

# High Peaks Bible Fellowship

## God's Provision for Edification in the Church

### Introduction

- In our last session we saw that the local gathering of members of the Body of Christ provides an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to each member through the other members, and that all things are to be done for edification (1 Cor 14:26).
- The local church becomes a process through which believers benefit from the equipping gifts of other believers. This process is also repetitive, with believers continually becoming better equipped for their responsibilities through the ministry of the Word of God. We saw that true church growth is growth in the Word of God.
- Now in this session we will be examining in detail one of the key passages of Scripture that tells us what God has provided for the edification of the church.



### Gifts given to the Body of Christ

#### Historical background and setting

- Ephesians 4:11-16 is a key passage that tells us how the body of Christ (and especially the gift of pastor/teacher) should function when the church gathers.
- The letter to the Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul around the year 60 A.D. This was about thirty years after the death of Christ, and Paul himself was to die in just a few years. When Paul wrote this letter some of the gospel accounts did not yet exist, and the New Testament was not completely written until about the year 95 A.D. when the apostle John was exiled on the island of Patmos and wrote the book of Revelation. So during the time when Paul was writing the book of Ephesians, there were special gifts that were operating to authenticate the Word of God and the messengers being sent with this new revelation. After the completion of the book of Revelation these special gifts would no longer be required.

### "The Gift" (Eph 4:11)

- The word "*He*" refers to Christ because in Eph 4:7 it says, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." Christ is the Giver, and He gave gifts to individuals so that they would function as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers within the body of Christ.
- Apostles and prophets were given to build the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20). They received the New Testament revelation from God, but they were no longer needed after the foundation was laid and since the completion of the New Testament. Evangelists and Pastor/Teachers are some of the gifts that are still required today.

"The Gift"

Verse

11

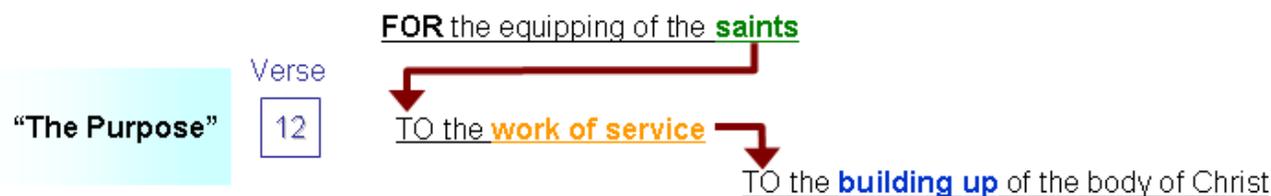
And He (Christ) gave

and

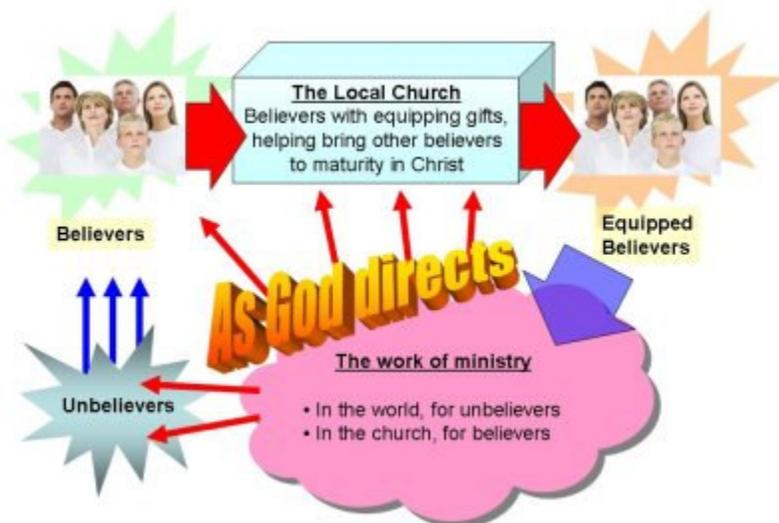
1. some as apostles
2. some as prophets
3. some as evangelists
4. some as pastors & teachers

## "The Purpose" (Eph 4:12)

- Why did Christ give these gifts? What did He expect to happen when the believers met together? The word "for" at the beginning of verse twelve is the Greek preposition "pros" which carries the meaning "for the purpose of" -- Christ is telling us why He gave us these gifted people.

