

MEN, MINISTRY, MISSION

Ephesians 4.12: Diversity in unity accomplishing the Great Commission

Theme: Our church will invest in men, ministry, and the mission. What will you invest in?

God's desire and plan for man has never changed.

- (Gen 1.26-27) God made man in His own image, and after His likeness. Obviously sin has affected that image and likeness in man, but God's desire and plan has not changed.
 - ✓ (Lev 19.2) But, God still desires that His people to be like Him: *Holy*.
 - ✓ (Mat 5.48) But, God still desires that His people be like Him: *Perfect*.
- God's desire and plan is that we be like Him in character and conduct (not in attributes).
 - ✓ (1Tim 3.16) That is what “godliness” means: God-like-ness. It is “God manifest in the flesh.”
 - ✓ Obviously, Jesus Christ the perfect manifestation of godliness because He is the very image of God (God Himself) manifest in the flesh.
 - ✓ But, this verse also points out and shows us what God desires in us: Godliness, Christ-likeness!

(Rom 8.29) God's desire and plan has not changed: He wants man to be in His image!

- He wants to make us (mold us) into the perfect manifestation of His image in the flesh.
- He wants us to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect manifestation of godliness.
- God wants us to be *holy* like Jesus Christ; He wants us to be *perfect* like Jesus Christ because He (Jesus Christ) is the *perfect man* (the perfect manifestation of godliness in the flesh).
- And that brings us to our passage of study for this morning: Ephesians 4.12.
 - ✓ God wants to perfect the saints (v12) until they “measure up” to the perfect man, Jesus Christ (v13).

If there were one verse in the Pauline Corpus that captures the essence of the Great Commission that God gave us in the Church Age, it is Ephesians 4.12.

- The *goal* is the edification (the growth) of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- The *work* of the ministry that results in that growth is that of evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved.
- The *people* who have been given Mission of the doing the work and reaching the goal are us—the saints!
 - ✓ We are all different, and yet we are all called to work in unity to get the job done.
 - ✓ (Eph 4.1) And our diversity will only work in unity when each and all of us *walk worthy* of this *vocation* that God has given us in Christ. Our vocation is our life's work... it's the Great Commission.
- I want you to see three things this morning in Ephesians 4.12: **Men, Ministry, Mission.**

I. (Eph 4.12a) **Men: The Perfecting of the Saints**

A. (v11) **Context: God's gifts were given to perfect the saints**

1. The reason God gave the leaders in the church (v11) is for the perfecting of the saints (v12).
2. God wants the leadership of the local church to focus primarily on *men*—on people, not programs.
3. And this focus on men has a very specific goal in mind: *Perfecting* the people God has placed in their care.

B. Definition: *Perfection*, in context, refers to a process of spiritual growth and maturity.

1. (v13, 15) As we saw before, the goal of the perfecting process is to make you like Jesus Christ, the measure of perfection (to mold you and conform you to His image).
 - a) (Php 1.6) God will accomplish this work in you—He will conform you completely to the image of His Son. That is your “predetermined destination” (predestination) as a Christian.
 - But this happens when Christ returns for us, or when we die to go be with Him.
 - b) (Php 2.12-13) What God wants us to do in the meantime is work out the salvation He has given us—to work with Him in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ (perfected).
 - And that means we need to be reading the Bible and doing what it says...
2. (2Tim 3.16-17) We are perfected (made more and more like Christ in character and conduct) by learning and applying Scripture:
 - a) **Doctrine:** God shows us in Scripture what is right—what we ought to be doing or not doing.
 - (1) Remember that in God's design He has placed men (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers) in this process of teaching you Scripture.
 - (2) (1Tim 4.16) It is very important for a Christian to be in a church that teaches the Bible.
 - b) **Reproof:** God uses the Scripture that He is teaching us to wake us up (!) and show us what is wrong in our lives.
 - c) **Correction:** God will show you in Scripture how to get right what you are doing wrong.
 - (1) This always begins with a call to repentance (decide! turn from your sin!).
 - (2) Then, God will show you clearly (in Scripture) what you need to do to correct the problem.
 - d) **Instruction in Righteousness:** God will use the Bible to show you how to keep it right—how to consistently walk daily in His righteousness.
 - e) **“Lather, Rinse, Repeat”:** (v17) This is the process that perfects you and prepares you in Christ-like character and conduct to do the good works that God has given you to do.
 - (1) This is the weekly (and sometimes daily) process of “growing in holiness” (of growing up in Christ, growing in spiritual maturity). *Learn the Bible and do what it says!*
 - (2) (Eph 2.10) If you are saved (if you have turned from sin and placed your faith and trust in Christ for forgiveness and eternal life), then God has given you good works to do.
 - (a) (Eph 4.17) That means that there are certain things you need to stop doing—you need to stop walking/living as the other Gentiles around you.
 - (b) (Eph 4.1) And that means that you should start doing that which will result in a walk that is worthy of the good works God wants you to do.
 - (3) (Eph 4.12) The perfecting of the saints is God using Scripture “thoroughly furnishing” you (preparing you) for the good works of the ministry he has give you to do.

