

*“The Blessing Of God’s Gifts”*

Ephesians- Blessed Beyond Belief- Part 4

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### **Introduction:**

Video: *Doing Your Duty...*

I wish I was Barney Fife... *You’re going to serve in this church...whether you like it or not!* ☺ Seriously, we can all relate to that. Barney was passionate about enlisting these two guys in service- in what he felt was a high calling. But, Gomer and Otis hesitated... and Otis even verbalized: *Sounds like somebody can get hurt...*

These guys tried to walk out the door... they didn’t want to commit.

We’re going to look today at a passage from Ephesians that talks about serving in the Church. This is so important- because there are great blessings associated with serving—blessings both for you and for those you serve. Blessings both for God and for your local church.

I ran across a phrase this week that I can’t get out of my mind: *We may not have it all together, but together we have it all.* That’s exactly what we’re going to learn in Ephesians 4:11-16. None of us are perfect, but when we allow God to put us together in a vital commitment to Him and each other in a local church- the potential for good for God’s Kingdom is enormous.

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

*<sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Let’s begin in verse 11: *“<sup>11</sup> Now these are **the gifts Christ gave to the church:** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers...”*

In this verse, we see that Paul is not so much speaking of spiritual gifts given to Christians **but is specifically speaking of Christians who are given as gifts to the church**. The other passages on spiritual gifts describe God-given abilities but here the emphasis is on God-given individuals.

We don't have the time to fully explain each of these categories, so suffice it to say that the first two (apostles and prophets) are foundational groups of people that the church needed before the New Testament was completed. Evangelists are "bearers of Good News" and continue their work today, presenting the gospel in a compelling way so that people get saved. Pastors/teachers are one category.

The word "pastor" literally means a shepherd and pictures the caring, feeding and leading of the flock of God. As "teacher," pastors must teach the Word of God, knowing that a well-fed flock will grow to maturity. Pastors then are to tend and to teach. I heard it said once that a pastor/teacher's role is: *To comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.*

### **The Real Ministers**

Before we move to verse 12, I'd like to suggest that we lose the laity label. When the church was launched in the Book of Acts, **everyone saw themselves as ministers**. Sometime during the Dark Ages, the distinction between "clergy" and "laity" came about.

But, one of the rallying cries of the Reformation was that every member of the Body of Christ is a minister. In fact, 1 Peter 2:9 paints a beautiful picture of how God views every Christian: *<sup>9</sup> But you are not like that, for you are a **chosen people**. You are **royal priests**, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, **you can show others the goodness of God**, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. **WOW!!***

Have you ever been asked how many ministers we have at ClearView? You might be tempted to say that we have one. Actually, that's not a biblically correct answer. The right answer is that today we have 30 or so ministers here. Our goal...the Bible's goal... is that *every member is a minister*.

**\* Pastors Prepare.** Let's look at verse 12: *<sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*" The Bible is saying that a pastor's main job description is to prepare...to equip...to train...to ready God's people for His work.

*I want to make a commitment to you. We are a church focused on mission. We've worked hard in our community. As well, as a portable church, we work hard each Sunday. I know I push myself and us to serve hard. **I also want to encourage you, train you, motivate you, blow wind in your sales and help you find exactly what God's good plans are for you. I want to do better at equipping.***

**\*Servants Serve.** Look at the next phrase in verse 12: “...to do his work.” The words “to do” is really the word “into.” Those who are equipped go into ministry. We mistakenly speak of only pastors or missionaries who go into the ministry. Every member of the family of God is a minister; every saint is a servant.

- **Ephesians 4:7:** *7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.*
- **1 Peter 4:10** says: *“10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.”*

Have you ever wondered what pastors do? Often people make fun of me and say that I just work one day a week. I correct them and say that I actually work just a half-day a week. Actually, it’s a pretty nice job. You pay me to get you to do all the work!

