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June 9, 2013

EPHESIANS 4:7-13

Ephesians: Recognizing Who You Are in Christ

Good morning. Ephesians 4 this morning.

This afternoon I encourage you to come out to the outreach. It's for the whole community, so just come out and hang out with us. I'll be there just hanging out with people. We can sit and talk and I can get to know some of you a little better than I know you now. If you'd like to come out, I'll be there for a while taking some leadership there and helping out, but also being available.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the privilege of being a church, a spiritual entity that your Spirit empowers and works through. Today, Lord, as we talk about the church, what it is and what it should be, we ask that you would give us a clearer picture of our identity as a church, but also our role in it as individuals. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

We are in Ephesians 4. I want to bring you from where we were last week to where we are going today. I'm going to start by reading the first part of the chapter, Ephesians 4:1-6, give us some information about how we should walk in our Christian life, and then verse 7 is where we're going to start this week. But let me read you verses 1-6 to bring you up to speed to where we are.

It says, *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* He's talking about how our personal walk is very important. He ends here on unity and he's going to illustrate the unity with seven things.

We talked about this all last week, but I'm trying to bring you where we're going. Here are the seven things that unite us. He says, *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

This passage starts for us and then leads us into verse 7. Now look at verse 7 because it's going to tell us how to do those things. How are we empowered to live the life worthy of the calling that we've received? Verse 7 says, *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.* This is going to be the key verse, pivotal verse in this passage that's going to help us move from one place to the next.

So please understand, how do we live every day? How do we walk this life that's worthy of the calling? How do we have humility and gentleness? How do we bear with one another in unity? How do we do all of those things? We do it through verse 7, which says, *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

I want to take this again like we did last week. Instead of verse by verse, we're going word by word. I want you to see some words that are important.

Notice that it says *each one*. That means everybody. That means you and me and the other person that we're trying to relate to all have access to God's grace. It's very important for us to connect people to God's grace. We don't connect them just to a church, we don't just connect them to me personally or to you personally. We connect them to God's grace. That is our objective because it's the grace of God that empowers them to live the life worthy that they've been called to live. So *each one*. That's the first part. Every person gets this, whatever it is that we're going to talk about.

Notice next it says *grace has been given*. This word *grace* is divine energy. I don't think people understand what this grace is sometimes. If you're having a problem in your life, you need God's grace. If you're trying to do something for the Lord, you need God's grace. We need God's grace to do all kinds of things and it's really this supernatural ability or presence or energy or something that comes into us that allows us to do whatever it is. "Lord, I need your help to overcome a habit." "Lord, I need your help today to go through this meeting." "Lord, I need your help today to calm my heart." God then gives us a supernatural energy, something different than just willpower. We're talking about something that God provides. This is a grace. That's what it's called.

Grace means gift and God gives it to us in a powerful way. So if you want to walk worthy, if you want to walk the life that God has called you to walk, you want God's grace.

As we've said before and we've learned already in Ephesians, God gives grace to everybody, but only certain people receive it. You have to be able to receive it. Let's say you're trying to work on certain areas of your life. You might say, "Oh, I really have a problem in this area." Well, it's one thing to say you have a problem; it's another thing to say, "God, I want your supernatural energy in my life in this area. I want to make you Lord of my life in this area. I want you to control me." That's what grace does. Grace then comes in at that moment and gives us something.

Often it requires that we give up something in our lives. Maybe give up control. "Lord, I'm going to give up control of this thing. I know I've been really pressured in it and I've been angry about it and I've been worried about it. Lord, I'm going to give up control." As soon as we give up that control, God says, "Okay. Now you're ready. Now you can receive the energy, you can receive the grace." And so He gives it to us.

Grace is really important. Every one of us needs it every day. This isn't something we just get on Sunday, this is something very important in our hearts that we need.

It is the grace, and notice it's *been given as Christ apportioned it*. Christ is the giver, but the *apportioned it* is really important. That means God's handing out servings of grace. Christ is doing that. He's handing out servings of grace. That's not to say that some people are going to get more than others. We're not talking about amount as much as we're talking about meeting the needs that we have. Your needs are different than this person's needs or this person's needs.

