**Preparing God’s People**

**The Word**

Read together Ephesians 4:7-16

**The Big Picture**

Jesus gives leaders to the church whose role is to prepare and equip God’s people so that the people can do the ministry of the church. The New Testament paints a picture of the church not as an organization with programs but as an organism where everyone is using his or her gifts to build up the body of Christ.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider the paradigm shift from church as an organization where the leaders do the ministry to church as an organism where the leaders help prepare the people to do the ministry. What in that shift was new for you on Sunday, or what in that shift did you come to understand in a deeper way on Sunday?

2. Consider that the role of church leaders is to prepare/equip you for the ministry God has for you. How does that square with your current expectation of the leaders at Grace? Is that what you are expecting from them?

3. Describe a time when someone came alongside you and did a good job of preparing/equipping you to serve or use your gifts. What was it he or she did that was particularly helpful and meaningful?

4. How could the church leadership do a better job of equipping and preparing you for ministry? Is there something specific you need from them? And what more could you bring to the table? How specifically could you engage more intentionally in this conversation with the leadership or the church?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

 A. We all have had different experiences with church leaders, some good some bad

 B. Today we explore the role Jesus has given to church leaders

II. The risen and victorious Christ gives gifts to the church (v. 8)

A. One form that takes is giving spiritual gifts to every member of the church (v. 7)

B. Another form that takes is giving gifted leaders to the church (v. 11)

III. The role of leaders is not to do the work of service but to prepare the people for works of service (v. 12) so that the body builds itself up as each part does its work (v. 16)

A. Church as an Organization/Institution

 1. The leaders/staff do the work of ministry (teaching, counseling, visitation, etc)

2. It’s easy to get caught up in this model

a. This plays into the consumeristic expectations of people

b. This plays into the egos and neediness of leaders

3. This is a very limiting model of ministry. It’s limited to the gifts and capacities of the leaders and the programs of the church

B. Church as an Organism

1. The leaders prepare the people to do the work of ministry

2. There are challenges to this model

a. It challenges our consumeristic expecations

b. Leaders may not feel as needed or as highlighted

3. This model ultimately allows far more ministry to take place according to the various gifts of the people and capacities of all the people. Ministry takes place beyond the formal programs of the church.

C. What does preparation/equipping look like?

 1. Specific skills training on particular spiritual gifts

2. A comprehensive understanding of the gospel and our role in God’s story (this seems to be what Paul has in mind, given the fact that all of the leaders mentioned in v. 11 have the role of communicating the gospel verbally to people)

IV. Leadership at Grace

A. We are elder led

1. The elders are prayerfully considering their role as shepherds (see 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Hebrews 13:17)

2. The elders’ goal is to make sure everyone who calls Grace their home church is being shepherded and has someone in their life who is praying for them and walking with them in some capacity

3. The elders are trying to reach out to people more, and they are encouraging people to get involved in small group contexts where real relationship takes place

 B. We are working to develop our small group leaders

 1. We are calling them to greater responsibility

 2. We are seeking to provide them with more training and support