

Better Together
Called to Belong, Pt. 4
Ephesians 4:11-16

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I. PRAYER

- i. Help us to reject the individualized Christianity of our day and to joyfully pursue you together. Help us to be convinced that we are better together than on our own.

II. INTRODUCTION

a. Well, it's Super Bowl Sunday.

- i. As a Redskins fan, I don't like the Eagles being there and as a football fan I'm tired of the Patriots being there.
 - So, I don't really have a team to root for tonight, so maybe we'll just tune in to the puppy bowl on Animal Planet.
- ii. But, I can't believe I am publically going to admit this, but there is a cool story in this year's Super Bowl....and that story is the Philadelphia Eagles...painful.
 - If you could care less about sports, just hang with me for a second.
 - But see, the Philadelphia Eagles had a great start to their season going 10-1. It seemed as if they were going to cruise into the playoffs and became a Super Bowl favorite pretty quickly.
 1. But then something happened late in the season. Their star young quarterback, Carson Wentz, blew out his knee. Out for the season.
 2. They still ended the season 13-3 and earned a first seed in the playoffs.



3. But since their star quarterback was out, although they were the first seed in the playoffs, everyone expected them to lose.
- But what happened? The Eagles kept winning.
 1. They kept winning not because their backup quarterback is as good as their star quarterback.
 2. They kept winning because they have a great team.
 3. They were able to adjust to the setback, and still find a way to win.
 4. It's a testament to the health of that team, those coaches, and that organization.
 5. (Something the dysfunctional Redskins probably will never accomplish until we get new ownership.)
 - iii. What's my point? The Eagles didn't earn a spot in the Super Bowl because of one person, they earned a spot in the Super Bowl because of the strength of their team.
- b. You know, when we think about what it means to live our lives following Jesus...somehow and somehow it has gotten cemented into our heads that the expectation on us is that we would be strong, mature individual Christians...MVP type Christians.
- i. That as a Christian, all by yourself, you should have complete knowledge of the Bible.
 - All by yourself, you should be able to fight all of your sinful temptations.



- All by yourself, you should never face doubt.
 - All by yourself, you should have the courage to share the hope that is in you to everyone you know.
- ii. Who here, is a Christian MVP and all by themselves, can follow Jesus faithfully and consistently?
- c. The Christian life is not meant to be lived out alone. The Christian life is to be lived on a team.

III. SERIES PLUG

- a. Over the last several weeks we have been in a sermon series studying Ephesians 4 entitled “Called to Belong.”
 - i. And in this series we have been studying how every single follower of Jesus is called to belong to a local church.
 - ii. And as we have studied Ephesians 4:1-10 so far, we have seen that a biblically faithful local church is filled with all kinds of different people who are committed to one another.
 - Different backgrounds. Different cultures. Different gifts and abilities.
 - And all of these people are unified together in what they believe about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and their mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



- iii. So, this morning, we want to press forward this morning and study together Ephesians 4:11-16.
 - And in this text this morning, we are going to discover that for us to live faithful lives following Jesus, then we have to follow Jesus as a team.
 - So, get your Bible out. Get your App open and keep it on Ephesians 4.
 1. There is a lot in this Scripture we need work through.
 2. So, we're going to do some Bible Study here for a few minutes, then we'll come back together and talk about what this means for us here at Grace Hill Church.

IV. EPHESIANS 4:11-16

a. V.11-12

- i. V.11 begins with "And he gave..."
 - Remember, in v7-10, Paul refers to how Jesus descended to the earth, became a human, and defeated sin on our behalf.
 - He then ascends back to heaven giving out gifts to the people of the church so that the church can fulfill its mission.
 - So, in v.11, Paul begins talking about one of those gifts they Jesus gives the church.



b. Read v.11-12

- i. So, in v.11, we see that one of the gifts that Jesus Christ gives his church is the leadership of the church and he specifically lists out four roles (or you could say four offices) that he gives the church.
 - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherd Teachers.
 1. In your text, it appears as if Shepherd and Teacher are separate but the Greek construction suggests that these are the same role/same office listed here.
 - Now, here is what you need to know about these four different leadership roles in the church.
 1. Paul was writing this letter to the Ephesian Church we believe in the late 60s.
 2. This was before the New Testament was written, compiled, and distributed to the church.
 3. So, because God's Written Word was not yet complete, God appointed certain leaders in the church who had specific gifts that enabled them to teach God's Word even though they did not have a completed copy of the Scriptures.
- ii. So, God appointed Apostles.
 - Apostles are clearly defined in Scripture as individuals who had personally witnessed the risen Jesus Christ in the flesh. They were personally given the mission to start the church and God inspired them by His Holy Spirit to write the New Testament.