God says, "Okay. I've got a package of grace designed for that need. I'm going to give it to you. I've got a Jim package for you, Jimmy, so you can deal with your grace. I've got something for you, Mary, that I'm going to give to you that's the grace that you need for your life." Christ apportioned it. He gives it out to each one of us. When we receive that grace, it's designed specifically for us. Christ is the one who apportions us.

We can't say, "That's not fair. He gets that over there." God doesn't work on the fairness principle that fair means equal. He just doesn't do that. He apportions everybody their own allotment that they need. You need grace in your life, a package that has your name on it, and God has designed that for you and it's apportioned, and He wants to give it to you. You just have to position yourself in the place to receive it, which sometimes means saying, "God, I'm ready to listen." Or "God, I'm ready to give this up." Or "Lord, I want you to do this in my life." When you're ready to come to that point of submission and say, "God I need you," then that's when the grace of God is able to come into your life and deal with that particular area. That's what he's talking about here in this grace.

Verse 7 is a bridge verse because it's leading us from 1-6, which is talking about how we're going to use grace to live our lives in a worthy fashion, to a passage that's going to talk about the church and the value of the church in all of our lives. We're going to learn about that today. So verse 7 is talking about grace and then Paul kind of bridges that grace to talk about a specific kind of grace.

God has given all of us the church. When I refer to the church today I'm not talking about Calvary Chapel Living Hope because Calvary Chapel Living Hope is a local church. Every person, whoever they are, needs to be involved in a local church. God has given us the church for a purpose, but it expresses itself in a local manifestation. So if you're visiting with us today and you're not a part of Calvary Chapel Living Hope then you want to take a message back with you in your heart to go back and be a part of the church that you're committed to. You want to be connected to a church. Being part of a church is not optional, it's part of God's grace that He gives to us and now we're going to expand on that and understand it.

Notice in verse 7 it says, *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it*. I want you to see here that that grace is God's power that He's given. Paul uses the word elsewhere. In Ephesians 3:7 he says this: *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power*. So grace is this working of His power that God gives to us and that's how Paul became this servant of Christ.

Here's another verse that helps us: Ephesians 3:20. We looked at this one already. *God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*. That's what we want and that's the grace of God ready to work and do this special thing.

God is in the business of doing new things. That's what He wants to do. When He did His first miracle He turned water into wine. He took something very natural and supernaturally turned it into something else that was natural that people could be able to see and drink and use. God did something new out of something that already existed. God, through His grace, wants to do the same thing in your life and my life. He wants to take something very natural, you and me, and He wants to empower us with His grace.

When Christ was walking along the Sea of Galilee He called out to James and John and He said to them, "You guys, fishermen there, come and follow me and I will do something supernatural in you. I will do something new in you. *I will make you fishers of men.*"

God is in the business of taking people and turning them into something new, something special. So what He does is He turns water into wine, He turns sinners into saints, He turns fishers into fishers of men. God takes each one of us through His grace and develops in us something that He wants for us. He's apportioned it; He's designed it specifically for you and me.

Now he goes into verse 8. I want to read to you verses 8-10 which are partly a quote from the Old Testament. I'm going to tell you where the quote comes from to lead us into this emphasis on the church and what the church is.

Verse 8: *This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)*

Christ not only ascended back to heaven, but He's here in the earthly regions with us and it's talking about giving gifts to His people. We're going to come to the next verse in a moment where he's talking about Christ giving gifts.

He's using an illustration that comes from the Old Testament and this illustration comes from Psalm 68. This is a real fun psalm, Psalm 68. It's a psalm that really talks about a number of things, but one of the quotes that I love out of Psalm 68 is that God takes the lonely and puts them in families. I like that because I talk about family all the time, and one of the purposes of families is to take the lonely and put them in families. But that's not what the quote is about.

The quote comes from verse 15 of Psalm 68 talking about Mount Bashan, this beautiful, majestic mountain and how it might look on Mount Zion which is where the Temple is. It's where Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice or got ready to do that. That's that mountain where Jerusalem is. That's Mount Zion. In verse 15 it says, *Mount Bashan, majestic mountain, Mount Bashan, rugged mountain, why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain, at the mountain where God chooses to reign (which is Mount Zion), where the Lord himself will dwell forever?*

The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary that is on Mount Zion. Now here's the quote that's taken in Ephesians 4.

