

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP FOCUSES DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

Ephesians 4.11: The work of Christ—Provision for the mission

Theme: To labor in unity we need to follow God-given, godly leadership.

Ephesians 4 starts the practical application portion of Paul's Epistles.

- He spent three chapters reminding us of all that we have in Christ from the moment of salvation.
- And now, in the last three chapters, he is going to teach us and exhort us how to live in Christ and thereby walk in the “first works” (the most important) that will keep us close Christ.
- He starts off this practical section speaking of our vocation:
 1. (v1-6) Because are all in Christ, we have all received the same mission—the same vocation (the work God wants us to do). In this we have unity (we are all the same).
 2. (v7-16) But then Paul explains that in our unity there is much diversity.
 - Each member of the Body is unique by divine design.
 - And each unique member (diverse in personality, passion, gifts, talents) is to do work in unity with the others to get the job done (our vocation/mission give to us a the Body of Christ).

Last message: (v7-10) Unity in diversity requires grace-filled members.

- We spent a good deal of time looking at verse 7, comparing Scripture with Scripture to understand how God made each member unique and therefore diverse.
- So we should not expect “cookie-cutter Christians” (everyone like me): God made us different!

Today: (v11) We start a passage (v11-12) where we see that our “unity in diversity” requires mission-focused members.

- With these two verses, we have come to one of the most important passages in Scripture for the Church (and so we are going to take some time to make sure we understand what this passage says).
 - ✓ In these two verses, we have the “Great Commission” given to the Church by her Apostle, Paul.
 - ✓ This passage states clearly what the focus of every member is to be—what each of us, in our diversity, needs to focus on in order to labor in unity in our new vocation (and thus glorify God by finishing the work He has given us to do).
 - ✓ Everything we do as members of the Body of the Christ ought to be focused on preparing for and participating in the mission of being and making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our focus!
- That focus begins with Christ's provision for this mission and mission focus: men/leadership...

This morning we are only going to look at two of the four “gifts” (leaders) God has given to the Church.

- God didn't just give us a job to do and then leave us to our own devices. He gave some specific provision.
- In context, that provision He gave refers to men/leaders (the leadership in the work):
 - ✓ (v7) Christ gave grace (divine design in personality, passion, and gifts) to every member.
 - ✓ (v8) But, more specifically in what follows (in context)... (v11) ...Christ gave four different types of leaders to guide the diverse members of the Church in accomplishing the mission.
 - ✓ (v11) The leaders are the gifts given to the Body in verse 8. God uses men to lead His work, and we need to understand what kind of leaders God wants so we can follow them in the mission.
 - ✓ And I believe this topic is important enough to take some time in studying it out. We need to understand these four “gifts” because these are the leaders God expects us to follow in the mission.

I. Christ gave some *apostles* as provision for the Mission.

A. An apostle is a missionary.

1. (Mat 10.1-2,) A disciple becomes an apostle when he is sent by the Lord with a mission.
2. The English word *apostle* comes from the Greek word *apostellos*, which means “one sent out.”
3. The Latin equivalent of *apostellos* is *missio*, and we get our word *missionary* from that Latin root.
4. An apostle, in the most literal sense of the term, is a missionary—one sent out with a mission.

B. Christ gave some very special Apostles.

1. He gave 12 Apostles to reach the Jewish nation and one Apostle (Paul) to reach the Gentiles.
2. These were special men with a specific mission during a unique time in history.

C. (Rom 15.20-21 cf. 10.14-15) Today our *apostles* are *missionaries*.

1. Obviously we could say that we are all called to be “missionaries” in the sense we are all called to reach the lost with the Gospel. But the meaning of this term goes beyond that (it's more specific).
2. We need missionaries!
 - a) In order to accomplish the mission God gave us to do (being and making disciples of the Lord in all nations), we need *these gifted persons* to go to places where people have never heard.
 - b) These missionaries are the people whom God has given to go places where the Gospel has never been preached, to reach the unreached.
 - c) Without missionaries (“apostles”), we will never accomplish the mission God gave us.