### **Gifts Lead to Growth**

When pastors do what they must do, and people do what they are called to do, according to verses 12-16, our gifts lead to growth in at least six ways.

**1. The body is built up (12b).** “...and build up the church, the body of Christ.” The purpose behind serving is so that the body is built up. *Statistics indicate that when a person is serving in the church- not only are they fulfilled and blessed by blessing others—but their attendance at church and giving through a church also increase.* Spiritual gifts are tools to build with. Once God’s people are equipped and serving, they will become growing and faithful followers. **Others grow as they are blessed by your service—you grow as you bless God and others by using your God-given gifts.** To the degree that the members of the church are serving...the church is strengthened.

**2. We will experience unity (13a).** “...<sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith...” The words “come to” refer to travelers arriving at their destination. Our goal in following Jesus is spiritual maturity...and the path to maturity is through being trained to serve and then serving Jesus with passion and commitment. Disunity often raises its ugly head when people sit on the sidelines and talk about their needs instead of sacrificially serving in order to meet the needs of others.

### **Illustration:**

Summer Blast...great unity through working together!

**3. We will have a renewed relationship with Christ (13b).** “...<sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith **and** knowledge of God’s Son.” In a study called Follow Me, the number one factor in moving people deeper in their relationship with Jesus was that they were regularly serving in some ministry.

Here's the challenge, though. Some of us are more comfortable playing the parts of Gomer and Otis—we'd like to walk out on service at the earliest opportunity.

There's a certain rule in most churches called the "Pareto Principle" which states that 80% of the ministry is done by 20% of the people. New research reveals that the 80/20 rule is actually highly optimistic. According to the February 2009 issue of REV! Magazine, it appears that it's closer to 15% of the people who are actually serving.

Friends, I don't think they added the data from ClearView in their survey because my hunch is that we have about 70% of our people serving in ministry! That's outstanding but it's still short of where we need to be because we're aiming for 100% involvement!

If these figures are correct, some of you are still searching for a way to serve here at ClearView. And, the challenge is this: *our church can't really grow...and you can't really grow in knowledge of God or in spiritual maturity until you are serving. It is like we need to serve to grow... and the church needs us to serve to grow.*

**4. We will have a mature membership** (13c-14a). *...that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children.*

If we want to mature as individuals and grow as a church we must be involved in giving of our time, talents, and our treasures. We could say it like this: *If you want to grow, then you must give what you've been given.*

The Barna research group has discovered that the number one thing that church members want from their spiritual leaders is to motivate people to get involved in ministry. Thom Ranier, in his book called "High Expectations," mentions that the most effective way to assimilate people into ministry *is by expecting more out of members, not less.* It really shouldn't be a question of whether you're serving; it's where you're serving.

As best as I know how, I want to motivate you to be involved in ministry.

I enjoy giving out my business cards when I meet someone new and I like getting contact information from others. Yesterday I met Danielle Elias from 10TV News. The first thing she did (after I asked her if I could get a shower before we talked ☺ was hand me her business card).

One of the things she asked me is what my title is... Sometimes pastors are called "Ministers". But, that is really a misnomer. Because we...you... are the ministers. Each of you could be a card carrying "minister". Your card could say... "Minister of KidView". "Minister Of Open Shelter Lunches". "Minister of Summer Blast nights".

**5. We will experience spiritual stability (14b).** *We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth..*" Spiritual stability comes when we are sold-out in our service.

**6. We will be linked in love (15-16).** If we want ClearView to grow in love, then we must live lives of serving. *"<sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."*

It's only as "each part does it's own special work" that we will grow and be healthy and full of love. *A church is healthy only when it is filled with people who serve, when pastors equip the gifted and God's people exercise their gifts.*

**I'm committed to do my part...will you do yours?** One pastor writes: *"God gave me a gift, not for me but for you; and God gave you a gift, not for you but for me. If you don't use your gift, you're depriving me; if I don't use my gift, I'm robbing you."*

**Illustration:**

Putting something together- directions, pieces, parts, missing stuff...turn the power on and it works...