When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious—that you, Lord God, might dwell there.

This is an exalting psalm where David is going up to Jerusalem, he's rejoicing in the fact that he's conquered his enemies. He's getting lots of gifts that are given to him. He's just relaying this sense of God's presence is there and God has given him these gifts, some other people have given him these gifts. Somehow Paul, in his mind, in Ephesians 4 is saying, "I remember that passage about all these gifts being given in the sanctuary of God," and he uses that as the illustration. It connects with him and so he shares that with us in Ephesians 4 and tells us about his. So the things you really want to remember out of this illustration, it's something about giving gifts and Christ giving gifts.

We're going to come out of that and Christ has given us some gifts. These are all about church. We're first going to learn about church leadership and then we're going to learn about church functioning.

Notice verse 11. Let's go there in Ephesians 4 now. *So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.* I want you to see in your Bible the word *the*. I know the word 'the' isn't a very important word sometimes, but it is an article. That's what we call it, an article. In Greek the word 'the' is important. It's a significant thing because it's setting them up.

Notice there are five words, but only four articles. Do you see that there? It says *the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers*. It doesn't have *the* before *teachers*, which leads us to believe that there are four offices mentioned there and that the 'the' before *pastors* ties *pastors* and *teachers* together. So it's really pastor-teacher.

Sometimes you'll hear people referring to the office of pastor as pastor-teacher. That's why they get this here because as you look in the passage there isn't an article before these.

It doesn't look like there are five; it looks like there might be four. It's not a significant piece of information. So what if there were five? You'd have teachers and you'd have pastors in the church, which we do, but it doesn't seem to look like that in the case. Not that it makes a big difference.

But I want you to see that these are things that Christ gave. They are gifts that are given to us. This is leadership within the church that God has provided for us. Four offices.

We also hear about spiritual gifts. You know about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12 where everybody has a spiritual gift and those spiritual gifts allow us to serve and speak and teach and comfort and so on. Everybody has one. If you're a Christian you have a spiritual gift. But the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, spiritual gifts, are different than the ones we're seeing here in Ephesians 4 in three ways. Let me just point those out to you so you can see that there's a difference.

One, it seems that in Ephesians 4 we're talking about offices as opposed to activities. These are people that have offices as opposed to people that have activities. So these four different things are like offices within the church, number one.

Another difference between these gifts that we see here and the ones in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 is that these seem to focus on leadership within the body where the others seem to be focusing on ministering among us in the body. That's a distinction as well.

The third distinction is these seem to be given by the Son, Jesus Christ. The Son gave these, whereas we see in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 that the Holy Spirit is giving these spiritual gifts that we have. There seems to be a distinction between these two kinds of gifts that are being offered. These ones seem to be talking about leadership within God's church.

We have four different ones and I want to talk about them and I want to ask this question: Do we have them today? I think it's a relevant question. Do we have apostles today? If you ask the question do we have apostles today, you first must define what apostle means.

If we go to the Bible and try to define what apostle means, what we're going to find is this. Number one, the word is used as the original twelve apostles. There were twelve of them. It's used that way in Revelation when we're talking about heaven. This is a passage that's looking at what heaven's going to be like and how they're going to have this new city built and it's going to have walls and there are twelve foundations. It says in Revelation 21:14, *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* Referring to the twelve. There are no more. There are twelve. That's who they are.

There are sometimes when we think about these twelve like the founding fathers of our faith. Christ chose twelve, He built into those twelve, they become the names on the twelve foundations and so on. So when you hear in the scriptures it's talked about the church built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, we're referring back to the original twelve. That's what we're talking about.

Now obviously we have a problem because one of the twelve betrayed Christ. What do you do then? What name is going to be written on the twelfth foundation? I don't know the answer to that question. That's up to God. I'm sure He has a plan; I just don't know what it is. Some may say Paul became the twelfth apostle. That's just an idea. We don't know for sure what God's going to do about that, but all we do know so far is that there are twelve founding apostles. If you're going to define apostles that way then we're not talking about apostles today. We're talking about twelve that existed.