- iii. God also appointed prophets.
 - The prophets had a number of different roles throughout the epochs of Scripture.
 - But in the early church, these were people who had an inspired ability to preach God's Word even though they did not have the New Testament written down.
- iv. Then you have the evangelists.
 - These are people who were able to take God's Word to places where it had not yet been proclaimed before.
- v. Finally, you have the shepherd/teacher.
 - This is essentially the pastors and elders of a local church who would take the Word of God, as proclaimed by the Apostles and Prophets, and teach it to their local congregation.
- vi. Now, what is different about our context today and the context of the Ephesians church back in AD 60?
 - (HOLD UP BIBLE)
 - We have the New Testament written down. It is closed. Nothing will be removed and nothing will be added to it.
 1. We do not have a need today for Apostles and Prophets in the church to receive special revelation from God and communicate it to the church.
 2. God has already delivered his Word to us.
 - *[Caveat: Now, I am talking about the role and the office of apostle and prophet. I believe that people*



today can have apostolic and prophetic gifts...but that's for another day.]

vii. But, because we have the complete Scriptures today, the church no longer has Apostles and Prophets.

- You can think of evangelists as the missionaries and church planters we send to places that do not have an adequate gospel witness.
- And then you have the shepherd teachers who are the pastors of local churches who faithfully teach God's Word.

viii. So, for our purposes, we can look at v.11 and we can say that God gave Grace Hill Church pastors/elders/teachers to [read v.12].

- So, the job of the pastor is to equip the saints (all of the followers of Jesus in the church) to do two things:
 1. To equip them to do the work of ministry...to contribute to the mission of the church.
 2. To equip them to build up the body of Christ...to help the church be encouraged and joyful in the gospel.

ix. Now, in v.13-16, Paul is going to explain what the result will be inside the local church if the church operates in this way.

- If the leaders equip and the saints do the work of ministry and build up the body.



c. Read v.13-16

- i. So, when the whole church is united under faithful leadership and everyone sees their role in the work of ministry and the building up of the body...
 - The whole body is joined together as each part is working properly...
 - Then we grow in maturity. We grow in knowledge. We grow in Christlikeness.
- ii. But, the implication here is that if we don't live this Christian life on a team, joined together, but we do this on our own...
 - We choose to live the Christian life apart from a properly functioning, faithful, Bible preaching local church...
- iii. ...the opposite will result.
 - The Scripture says we'll be like children. Tossed to and fro by the waves. Influenced by any teacher that comes along and is witty, charismatic, has crafty and cunning things to say. Easily deceived.
- iv. I must admit, I am guilty of using craftiness on my own children.
 - If I put a plate of green beans in front of my son and tell him to eat it, he is going to look at his plate, see that there is something green on it, and tell me he doesn't like it.
 - So, sometimes, I take advantage of his childlikeness and willingness to be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.



- So, I'll say something charismatically: "Leland! Do you know how strong you will get if you eat your green beans!!!"
 1. And he'll get excited and reluctantly put a green bean in his mouth.
 - And Kim and I will go: "Oh my gosh! Look how big your muscles are!!!!)"
 1. And Leland will flex and devour the rest of his green beans.
 - I'm not proud of it. But parent's, you get it.
- v. A child can be easily influenced if you're convincing enough, compelling enough, excited enough...and without being joined in with the body of Christ in a properly functioning local church, we can be like children.
- d. This is really important for us to understand.
- i. We live in a period of time where our access to books, articles, sermons, teachings, and all different kinds of media is unprecedented.
 - Not to mention how easy it is for anyone to publish and distribute their content nowadays.
 - There is a lot of good about this but there is also a lot of bad because it's not a question if we've been exposed to false teachers who tickle our ears.
 1. We've all been exposed to false teachers who tickle our ears...who sound convincing.
 - ii. Couple this reality with the fact that we've made Christianity an individual thing, a personal faith thing....not a team thing.



