to prepare the saints to do something other than become one of the leadership positions, the evangelist? And I believe David Lipscomb & J.W. Shepherd got it right, the saints are to do works of service ministering to the wants [and needs] of the afflicted, using their words.

And the leadership is to equip the saints...

- **"For building up the body of Christ"**

For building up... the saints will do the building up of the body of Christ (ie the church, Eph 5:23; Col 1:18). The leadership equips them to do that work. What might the equipping be? And once equipped, what might the saints be doing to build up the body of Christ?

I think there is a good passage that directly addresses these questions. Paul using the building metaphor tells the Corinthians in...

1 Corinthians 3:9-13 (ESV)

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

Paul laid a foundation for the Corinthians upon which they could build. They were not at liberty to build a new or another foundation, but they could build on top of the already existing foundation. Whatever they build would be tested.

Paul again gives us some insight when he tells the Ephesians about Jesus in...

Ephesians 2:17-22 (ESV)

*And he [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens **with the saints** and members of the household of God, ²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,** ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, **grows into a holy temple in the Lord.** ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the saints. Today it would be the evangelists, shepherds and teachers laying that foundation. With Jesus being the chief cornerstone to whom the whole structure is aligned. If the whole structure is aligned to Jesus, then we better know something about Jesus. We need to know a lot about Jesus or we'll be out of alignment.

Let me suggest that most of our studies deal with the foundational part of building God's house (His temple). Even our studies into the solid food for the mature. Little of what we've done so far, to me, seems to address our building on top of that foundation given by the apostles (including Jesus, Heb 3:1) and prophets.

However, I think (and yes this is my opinion), I think the Truth Project of building a Christian worldview to live by and the Engagement Project for how we may engage a culture of those who have a depraved mind both are efforts to build upon the foundation we've been given. Hopefully, as we move into these studies we can move on to building up the body of Christ.

This instruction to equip the saints

For the work of service and building up the church is to continue, verse 13 says...

- **Until we all attain to the unity of the faith**

Henry Halley in his Bible handbook comments on these ideas of the church being "one body" and of "the unity of faith."

He says,

"The church is nearly 2,000 years old, and, in this respect, is still in its childhood state. It has not yet, in its visible manifestation as a whole, known Unity. Paul's unceasing fight was against factional elements in local churches and the Jew-Gentile dissension. Then came the bitter controversies of the 2nd to 4th centuries. Then the Imperial Church, with its outward semblance of Unity under State authority, but poisonous blight of its spiritual life. Then the Papal Hierarchy with its Unity of Authority that robbed men of their rights of conscience and drove the Bible out of circulation.

"Then, 400 years ago, the Protestant break for freedom. Naturally, when men began again to think for themselves, after the long night of Papal bondage, they would see things somewhat differently; and it was inevitable that the Protestant Movement would go down the years in different streams. So we still have a Divided Christendom. Whether there will ever, in this world, be an outward organic Unity of the Visible Church, we do not know. The selfishness and pride of men are against it. But there always have been, and still is, a Unity in the Invisible Church, of God's true saints, which, somehow, sometime, somewhere, will come to full fruition, in answer to Christ's own prayer (John 17), and manifest itself as the full grown body of Christ."

And equipping the saints continues until the saints attain...

- **And knowledge of the Son of God**

We've already mentioned how important having a knowledge of the Son of God is, since He is the cornerstone on which the whole foundation is built upon.

- **To mature manhood,**
Christianity is a process. We are to continue growing up in every way (v15) into the image of Jesus. A maturing must take place.
- **To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,** The whole point of us becoming Christians is for us to "be transformed" from the world "by the renewal of our mind" (Romans 12:2) and "conform to the image" of Christ (Romans 8:29). We should look like Jesus... until we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

In other words, this instruction continues to be needed and probably won't be accomplished until Jesus returns and the faith becomes sight.

What is the purpose of this instruction? Why do it?

Ephesians 4:14-16 (ESV)

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.*

- **So that we may no longer be children,**
We need to mature as Christians. We cannot continue to be infants, children in the faith. It means we have to put some effort into our faith. Not for our righteousness, we have no righteousness of our own (Romans 3:10; Phi 3:9). We are righteous because God gave us the righteousness of Jesus (Rom 3:22), when we became Christians, at baptism.

No, we need to mature because it will keep us from being...

- **Tossed to and fro by the waves** (i.e. driftwood)
- **And carried about by every wind of doctrine,**
- **By human cunning,**
- **By craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

That is, becoming mature Christians we keep us becoming influenced by our culture and its worldview as we saw through the 7 threats of our time series of studies.

A Glimpse of What This Solution Might Look Like

Ephesians 4:15,16 (ESV)

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.*

The result of the leadership putting effort into equipping the saints for the work of service and building up the church and the saints actually doing the work of service and building up the church for which they have been equipped WILL BRING ABOUT the maturing of the saints. That's the promise given here.

- **Speaking the truth in love**

Our motivation won't be what's the least I can do to squeak into heaven and still enjoy the pleasures of the world... In fact, our motivation will change from focusing on ourselves to focusing on doing good for others.

- **We are to grow up in every way into... Jesus**

We will begin to conform to the image of Christ. We will begin to look like Jesus

Because after all...

- Jesus is the head
- from Him the whole body is
 - Joined and held together by every joint (member)
 - Which is equipped (the leaders have been actively equipping the saints)
 - Each part (individual) working properly

For what purpose?

MAKES THE BODY GROW SO THAT IT BUILDS ITSELF UP IN LOVE!

That's the result, that's the promise. Do we believe it?

THIS IS AN AMALGAMATION OF FOUR TRANSLATIONS

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NKJV, ESV, NASB, NIV)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some [shepherds (ESV)] and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of [service (NASB)], for [building up (ESV)] the body of Christ, ¹³ [until (ESV)] we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to [become mature (NIV)], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 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 of deceitful [schemes (ESV)], ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, [we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (ESV)] ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and [held (ESV)] together by what every joint supplies, [when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)]

THIS IS THE ESV ONLY

Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV)

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.