But there's another way that the word 'apostle' is used in the Bible and that's in 1 Corinthians 9:2. It is an example. Notice what Paul is saying to these people about the word 'apostle.' He says, *Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.* What he's saying is, "For you guys over there, I've had an influence in your life, helping you to become Christians, helping to start the church there. For to you I am an apostle."

In other words, the word ‘apostle’ here is defined more as having a founding influence in someone’s life or in a church’s life. This might be the missionary person or the person who leads someone to the Lord. They have a founding influence. That’s how the word is used here.

A third way that the word is used is in Acts 14:14. *But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd.* We have Barnabas being called an apostle because he’s a sent one. The word ‘apostle’ means to send. So here they are missionaries being sent out and so they are called apostles.

Now let’s go back to our question because once we understand what the Bible says and how it uses this word in three different ways we can answer the question. Do we have apostles today? Well, if we’re talking about founding fathers then the answer is no. But if we’re talking about people who have a founding influence, or people who are missionaries that go out and start things, or people who lead people to the Lord, those could be considered apostolic.

I want to warn you. Here’s where the problem happens sometimes in church life. Someone who’s a number three or a number two who has an influence in someone else’s life takes on the authority as if they were a number one. They start speaking it to people’s lives and they start being very heavy-handed in their leadership in the life of the church. There are some churches we say are almost like cults because the leadership has such an important role in everybody’s life. You want to get married? You’ve got to go talk to the apostle or whatever they call the leader. You want to buy a house? You’ve got to talk to the founding leader there. Because the leaders have significant control over what’s happening.

We want to be careful of that. That is not what God designed. God designed the church to be a place we have leaders. It is good to get advice. I think it’s good to ask your pastor for advice, although your pastor might not have any in that situation. But he might; you never know. It’s good to get advice. But when pastors start controlling the lives of people then we have a problem and we want to be careful of that.

The second word that’s used is *prophet*. Do we have prophets today? Again, in order to define this we have to talk about what it is. Remember 1 Corinthians 12; we have a spiritual gift of prophecy. We have that spiritual gift that exists, but here we’re talking about an office of a prophet.

I think we have to understand the difference between foretelling and forthtelling. Foretelling is telling the future, as we saw many of the prophets do. And then also we have forthtelling where we’re being very strong and telling people a word from the Lord.

For example, when Jonah came to the city of Nineveh he said to the Ninevites, “If you do not repent, then God’s going to destroy this city.” That’s what he said. Very forthtelling. It wasn’t necessarily predictive in nature, but it was saying, “Here’s how God works and He’s going to destroy this city if you do not repent.” A word from the Lord that God was giving to them.

It's very possible that we have prophets today that have this ability. They just have this way of speaking that God pours His grace right through. We listen to those prophets and we go, "Wow. God spoke to me today."

There are other people, though, who like to go around sharing a word from the Lord. I want to be careful about how we talk about this. I do believe that God shares words from the Lord with individuals through other people. Someone may come up to you at some point and say, "I have a word from the Lord for you." I would suggest you listen to them and evaluate it. But just because someone says it, doesn't mean it came from the Lord. You must evaluate whether it is.

If I ever say that to someone, I always say it this way: "I believe the Lord has given me a word for you." In other words, I want to put some humility in there because I might be wrong. I may sense it. "There's a scripture verse I want to share with you. I believe this is for you." But I might be wrong so I have to be very humble in my approach that I don't come in and pretend to be God in someone's life. All I am is a conduit of grace, so I have to remain humble. I may be passionate about what that person needs, but the way I share it with that person is very important.

Be careful about words from the Lord. You want to listen. I always listen. If someone comes up to me and says, "I have a word from the Lord for you," I'm eager to hear it. But sometimes I think as Christians we like shortcuts. We like shortcuts that say, "Here's a fast way for me to get the information I need to live my life." So if someone says, "I have a word from the Lord for you," I say, "Oh good. I want to hear it," then I don't have to do all the work of Bible study, right?