Likewise, you have been given everything you need to complete the task that the Father has custom made just for you. You have the gifts and the equipment and now you just need to put it all together.

The Bible says we all have gifts...**but it not something remarkable to have gifts... it is something remarkable to use them.** We must discover what they are and then use them!

The last phrase of verse 16 comes as a concluding statement so we don't miss it: *"...As each part does its own special work."* I came across a statement that put things in perspective for me: *"If each Christian was given the exhaustive repertoire of gifts, it is conceivable that we could carry out our Divine mandate in isolation from one another. But because God has withheld some gifts from the individual Christian, and because God has withheld nothing from His church, our context for doing Christian ministry becomes clear. We must do the work together."*

All of us have heard people say, "I don't go to Church because I can worship God anywhere." Those people have it all wrong. If they are not in relationship with the body of Christ- they are missing the opportunity to grow. They are missing the opportunity to use the unique gifts God had given them to help Christ's body be all God intended it to be.

Or, think about those who go to church...maybe even regularly...but they sit back and don't contribute. Not only are they missing blessing- but they are robbing others of the blessing of their gifts. They are holding the body back from growing. Instead of helping build a strong foundation for their local church, they are weakening it by their laziness or passivity.

One reason I'm excited about ClearView Church is because so many of you are using your spiritual gifts. And, we can get even stronger to the degree that even more of us put our gifts into action. Imagine what would happen here, and in churches around the world, if every believer would realize that they are meant to be ministers, not spectators.

Here's the bottom line: *We are looking for servants, not superstars; contributors, not just consumers.* Some of you just eat and run...you come on Sundays and get something out of it, but then you're gone until next Sunday morning. That whole idea would be foreign to the early church.

Paul's concern for young Timothy was that he not only be able to identify his gift, but that he would deploy it by doing something with it:

- **1 Timothy 4:14**  
*<sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you.*
- **2 Timothy 1:6**  
*<sup>6</sup> This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.*

**Have you neglected the spiritual gifts you received? Do you need to allow the Spirit to fan your gift into full flame?** Are you burning bright for Him, or are you just flickering or smoldering? You're needed in this church! God has gifted you and now He wants to use you.

There are so many ways that we are different from each other. That's how God designed us. A fully devoted follower of Christ understands and celebrates this variety in the Body of Christ. We've shared the acrostic S-H-A-P-E before and I think it's real helpful:

Spiritual Gifts (what you do)  
Heart (where you do it)  
Abilities (talents)  
Personality (how you do it)  
Experiences (our spiritual resume)

I'm shaped differently than you, and you're put together differently than I am. And that's a good thing. And yet we're all to use our gifts. Look at **1 Corinthians 12:7** (NIV): *"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."*

The word “manifest” means to make plain. Spiritual gifts are given to show the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives because He is the Giver of gifts.

**Illustration:**

*A man approached a minister and told him he wanted to join the church but he didn't think he had a lot of time to devote to serving: “I have a very busy schedule and can't be called upon to do any cleaning or teaching or serving in any way. I can't help with special projects or with the students as all my evenings are tied up.”*

*The minister thought for a moment and then said, “I believe you're at the wrong church. The church you're looking for is three blocks down the street, on the right.” The man left and followed the preacher's directions. He soon came to an abandoned and boarded-up church building. The pastor had made his point.*

**Illustration:**

*Interview Diane Martin....*

1. What was your relationship with God like before coming to ClearView?
2. Since coming to ClearView, what has God done in your life? *How have you plugged into ministry? What led to taking the next step and committing to serve at the level you have?*
3. How has serving at the level you have committed to impacted your relationship with Jesus? *How has serving God strengthened your relationship with Him?*

OK, I know you're thinking “I'm glad he's done.” ***The sermon is over but now our service begins.***