C. Review: Men. We need to invest the Word of God in men in order to prepare them for ministry...

II. (Eph 4.12b) Ministry: The Work of the Ministry

A. The majority of the work in the ministry is done by the “saints.”

1. (v11) God has charged certain men with the task of laboring in Word & prayer to perfect the saints.
2. (v12a,b) The saints are perfected for the work of the ministry. Therefore, most of the ministry, by God's design, will be done by the members of a church congregation (not the pastors).

B. Churches fail in the Great Commission when they stop preparing men for ministry.

1. Our focus is to be on men, not money—on people, not programs.
 - a) Obviously we will have programs (activities, meetings, etc.) in our church, but those programs need to exist to invest in people and prepare them for the works God has given them to do.
 - b) The programs in the structure of the local church exist for people; the people do not exist for the programs. We build the structure around the people; we don't build the structure and then make the people fit into our idea of how a church out to look (e.g., *The Trellis and the Vine*).
2. Here is where I believe our focus needs to be (and where I see our church going):
 - a) We need to establish a **key church**...
 - b) ...in a **key city**...
 - c) ...in order to prepare **key men**...
 - d) ...and provide them with the **key tools and training** they need...
 - e) ...to do the good works of the ministry that God has given them to do.
 - (1) This church is a **key church** because it is our church (key to our growth and our ministry).
 - (2) This city is our **key city** because it's our city (God expects us to reach it with the Gospel).
 - (3) You are the **key men** because you are key to reaching this city. Why? Because you are members of this church in this city. Each of us is different by God's design, but each is “key” in the mission and work that this local body is doing in this city (and abroad).
 - (4) And what we aim to do in this church is provide you with the **key tools and training** you need to do the work of the ministry God has give you to do (and each is given works!).

C. Review: Men... Ministry...

1. (v12) The work of the ministry that God expects us to do is the work that results in the edification of the Body of Christ (the godly and biblical growth of the Church).
2. We invest in **men** to prepare them for **ministry**, and we do the work of the ministry to accomplish the **mission** God has given us...

III. (Eph 4.12c) Mission: The Edifying of the Body of Christ

A. The church grows (is built up) in two ways:

1. It grows in members through the work of the ministry called *evangelism*.
 - a) We are all called and commanded to evangelize the lost (that is clear: 2Cor 5.18-21).
 - b) Yet, we are all different by God's design, so how we evangelize will look different (but it will still be the work of biblical evangelism).
 - For example: Street work (which I think should be an intentional focus simply because of the pattern we see in the Bible), jail ministry, Hispanic outreach, clubs in the schools, etc.
2. The church grows in maturity through the work of the ministry we call *edification*.
 - a) (v15) This involves speaking the truth (Scripture) in love to another believer to help him grow in Christ.
 - b) Again, we are all different by God's design, so this ministry of edification will look different in practice but it will always center around the Word of God and loving your brother (by teaching him Scripture and showing him how to apply it—by example and careful exhortation).
 - For example: Classroom teaching, writing books/materials, one-on-one, small groups.

B. The mission of the church (evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved) is the mission of every member of the church.

1. (1Cor 12.18) God made you *how* He wants you and He has placed you in the Body (in the Church) exactly *where* He wants you. If you are saved, you are a member of the Body (and this local body).
2. (1Cor 12.27) We are as different and diverse as are the members of a physical body. And that is by God's design!
3. (1Cor 14.26b) But *everything* we do as members of the Body of Christ (and this local body) has one specific goal: Edification!
 - a) We are perfected *for* the good works God has given us to do in the ministry.
 - b) And we need to *do* those good works in the ministry—evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved—according to God's design in us.
 - c) That is how we fulfill the Great Commission of edifying the Body of Christ: By reaching the lost for their salvation and helping the saved grow in sanctification.

Conclusion:

God's plan has not changed: He desires men to be made in His image.

- That image has been tainted by sin: Adam's sin and your sins. God's plan is to restore His image in man!
- (John 17.4) The way that we can glorify God and enjoy Him (today and forever) is by doing the work He gave us to do.
- The work He gave us to do is the mission we do together, the Co-Mission: *Laboring to restore the lost image of God in fallen, sinful man.*

That means we, as members of this church, need to focus on three things: Men, Ministry, Mission.

1. **Men:** We focus on *men* by perfecting the saints (through teaching and application of Scripture).
2. **Ministry:** We focus on *ministry* (evangelism and edification) by giving you, our key men in our key church, the key tools and training you need to reach our key city so that we can do the same thing in other places (here and abroad).
3. **Mission:** We want to see our people grow in Christ and do the work of the ministry so that we might accomplish our mission together (our “Co-Mission”). That mission is the edification of the Church by...
 - Leading lost sinners to salvation in Christ so they can be born again in the image of God.
 - Helping saved sinners grow in sanctification so that they can be conformed daily to the image of God.

“God has a wonderful plan for your life”: He wants to make you in His image and then use you to do the same in others!

- My question to conclude is simple: *Is that your plan for your life?*
- God will not force you to be saved: He will allow you to live for yourself, according to your own desires, until death ushers you into His presence for judgment (every thought, word, and deed). Turn to Christ!
- God will not force you to participate the in Great Commission: He will allow you to live how you want (under His discipline, of course) until death or the rapture ushers you to the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- I would just say this: Death will rob you of all that is precious to you in this world. So, if it doesn't matter on the day you die, it doesn't matter. *How, then, do you want to live?* Now: Choose to live that way!