Here's the reality. You want a word from the Lord? Study the Bible. That's the best way you're going to get a word from the Lord. If someone comes and says, "I have a word from the Lord for you," then take it to the Lord and take it to the scriptures and see if it matches up.

Prophets. Prophets command attention. They're the ones who can speak into our lives. We're grateful for them.

The third word that's used there is the word *evangelist*. An evangelist is someone ministering within the body of Christ that stirs us all up to be able to share Jesus with other people. Someone who equips us. That's an evangelist; someone who has the ability to allow us and equip us to share Jesus with other people.

The fourth word is a *pastor-teacher*. Pastor has this idea of caring for people. Teacher has this idea of passing on the word and sharing the word with people.

One of the things I really like about the Calvary Chapel movement is that it's simplified the role of the pastor and his job description. In a Calvary Chapel you don't have to go to three or four years of seminary in order to be a pastor.

I went to seminary and I'm really grateful for my seminary experience. Studying the Bible and studying the original languages and studying theology for three years of my life was powerful in preparing me to do what I do. So I highly recommend it. I think it's great, except when people

think that because they have the credential then they're somehow qualified to be a pastor. I think sometimes people have more of a credential than they have the Holy Spirit, and really it's the Holy Spirit that empowers someone to be a pastor and do the work of pastoring.

In the Calvary Chapel movement we don't require people to have gone through seminary in order to be a pastor. The person who's a pastor has a two-fold job description: love people and teach the word. That's it. Love people and teach the word. That's the job. It's not that complicated. Love people and teach the word.

If someone comes and says, "I want to be a pastor," I say, "Great. Here's what you do. Come in the morning, set up chairs with us, or clean up afterwards. As you're cleaning up, stop someone and say, 'Hey, what's the Lord doing in your life this week? How can I pray for you?' You'll start pastoring people while you're picking up chairs and cleaning things up. God will start building in you the same thing He did with Moses. When Moses was going to be a leader, God said to Moses, 'I want you to go back and raise sheep for a while.' 'Learn how to raise sheep, David, before you can be the king of Israel.'" God uses shepherds as that same idea as pastoring.

Go learn how to do it and start caring for people. You might lead a small group and start caring for people. God may bring something into your heart that says, "Wow. I really like this," and people are ministered to. God may move you into position of being a pastor. One of the jobs of a pastor is to care for people. Love people and teach the word. That's really what we're talking about here.

Now we take those four different offices, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers, and they are the gifts that Christ gave to the church for a specific reason. When they come into the church then they enable the church to do what it needs to do.

Let me just say something to you for a moment before I look at this next passage. I was just thinking this week, what is the church? Some people believe faith is a very private matter and you don't want to really share it with other people. Other people believe the church is a hobby. "I think I'll take on church for a while because I'd like to do that." Church is not a hobby; church is part of what God has called us to as believers.

Every believer should be a part of a church somewhere. It doesn't have to be this church. They should be connected to a church. Connected where they can receive and give, they can be serving and receiving service. Because it's in the midst of that experience that God allows growth to take place in their lives. It's very significant that you be connected to a church. If God is calling you to this church, I say connect yourself. Whatever that means for you.

Some people say, "I want to be a member of this church." Let me explain to you church membership. Someone asked, "Do we have membership at Calvary Chapel?" The answer is (I know some of you would say no), but the answer is yes, we have church membership. It's really important for you to understand that. We don't have an official list that you're on or not on, but church membership is in your heart. And yes, you want to be a member of the church. You want to say, "Yes, that's my church. That's where I'm committing myself to. That's where I'm serving. That's where I'm contributing my life in order to grow. That's where I'm receiving. I'm

connecting to them,” so that something’s going on in your life as a result of being a part of a church.

Having said all of that, let me say that something spiritual takes place here on Sunday mornings and during the week. The church is not a building. The church is not an organization, although there are some aspects of the church that are organization-like. We are filled with the government. We have spreadsheets and we have leadership charts and we have systems that make us look like an organization. But we’re really an organism. We’re alive and God is doing something continually within us that can’t be quantified on a spreadsheet. It’s a spiritual thing that happens inside of us. God is alive and working and He does that within the church. That’s what you want to be, connected to the church and being a part of it to watch that living thing take place inside your life.

