

**Church Matters**  
**Week 6: Serve Teams**  
**Ephesians 4:1-16**

I love that video. I got to serve with Esther at this year's Furniture Giveaway. We were on a delivery crew together and it was so beautiful to see the way she connected with international students and made them feel welcomed and loved. I could tell she has a pastoral heart that deeply cares for others and it was a blessing to me to watch her use that gift.

That's one of my favorite things about that event. FGA brings a wide variety of people together with all kinds of gifts to serve for a common purpose. People who, otherwise, would have nothing in common.

- Young/"Seasoned"
- From different countries
- Speak different heart languages
- Different political beliefs
- There are some who are even Purdue fans!!!

Despite all these differences, this group comes together to share the love of Jesus with international students, one couch at a time. We put aside our differences to unite around a common mission and ministry. Everyone pulling together, using their gift, whatever it might be. I think that's what Paul is getting at in our text today.

If you have a Bible, or a Bible app you like to use, turn with me to Ephesians 4.

Throughout Scripture, we see this pattern of people encountering God's holiness or experiencing His grace, and they respond by offering their lives back in service to this holy, gracious God. The prophet Isaiah encountered God's holiness and responded with, "Here I am. Send me." The Apostle Paul experienced God's grace on the road to Damascus and responded by going around the world, risking his life to share the good news of Jesus.

What I find in Scripture and what I've seen in the lives of so many followers of Jesus is this: **When we encounter the holiness of God and experience his grace, our natural response is to humbly serve Him.** Like, when you really understand who God is and what He's done for you in Jesus, you realize, as Paul says in Romans 12, that our only appropriate response is to offer ourselves back to Him. That our life becomes an act of worship in the way we live and love and serve others.

And, when you have a Church filled with people who are using their gifts and abilities to humbly serve God alongside one another, the community of faith grows into maturity and becomes a powerful picture to the world of God's goodness and grace.

That's why the third part of our ministry strategy is Serve Teams. **Worship Gatherings, Connect Groups, and Serve Teams** are how we live out God's design and desire for His Church. And, I

believe that the Church is at its best, and is most beautiful, when everyone comes together and uses their gifts to serve one another and the community around us. Let's look at our text. Ephesians 4, starting in verse 1...(READ 4:1-6)

Now, let's push pause right here. Paul starts this section by telling us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. The "Calling" here isn't for a specific task or mission. It means that we have been "called out" of this world to follow Jesus and live for Him. We have been set apart **by Christ** and **for Christ**. We have been given a new identity and a new purpose. We are new Creations in Christ who have been given the ministry and message of reconciliation, like we talked about in week 1.

That is who we are in Christ, that's our calling, and Paul says, "Live a life that is worthy of who you are." The word "worthy" literally means to bring up the other end of the scales. We have encountered this holy God, been transformed and renewed by His grace, now we go out and live like it. We live holy lives that measure up to the holiness we've received by grace. We don't do this to **earn that grace**, we do **it in response** to the grace we have freely received through Christ.

And, as the Church comes together as one body, redeemed and restored and renewed by Jesus, Paul says there ought to be a passion and an urgency to protect and maintain the unity we share in the Spirit. We are to make every effort to keep that unity because we are committed and bound to the Father and to one another through Christ.

And, notice in these verses that this is not just some casual commitment to Christ and one another. In verse 4, Paul says we are one *body*. We'll talk more in-depth about this next week, but the idea is that we're not just loosely connected to one another. Like, my arm's not casually attached to my body. My foot doesn't come and go as it pleases. We are bound together by Christ, each doing our part to serve each other. And then look at what he says in verse 7...(READ 4:7)

Paul shifts from talking about the whole to recognizing the value of each individual part. We are united and one in Christ, but our unity does not equal uniformity. We're not clones of one another. There is beauty in the diversity of the Church. Ethnic and racial diversity, but also the diverse roles that each of us play. We have each been given different gifts and abilities to use in service to Jesus and each other.

That's what Paul means when he talks about Jesus handing out different measures of grace. He's not talking about saving grace. Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and trusts him as their Savior is given the same amount of saving grace, and it's MORE than enough. The grace Paul refers to here in vs. 7 is God's **Equipping Grace**. He draws this out a little more in Romans 12:6 when he says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."

In his grace, Christ has gifted all of us in different ways to make up the body. Our gifts are a grace Jesus has given us and they become a grace that we give to others when we put them into practice.

And in verse 8-10, Paul quotes Psalm 68 to emphasize Jesus as the gift giver. That even though he now reigns in Heaven, He is still very much engaged in our lives and the life of the Church through these gifts he gives.