D. What should we do, then?

1. I think our responsibility here is to pray, prepare, and participate (follow these guys!).
2. We should *pray* for more missionaries (and consider in prayer that the next missionary just might be “me”!).
3. We should *prepare* those whom God has given to be missionaries.
 - a) Obviously we need a good, solid local church; but we also need to think about, pray about, prepare for... a Bible Institute in order to further prepare our people for the mission.
 - (1) There are several like-minded churches close by who would like to do the same thing.
 - (2) Part of our plans for the near future are to work with them (guys like Greg Axe and Rick Johnson) to build a Bible institute.
 - (3) And we need it both in English and in Spanish; we need it both in person and online.
 - b) We need missionaries; we need to see men and women sent out to other geographic regions in our world where the Gospel has not been preached. And that means we need to provide the preparation (the teaching and training) they need to get there.
4. We should also *participate* in the work of sending missions: if we don't go, we should give.
 - a) I don't think our sole responsibility here is giving; I think God wants people more than money (I think the church is to focus on *sending people*, not raising money for projects).
 - b) But, sending people will always involve supporting them. We need to give to missions, especially to the missionaries God raises up from among us (or Greg or Rick, etc.)!

E. The work of missions and missionaries is far from finished.

1. Christ has not stopped *giving* missionaries (apostles) as gifts to the Body to get the job done.
2. That means we need to *focus* on missions and missionaries: in prayer, preparation, and participation. We need to *follow* the missionaries God gives us in order to finish the work.

II. Christ gave some *prophets* as provision for the Mission.

A. A prophet is a preacher.

1. Too many people today have this warped Pentecostal idea that a prophet is someone who receives direct revelation from about some current or future event.
2. (1Cor 14.1, 3) But the Bible says that the prophet prophesies, and that means he simply *speaks* to others with the purpose of edifying them, exhorting them, and comforting them.
 - a) We call this “preaching” today, and preaching is done by *preachers*.
 - b) Preachers and their preaching are God's gift to the Church, a provision for the mission!

B. The work of a prophet/preacher is that of *foretelling* and *forth-telling*.

1. The prophet/preacher will *foretell* the future: He'll preach about things to come in God's plan in order to *wake people up* to reality!
 - a) Example: God will judge you for your works at the Judgment Seat of Christ, so... live today for that coming judgment!
 - b) You'll find all throughout Scripture that God's prophets/preachers use future events this way.
2. The prophet/preacher will *forth-tell* (tell forth, hold forth, announce) God's Word.
 - a) The majority of the prophesying and preaching in the Bible is this type: Plain preaching!
 - b) Do we see prophets/preachers in the Bible that got their messages directly from God. Yes!
 - (1) God spoke to Elijah and he went out to “forth-tell” (to preach) what God told him.
 - (2) Many other prophets/preachers had the very same experience.
 - c) Do we need God's direct revelation to preach today? Absolutely not!
 - (1) (2Tim 4.1-2 cf. 3.15-17) We have the perfect and complete Word of God in Scripture; therefore there is no more need for further revelation.
 - (2) What we need today are *preachers* who will take *Scripture* and learn it and live it until they, like Jeremiah (Jer 20.9), simply cannot contain the Word that burns in them!
 - (3) We need preacher so full of Scripture, so in love with God and His Word, that they cannot bear *not* preaching. They *have* to get up and proclaim to “Thus saith the Lord...!”
 - (4) That's the kind of preacher that is a gift to the Body because that preacher will wake us up!
3. We need prophets today—we need preachers!
 - a) We need men who will “foretell” with authority and passion and zeal what the Scripture says is coming in the God's plan—to wake us up and stir us to action!
 - b) We need men who will “forth-tell” with authority and passion and zeal what Scripture says about how we ought to be living out God's plan each and ever day!
 - c) The Church slumbers in her comfort and ease... The Church has become complacent and lazy and self-centered in her prosperity... and our churches are filled with “believers” who sleep and slumber while God and His Word are forgotten... and while people all around us go to hell.

C. What should we do, then? The same as with missionaries: Pray, prepare, participate!

1. Would God He would give us preachers who love the Lord, love His Word, and who are zealous and passionate and can stir us and move us to holy living!
2. We ought to *pray* to God that He would give us *preachers*—real, zealous, passionate preachers!