It’s in the midst of all of that that it’s very refreshing for us to look at what Paul writes here in verses 12-13. Because in verses 12-13 of chapter 4 we have a description of what the church is to be about. How does it function? What does it do?

In verse 12 it says, *to equip his people for works of service*. Let me just stop right there because the word ‘service’ is the word *diakoneo* where we get our word ‘deacon’ from. Notice who’s doing the serving or ministering there. Does it say that those four offices are doing it, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers? Are those the ones that are doing the serving? Is that what it says? No. Look at what the passage says. Their job is to *equip his people for works of service*. Who’s doing the works of service? It’s everybody who’s part of the fellowship. They’re the ones doing the works of service. They’re the ones doing the ministering of the church.

I always get a little bit uncomfortable when somebody says, “He’s my minister,” referring to me. Because that’s the word used here: minister. I’m not the minister. You’re the minister. We’re all ministers. I’m a pastor, but I’m not the minister. Everybody’s being ministers here and so that’s the service. God designed the church to be in His place.

Good leadership in a church is going to create an atmosphere where people are able to use their gifts, they’re able to pass on their faith, and they’re able to be a part of the fellowship, connected and serving as ministers with one another. I like to say it this way: The most important words that are said today may not be said from me. The most important words that are said today may be from you as you talk to someone after church after we break up this time together.

You want to be thinking about how has God caused you or created you to minister within the fellowship? He has lots of different ways He does that. But it’s your job to be the minister. That’s what it’s talking about there.

Let’s go on to the word *equip*. *To equip his people for works of service*. The King James Version uses the word ‘perfecting.’ It gives a little flavor to the word ‘equip,’ but I’m not sure that’s the best idea here. These four offices are designed to equip.

What does it mean to equip? That's my job description. I want to know. I'm a pastor. What should I be doing to equip you as a pastor? What are some things? I look at the word 'equip' and where it is seen elsewhere in the Bible that gives me an idea of what it looks like.

Here's an example. In Matthew 4:21 here's the word 'equip' in this particular passage. *Going on from there, Jesus saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, **preparing** their nets.* That's the word 'equipping' that I want to do as a pastor. *Preparing their nets.* The King James Version uses the word *mending* their nets. You can imagine them getting the nets out, fixing any holes so that the nets could be used to catch fish. That's the word that's being used.

So my job as a pastor is to look around. Who needs to be mended here? Who needs to be prepared a little bit so they can catch fish? That's the idea of what it means to equip someone.

Let's go to another use of the word 'equip.' In Hebrews 11:3 it says, *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.* The words *was formed* is the word 'equipped.' There's some way in which what I want to do as a pastor is form or help equip people so that they can do the work of ministering. To make it happen, you see. So that's another use of the word.

Let me show you one more. Galatians 6:1: *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.* One of the works of a pastor, if a pastor's going to equip, is to restore someone. "You know what, we should talk about this. I think we need to bring you back in and get you moving in the right direction." How can we restore someone. The work of a pastor is to equip people so that they can do the ministry.

Who should be doing the ministry? Everybody, right? Is the pastor the one doing all the ministry? No. There are some people who believe that everybody comes to church on Sunday in order to watch the professionals do their job. No, no, no, no, no. Let's not do that, okay? Everybody's the minister here.

I like the church shirts that say "Staff" on them. Everybody who gets one it says "Staff" because everybody's part of the staff. That's what we're saying here. The pastor is a job to equip people in order to help them. That's what I want to do in order to move forward. It's not a leadership structure that, if you were drawing the boxes, here's the pastor and then underneath him is these people and then... No. Turn the whole thing upside down. The ministers are the ones at top. That's all of us. We're ministering. The pastor's the one feeding them in order to equip them to do ministry.

