

WE ARE THE BODY

Part 2 of CHURCH 101. Ephesians 4:11-16.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. August 28, 2022.

THE CHURCH 101 SERIES

We are learning God's plan for the church using three metaphors.

One of the metaphors the Bible uses for the local church is **BODY**:

- The local church is like a body. Healthy bodies grow to maturity.
- We grow spiritually mature together.
- Jesus is the head, we are the body - a network of interconnected parts.

Romans 12:4-5 (NLT) Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

EPHESIANS AND THE CHURCH

The letter to the Ephesians is a compact theology of the church:

Ephesians 1:22-23 (ESV) And he (God) put all things under his (Christ) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his **body**...

Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV) And he (Christ) gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the **body** of Christ ...

Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV) ... we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole **body**, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 5:23b (ESV) ... Christ is the head of the church, his **body**, and is himself its Savior.

ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

Ephesians 4:11-16 describes the anatomy of a healthy church:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

There are three main components of spiritual growth:

Component One - Verse 12: Equipping

12 ... to equip the saints ...

- Pastor-teachers are given to the church to tend and teach.
- Their goal is to equip, prepare, get people ready.

Component Two - Verse 12: Ministry

12 ... to equip the saints for the work of ministry ...

- Ministry is practical service done by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:7 (ESV) But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

1 Peter 4:10 (NLT) God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Component Three - Verse 12-16: Spiritual Growth

Ephesians 4:12 (ESV) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ ...

- "Building up" refers to spiritual growth of the body - the church.
- The church body grows spiritually in three areas:

Verse 13: Unity - The people are united in their knowledge of Jesus and the teachings of the Christian faith.

Verses 13 and 15: Maturity - The people speak and act like Jesus. Ultimately, the test for Christlikeness is sacrificial love for each other (verse 15-16).

Verse 14: Stability - The people do not fall for false teachings. They are rooted firmly in Jesus and his Word.

INVEST IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Our best opportunity to grow spiritually is in service to others.

Four ways to invest in your spiritual growth:

- Walk the MERGE pathway.
- Join a small group.
- Complete the SHAPE assessment.
- Minister - serve practically in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

THE SHAPE ASSESSMENT - SUMMARY

Adapted from *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren

This week, find a good time and a quiet place and prayerfully work through the five parts of the SHAPE Assessment. Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts. Write down what comes to mind.

The SHAPE Assessment will help you identify how you are "shaped" by God to join in Christ's mission to the church and the world:

S - SPIRITUAL GIFTS: The Holy Spirit has given all of us energized abilities to serve. See 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:1-11.

H - HEART: God has put in our hearts a passion or driving interest in something: people, age-group, causes, needs, organizations. What really turns your crank?

A - ABILITIES: We all have certain useful abilities that either come naturally or we have been trained to develop. Think about your talents, education, training, experiences, and so on.

P - PERSONALITY: God wired us to respond to life's problems differently so that, by working together, we can create great solutions. We're not all wired the same, so find your unique calling that fits with your personality.

E - EXPERIENCES: God can use every every event, every success, every failure, every hurt, victory, every mistake, every gain, and every loss in our lives to help someone else.

"Your ministry will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your gifts and abilities in the area of your heart's desire in a way that best expresses your personality and experience." – Rick Warren