

---

## WORKING TOGETHER CAUSES GROWTH

*Mark McCrary*

### *Leadership Gifts Given by God to the Church*

1. The gifts of revelators
  - a. Apostles
    1. The apostles referred to here seem to have been “the twelve” (Jn. 20:24; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor. 15:5). Their authority ran through the whole church.
    2. Regarding apostles: “Since their essential qualifications, function, and credentials cannot be duplicated today, we necessarily conclude that these functionaries are not personally present in the church today... We continue to benefit from this gift through the apostles’ doctrine.”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Prophets
    1. One who told the will of God through the process of inspiration
    2. God spoke through them, inspiring them with specific messages for specific times and places (Acts 11:28; 21:10; 21:9)
    3. Regarding prophets: “The work of the prophets was essential because the completed written revelation was not available to the brethren at the beginning. When it was finished, their work was concluded (1 Cor. 13:9-13)... Therefore, their function also no longer remains, except within the written revelation which some of them penned under the direction of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>
  - c. These two gifts revealed God’s word to the world and were hence called the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20)
2. The gifts of instructors
  - a. Evangelists
    1. Literally, the “bringers of good news.” These were men who gave themselves to proclaiming salvation by grace through faith
    2. They may have traveled (as Paul), or they may have been located in one place (Philip; Timothy).
  - b. Pastors
    1. Pastors are elders or bishops of the local church. They are men who have distinguished themselves through extraordinary living and set an extraordinary example among the saints. They are men who are qualified before all (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9)
    2. They shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They long to see people grow and develop.
  - c. Teachers
    1. This may not be distinct from the role of an elder in this verse; or, it may be a very general word for anyone who seeks to give information out to those who need it.
3. What we see in these verses is that while all have a role in unity and growth, God has placed some as leaders to inspire others to greater effort.

- a. APPLICATION: If the church is to grow, we must raise up men whom God can use for this process!

### ***The Work of the Leaders***

1. To equip the saints
  - a. The word “equip” means to place something into the state where it is useful (SEE “mending” in Mk. 1:9)
    - i. The work of these leaders in the Lord’s church is to place the members of the church into a useful state before God. It is the work of those in v. 11 to so educate, guide and help people to be where they ought to be in the church.
  - b. “Their aim is to see to it that the body of Christ is built up. Always the work of the office-bearer is construction, not destruction. His aim is never to make trouble, but always to see that trouble does not rear its head; always to strengthen, never to loosen, the fabric of the church.”<sup>3</sup>
2. To encourage service
  - a. Here we see that all the work (of the church) does not fall upon the shoulders of leaders. Spiritual service is the work of every Christian.
  - b. Through teaching God’s word, prayer and guidance, leaders set an example of how people serve.
3. When Christians serve one another in various ways, then the church is edified—built up
  - a. In v. 13, Paul wrote, “...till we all...” No one is left behind in the church. No member is unworthy of our time, energy and love (2 Thess. 5:14).

### ***The Aim of God’s Leaders***

1. Unity of the Faith
  - a. This faith is the system of believe; the body of truths; Christian doctrines.
    - i. Discord comes from a lack of maturity and ignorance of the word. Those in v. 11 were to disperse information to bring about growth
    - ii. The answer to Corinth’s divisions was unity of faith (1 Cor. 1:10)
  - b. When believers are properly taught, faithfully doing the work of service, unity of faith is the result; we are united in what the faith is.
2. Knowledge of Christ
  - a. Knowledge here does not mean to simply have some information about Christ. It speaks of intimacy and acquaintance (Phil. 3:8-10 & 12).
3. Perfection of God’s People
  - a. “Perfect” man means “complete,” “not lacking”
  - b. A “measure of the statue of the fullness of Christ”
    - i. God desire us to become like His Son (Rom. 8:29; 1 Jn. 2:6)
    - ii. The work of leaders is nothing less than to produce men and women who reflect Jesus Christ Himself every day.
  - c. These are lofty goals for the Christian! They are not content with mediocrity! Leaders are constantly urging a higher standard of living for the Lord’s people.
4. Doctrinal Stability

- a. “Just as many families today are dominated by their children, so are many churches.”<sup>4</sup>
    - i. Children lack knowledge; they are gullible; they lack experience and are uncertain of life—which way to go, whom to trust.
    - ii. Elders are to watch for those who seek to misdirect the flock of God (Acts 20:29); one of the best ways to do this is to make certain truth is taught so followers can recognize error.
  - b. The NT speaks often of “sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1)-- Sound doctrine is healthy teachings—teachings that help people grow closer to God
  - c. When we are so lead in sound doctrine, we will not be easily misled. However, when teaching is weak, churches are prone to weakness. They are not captivated by the word, and are often chasing after something new.
5. Loving attitudes
- a. Those in v. 11 are to speak the truth because they love people
    - i. People are the thrust in these verses. What drives a man to evangelize, shepherd or teach is a love for people. Men who seek to do any of these things without love as their motivation will ultimately fail miserably.
    - ii. Leaders in the church must first show how much they care before they can seek to rebuke or admonish others.
    - iii. “You show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer,” German poet Heinrich Heine
  - b. Those in v. 11 are to speak the truth in a loving way
    - i. 2 Tim. 2:24-26 is always a verse that teachers need to pay attention to (see also 1 Thess. 2:7-12)
    - ii. “The combination of truth and love counteract the two great threats to powerful ministry—a lack of truth and a lack of compassion.”<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Growth of God’s People***

1. At all times, Christ and the role He plays in our lives is front and center—He is our Sovereign Lord and King. He is the head of the church.
  - a. Our growths as individuals and as a church are in the end the result of Him, not the gifts mentioned in v. 11. They work for Him, but He works through them. It all goes back to Him.
2. God’s people also grow because everyone is busy—growing personally and bringing others with them.
  - a. “Where His people have close relationships and genuine spiritual ministry, God works... He does not look for creativity, ingenuity, or cleverness but for willing and loving obedience.”<sup>6</sup>
3. These two facts ought to humble evangelists, pastors and teachers.
  - a. They—we?—are vital tools that God uses to accomplish something great. But, we must remember we are where we are by the grace of God. And, we are here to motivate God’s people to help us do what we cannot do alone. Growth is a community effort—and that is what unity is all about.

**Questions:**

1. What emphasis can you find in this text for men in particular?
2. Are all of the roles mentioned in v. 11 relevant today? Think about your answer carefully.
3. How do you think people view the roles in v. 11 today? As a privileged position or one of service?
4. What are some practical ways leaders can equip God's people today?
5. The phrase "work of ministry" is very broad. Can you think of some specific actions that can be included in this?
6. What does the phrase "the knowledge of the Son of God" mean? What is the difference between *knowing of* someone/something and *knowing* someone/something?
7. Is it always easy to speak the truth in love? What is your greatest danger here?
8. Is every member really necessary to the local church? If so, how should that affect our attitude when the church must exercise church discipline?

**References**

- 1 Caldwell, Colly, Truth Commentaries on Ephesians (Guardian of Truth Foundation, Bowling Green, KY, 1994) 176
- 2 Ibid, 177
- 3 Barclay, William, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1976) 149
- 4 MacArthur, John, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Ephesians (The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1986) 159
- 5 Ibid, 160
- 6 Ibid, 161