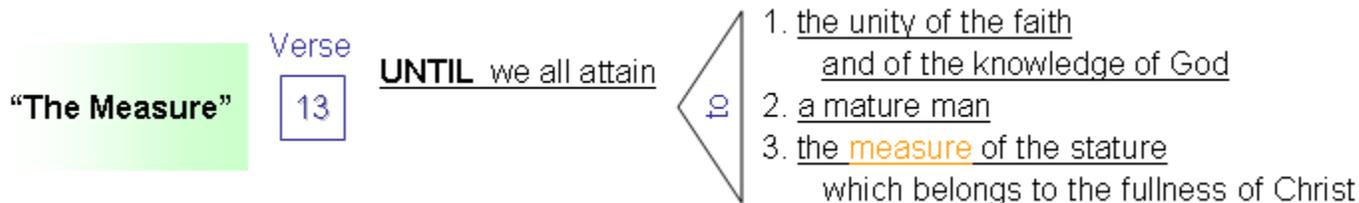


- The purpose for having these gifted men is "for the equipping of the saints to the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." Who is being equipped here? The time when the church gathers should be an equipping time, and the "work of ministry" is to be done by believers who have been equipped for service. The pastor/teacher is Christ's *equipper* to equip the saints to do the work of ministry.
- What is the "work of ministry"? It refers to any of the many responsibilities that each individual believer has in his relationship to God, to other believers, and to non-believers in the world around us.
- The meeting of the church should serve its God-given purpose as an equipping time for the saints. The Body of Christ must be built up so that it can carry on the work of ministry, both within the church and out in the world.



## "The Measure" (Eph 4:13)

- How will we know when we have accomplished Christ's purpose for us when we meet? When *we all attain* to the things in this verse, then we will have accomplished the goal of equipping the saints.
- The first *attainment* is doctrinal unity -- agreement on the truths of "The Faith" -- which involves a clear knowledge of the body of beliefs that are central to biblical Christianity (Jude 1:3).

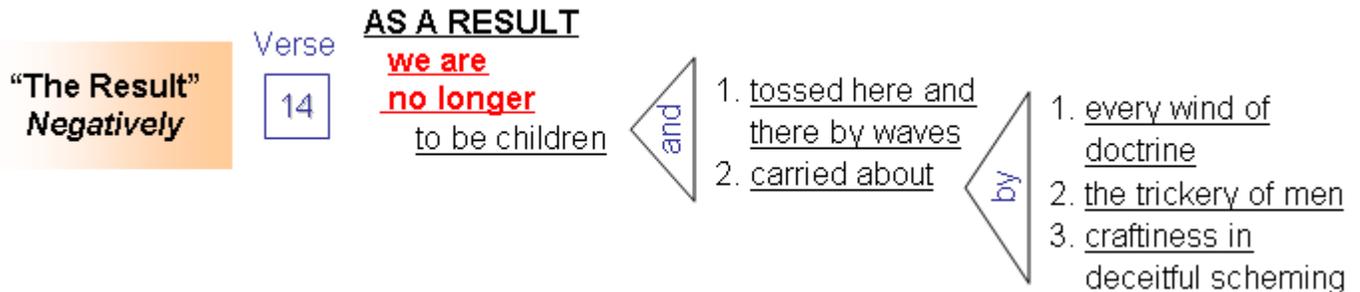


- Notice that the details of doctrine were not *secondary* issues to the apostle Paul. Doctrinal agreement is the very basis for biblical unity.
- The second and third *attainments* involve spiritual maturity. This kind of maturity involves growth in our understanding of the truths of God's Word, which leads to an increasing exercise of wisdom and discernment in our attitudes and actions.
- All believers should be growing toward this goal -- we should see clear progress in maturity as a result of the equipping time on Sunday mornings in church. We must all commit to getting ourselves and our families to a place where we can have gifted equippers help us grow to maturity in the faith.