And you'd expect Paul to go into a list of the gifts the Lord has given to the Church like he does in Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12, but instead, he chooses to only focus on 5 Church leadership gifts. Look at what he says in verses 11 through 13...(READ 4:11-13)

Now, did you notice WHY Christ gave the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to the Church? Notice, it's not for them to **DO** the work of ministry. Christ gave these leadership gifts to the Church **to equip God's people to do** the work of ministry so that the body may be built up and grow to maturity.

That word "equip" means to make "fully ready." In common Greek it was sometimes used as a surgical term meaning to set a broken bone back into place. And so, the work of the Church leadership is not to just do the work, but to equip fellow followers of Jesus to do the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ. It's to take a bunch of broken, scattered pieces and send us out as one to do the work of ministry together. It's an incredible picture of unity that Paul paints here. Bringing together broken pieces and sending them out as one body that is unified and fully equipped to live and love and serve like Jesus.

It's another reason why the Church matters. Why we need one another.

In a world that celebrates individualism as a sign of strength, then and now, Paul teaches us that individualism within the Church is actually a sign of immaturity. You cannot mature in your faith in isolation. In fact, Paul is teaching us that **We mature in Christ when we recognize our need and dependency on one another.** This is the way God has structured the Church to operate. His desire and design for the Church is that each member is dependent on the other.

And I love how this happens every day at Sherwood Oaks. Listen, our church would be a sad, sad place if it were just up to the ministerial staff and elders to do the work of ministry. But we have a body of believers here that takes seriously their call to ministry. We have over 90 Connect Group leaders who love and teach and encourage the people in their groups. We have student ministry volunteers that disciple our students in faith. We have a team of people that spent last week loading Operation Christmas Child boxes into bigger boxes, and into a trailer so they can be delivered around the world this Christmas.

We have countless people who work behind the scenes counseling those going through a hard time, calling shut-ins just to check in and see how they're doing. We have ladies who use their gift of knitting and sewing to provide lap blankets to those in wheelchairs, hats to our mission

partners in Northern India, prayer shawls to let people know they're not alone, sling bags for ladies going through breast cancer treatments.

Last week, I ran into a lady in her 80's who attends our Bedford campus. She told me that after Thanksgiving on Thursday, she's peeling 80 potatoes to take mashed potatoes to the Men's Warming Center that night so the guys can have a nice Thanksgiving dinner. Yesterday, I spent the morning with Upward Basketball coaches who were using their gifts to do evaluations so we cannot just teach kids how to play basketball, but share the Gospel with them this season.

From my seat on the Sherwood Oaks bus, I'm so blessed to have this incredible view of the Church body serving Jesus and one another. I get to see the body of Christ caring for those who are hurting and struggling by coming alongside of them however they can.

I get to see a group of college girls at IU who are working together and using their gifts to raise money that will go towards rescuing young girls trapped in sex trafficking. One of them told me recently, "Compassion without action is a wasted reaction." So, these 19 and 20 year old's aren't just sitting on the sidelines, waiting to do something until they're older and out of college, they're doing what they can NOW to help bring freedom and hope to these girls.

Last week, our Connections and Care ministries offered training events for Welcome Team volunteers and a Peer Counseling Ministry we're developing. Over 10% of our adult worship attendance last week stayed after the worship gathering to go through one of those trainings.

There are so many great ways people are serving as the body of Christ in our church and it's making a difference. And, if you've been kind of sitting on the sidelines, this is your challenge to step up and get in the game. Use your gifts, your talents, your time. Respond to the grace you've received in Christ by serving others like Jesus served you. We have tons of ways for you to take that first step, or next step. And here's a really fun one coming up next month. Check out this video [...\(Show Red Kettle Video\)](#)

There are so many ways for you to serve at Sherwood Oaks. If you're [ready to join a Serve Team](#), there are two ways you can do that today. First, you can text "serve" to 812-324-8644 or you can go to [socc.org/serveteams](http://socc.org/serveteams) to see how you can get plugged into one of our ministries.

When we encounter God's holiness and experience his grace through Jesus, everything changes. Jesus tells us that he came not to be served, but to serve, and so you're never more like Jesus than when you serve others. Your faith grows stronger and the Church becomes better because of the part you play. If you're ready to get off the sidelines and into the game, we're ready to help you find a serve team to join.

And, if you're here today, and you're ready to take your first step of faith or want to know more about following Jesus, we're here for you, too.