Are you getting the idea here? I just want you to know what it looks like and I want to invite you to be a minister. Maybe we should ordain you all today. You are now official ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I got a message this week from a lady through someone else. This is what she says: "How many times does someone have to not be there on Sunday morning before you recognize that they're gone?" Right away I called her up and I talked to her and I tried to minister to her and care for

her. That's my job. I need to be doing that. But I wonder if anybody else noticed that she was missing. See, we're all ministers here. In a church of about a hundred people like we have there's a lot of expectations on the pastor to be in touch with everyone. If we had five hundred people I don't think she would be calling me or contacting me or sending me a message that says, "How long does someone have to be missing before they get a call?" I did know that she was missing and I probably should have called beforehand, but I didn't. As soon as I knew, I called her. But that's something that all of us could be doing. We're ministers together. How can we do this together?

If you're going to call me something let's start by not calling me minister. Don't call me your minister. Also please don't call me reverend. There's only one reverend, that's God, He's holy. That's what reverend means. I don't even like it when I get called clergy because clergy comes from the Latin word 'priest.' And we're all believers, priests.

If you want to call me something, let's just keep it simple; call me Scott. If you want to put a title on there you can call me Pastor Scott. But the idea is that we are all in this thing together that we call church and we're trying to be the people that God wants us to be.

Verse 12 says, *to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith* (that's just kind of a unity that we're experiencing) *and in the knowledge of the Son of God* (that's the vertical) *and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

When Jesus was asked the question, *What is the greatest commandment?* He said, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.*" There's this two-fold pronged thing that we're trying to do together. We're trying to love God and understand who God is. We're also trying to understand how to love each other and do that in a wise way.

How are we going to do that in our lives? How are we going to be the church that God wants us to be? I invite you to be a part of that with us. Maybe God is speaking to you today and saying, "I want you to do such and such." I don't know what that looks like. I know that God does want all of us to be involved in ministry. I enjoy equipping them and getting them involved. Some people need to sit and soak for a while. I don't want you to feel guilty if God isn't prompting you to serve. But if He is, let's get you involved somehow. Let's get you contributing or caring for people or connected to people or doing something in regards to that.

I just want to tell you one story in closing. Some of you know that (and I've shared this before and I'll share it again, I'm sure, over and over again) that when I'm teaching on something on Sunday morning God does something in my life that week that illustrates the point of whatever it is. God does these things and illustrates in my life something about whatever I'm teaching. I was laughing this morning and I was telling some of the folks that started here I'm teaching this passage on how I am to equip other people for ministry. I'm not the one doing all the ministry, I'm equipping other people for ministry.

It so happens that this week Glen calls and says, “I can’t lead worship.” So you know who’s leading worship today? Me. Then it so happens that Peter and Terri went on a weekend away and they couldn’t bring the trailer over today, so I’m in charge of the trailer, so it’s on the back of my car. And then I got here at 7:30, because I don’t usually set up in the mornings, so I’m unloading the trailer by myself. I’m bringing this stuff in because everybody’s supposed to show up at eight, which is what they did. They came at eight o’clock. But I’m unloading the trailer and I’m laughing and I’m saying, “God, this is so funny. Here I am unloading the trailer on Sunday morning.” Not to be the minister or anything, but here’s what God is doing in my life.

I just laughed because I’m really grateful for all of the people that serve here. There’s so many. We could not do Sunday morning, we could not do church during the week, we could not do the things we do without the many people that are involved in this church. I am so grateful for you who are. I thank you for that. Because, you know what, it’s really a ministry to me. This is not a church where I’m the owner or the manager or something like that. I’m a pastor, I’m a person, I’m a person in this church, and my friends are in this church. The people I minister with, that’s a tremendous blessing for me. I appreciate that and I thank you for being the church with me. It’s a great place. I love coming here on Sunday morning, seeing what God’s going to do. I enjoy getting to know you and learning more about you and serving with you.

If the Lord is prompting you to do more in that area, maybe even get to know me, I’d love to do that. Come and hang out with me this afternoon a bit and we’ll get to know each other a little bit better. But let’s be the church together. Okay? Let’s pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love for us. We’re grateful for the gift you’ve given to us in the church. Thank you for that privilege that we have Christ as the head of the church, but you’ve given us this gift to fellowship, worship, serve together. Continue to tie us together, Lord, in some powerful ways. We consider it an honor to be a part of your church and to serve you. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Let’s continue to worship the Lord together.