## "The Result" (Eph 4:14)

### The Negative Aspect

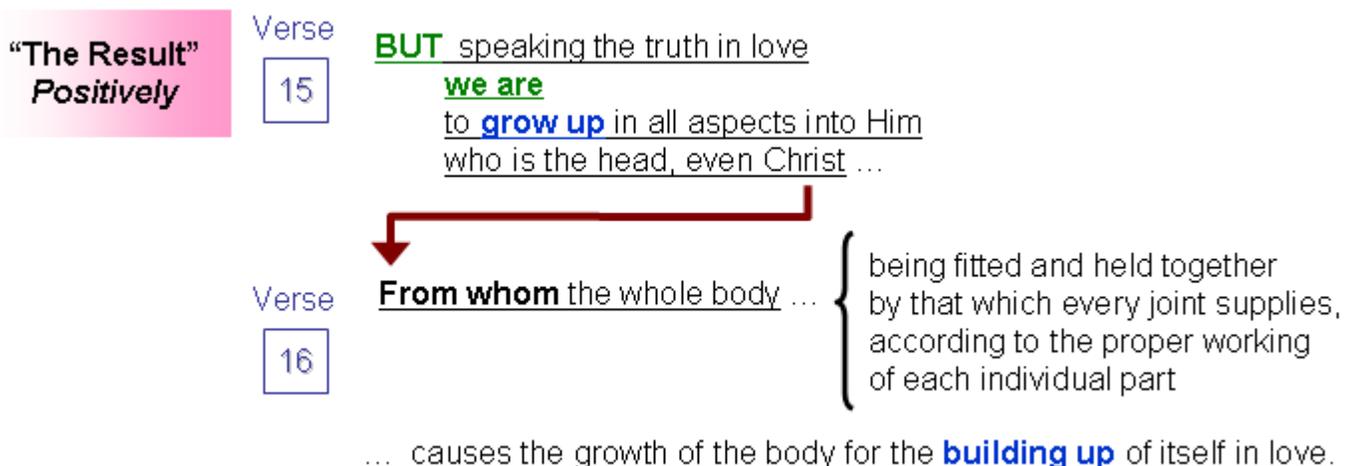
- The phrase "as a result" is a clear marker in the text that tells us what will happen when we fulfill Christ's plan for edification in the church. First, we are no longer to be children = an infant (*napios*).
- In the church, if we are properly "equipping the saints" they will no longer be infants who are unable to do anything for themselves -- they will not be little newborn spiritual babes forever.



- Being *tossed* and *carried* are good words to describe how you would handle a baby, and they are verbs that imply having no control over one's actions.
- What can prevent us from being affected by forces outside of ourselves? The church must have equippers that do the equipping of the saints. If we are following God's plan to equip the saints, then the saints will become wise and be able to discern truth from error. If the equipping of the saints does not happen then the result will be continual immaturity within the body of Christ.
- While it is a wonderful goal to have the unsaved receive Christ as their Savior, that is not the primary focus of the Sunday morning church service. If the Sunday meeting is focused on producing babies and the church is full of infants, then the leadership has no right to reprimand them for failing to do works of service that are characteristic of mature believers.

### The Positive Aspect

- These verses begin with a contrast word ("*but*"), so in contrast to what the church should not look like this is what it should look like.
- "Speaking the truth in love" is literally "truthing in love." In order to live the truth we must be equipped to know, understand, and apply the truth through the Word of God.
- The words "grow up" and "building up" are prominently featured as positive results of following this pattern for local church ministry. Ephesians 4:11-16 clearly tells us that if we spend our time on Sunday morning equipping the saints for the work of ministry, then we are promised that we will see the growth of the body.



## Summary

- If we build a church on this foundation it may take longer to see growth, but we will be operating the local church the way God says to do it. We each need to commit to putting ourselves and our families into a local church where believers with equipping gifts are equipping us toward the goal of spiritual maturity.
- The local gathering of the members of the body of Christ on Sunday morning should be fulfilling its function to edify or build up believers, to equip them for the work of ministry.