3. And we ought to be *intentional* about *preparing* the next generation of preachers!
 - a) There are far too many false prophets out there preaching their “direct revelation” from their dreams, visions, and mystical promptings.
 - b) If we want godly preachers who are filled with Scripture to where it burns in their hearts... to where they just can't keep quiet... we ought to build a ministry to *fill them with Scripture!*
 - c) And I'll say it again: I want to build a solid, biblical local church; but it cannot end with just that because we need Bible Institute—we need a ministry that prepares preachers!
 - (1) We need that; Greg Axe needs that; Rick Johnson wants that; Gabe out in Lawrence...
 - (2) We need to pray that God would provide us the resources to (time and money!) to build a ministry that will prepare men and women for ministry—missions and preaching!
 - (3) We need it in English and in Spanish. We need it local (in person) and on-line (so we can meet the need that exists in the Body of Christ for solid leadership in ministry).
 - d) We need to fill our prophets/preachers with Scripture until they cannot contain themselves.
 - (1) And then we need to let them loose to do what God has gifted them to do: Preach!
 - (2) They will preach on the streets (to the lost, but mostly they'll be stirred to preach to “believers” and call them from apostasy back to the God and Scripture).
 - (3) They will preach in pulpits (some will be based in local churches, other will travel).
4. This means that in addition to prayer and preparation, we'll need to *participate* in the support of these men that God raises up to preach to our generation and wake us up.
 - a) And that support is not always money (although that will be part of it).
 - b) One of the greatest needs of a prophet/preacher is *loyalty* (from God's people).
 - (1) Think about the great prophets/preachers God raised up and sent to His people in Scripture.
 - (a) Elijah, after his great message on Mount Carmel, wanted to quit and die (saying he was all alone and there was no one else).
 - (b) Jeremiah: (Jer 20.7-9) He got fed up with preaching to people who wanted to kill him! He wanted to quit.
 - (c) John the Baptist ended up in jail and sent messengers to Jesus because he doubted!
 - (2) Preachers are the guys sent to wake up a sleeping generation. They are not received well by the people they preach to. They will likely offend both pastor and pew sitter (because in times of apostasy many a pastor and pew sitter are far from where God wants them).
 - (3) We ought to support the preachers God raises up with our loyalty, even when they step on our toes... even when we are offended by their rough and abrasive personalities (that's how a preacher is designed because that is what is required for the job given him to do).

D. Preaching and preachers don't “go out of style.”

1. A society might think itself to good, cultured, and refined for preaching (Israel did when she was in apostasy before the captivity, and modern “Christian societies” are the same today).
2. But, when a society gets that way, they need preachers all the more.
 - The nice, cultured, refined (but apostate) society needs an Elijah, a Jeremiah, a John the Baptist to stand up amidst all their finery and lay into them with passionate preaching from God's Word to call people to holiness!

3. Christ has not stopped giving preachers (prophets) to the Body so that we can get the job done.
 - a) So, let's remember that in prayer and focus on it by preparing the next generation of preachers.
 - b) And then when God blesses us with the gift of a prophet/preacher, let's participate in his ministry by supporting him—mostly with our *loyalty* (follow his preaching!), but even with our finances should that need arise.

Conclusion:

(John 17.4) We have been created in Christ to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The way to fulfill that purpose is to finish the work he has given us to do while we are on this earth.

- (Eph 4.1) That work is our new vocation, and it is the same for everyone.
- (Eph 4.12) That work is the mission of edifying the Body of Christ (making disciples: evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved).
- (Eph 4.7) Each of us is unique in God's divine design in our personalities, passions, and gifts.
- (Eph 4.3) And yet God expects us to labor in unity in order to accomplish the mission.
- (Eph 4.11) To labor in unity we need to follow God-given, godly leadership.

(Eph 4.11-12) God speaks here of four specific leaders in the Church that He has given as gifts...

- They are God's gifts to the Church—men that He uses to perfect the saints so that they can do the work of the ministry and thus fulfill the mission.
- God has given apostles: We call them missionaries; and we ought to pray for more missionaries, strive to prepare the next generation of missionaries, and then participate in the work of these missionaries.
- God has give some prophets: We call them preachers; and we ought pray for them, strive to prepare a generation of them, and participate with them in their ministries (specifically in our loyalty!).
- We have two more to go (evangelists, and pastor-teachers), and then we'll focus on the purpose of this God-given leadership (the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry).

If we as a local church ever hope to finish the work God gave us to do (that of being and making disciples), we have to follow the the godly leadership that Christ has given to us as gifts for perfecting.

- Following means getting behind the leadership God gives to the church, not doing your own thing.
- Are you willing to get behind the missionaries and preachers God will raise up? Will pray for that? Will you get behind and support the preparation of the next generation of leaders? Will you participate?
- Or are you just looking for a “me-church” that will be all that “you want,” and not what God wants?
- I want to serve God and do something for the Lord before it's all over. And I want to do that with this local church. But the time is short. And so I ask: If not now, when? and if not us, then who?
- We need to make the decision to get behind the God-given, godly leadership the Lord has given us and stop thinking it always has to be our way. We need to follow them! And not expect them to follow us.