- And that has created a crisis of false teaching in the church and many people being led astray.
 - It has created a crisis in the church of people rejecting involvement in the local church and rather getting fed spiritually through other means.
 1. By listening to sermons online or involving themselves in ministries that are not the church.
 2. And there is nothing wrong with either of these things unless they act as a local church replacement.
- iii. You know, I saw this when I went to college.
- I went to a “supposedly” Bible college where I earned a degree in Biblical Studies.
 1. And many of the students, including myself, that went to this school grew up belonging to solid local churches where they were taught the faith.
 2. But, to our surprise when we began attending our Bible classes, our professors were not teaching historic, orthodox, doctrine and theology.
 - I had professors who openly advocated tearing out sections of the Bible that we personally disagreed with.
 1. I had professors who taught that it was preposterous to believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.
 2. And there were many other things...
 - And so, you had all of these college students who were no longer attending the churches they grew up in, they were not involved in new churches, and they were being exposed to these teachings...



1. And so many of them fell for it.
2. They heard this academic type “Bible” scholar spout off about how it was unintelligent to believe in the supernatural...and just like children...they were tossed to and fro by the waves...they got swept up into every wind of false teaching.
3. They weren’t a part of a properly functioning church where they could wrestle with these claims, they could be encouraged in the faith, they could dialogue about their questions.
4. And I still have friends from college today who although they were raised in the faith are atheist today.
5. They walked away from the faith.

e. Here’s the point.

- i. We are more mature together than on our own.
- ii. We will grow in our faith, grow in our trust in Christ better together than on our own.
 - Ephesians 4:15b-16 – *“we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from 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.”*
- iii. You cannot expect to flourish in your relationship with Jesus all by yourself.
 - It’s too dangerous out there.



V. THREE EXHORTATIONS

- a. With that stated, I have three exhortations for us as a church that come from Ephesians 4:11-16.
- b. Exhortation #1: Leaders equip the saints through the faithful ministry of the Word.
 - i. When we look at v.11, we see that these four leaders that Paul lists (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherd/Teachers) all play a role in the distribution of God's Word.
 - And so, if the role of the shepherd/teacher in this church is to equip the Saints for the work of ministry and the building up of the body, then we do that equipping through the faithful teaching and preaching of God's Word.
 - If we are going to set up this church to have success when it comes to not being tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, then we need to faithfully, skillfully, and boldly teach the Word of God!
 - ii. This is why our Sunday morning sermons will always be anchored in a text of Scripture.
 - This time of preaching is not about what I have to say, it's about what God has to say to us through His Word.
 - This is why you are encouraged to have your Bible open or your app open as we are preaching/teaching because you need to see that what we're saying is right there in the text.



- So, today, I am making the claim that we are more mature together and more like children on our own.
 - But those are not my thoughts, that's right here in Ephesians 4:11-16.
- iii. So, it is imperative for the faithfulness and fruitfulness of Grace Hill Church that we never stray away from a high and robust view of the Scriptures and a devotion to proclaiming them unapologetically.
- c. Exhortation #2: The Saints must devote themselves to the work of ministry and the building up of the body.
- i. The Bible is clear that each and every person in the church has a role to play, gifts to exercise, a ministry to fulfill, and a call to build up the Body of Christ.
- ii. And if Ephesians 4 is not clear enough, take a look at Romans 12:4-8...
- *“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, **let us use them**: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”*



- We don't just have the opportunity to use our gifts for the work of ministry and the building up of the body, we have been commanded to by God.
- iii. You have a role to play in the ministry of this church and you have a role to play when it comes to the building up of this church.
 - Has God gifted you with a soft heart and an empathetic demeanor. And you have the ability to really encourage and strengthen those who are suffering, those who are hurt, those who are anxious with your words.
 1. You need to do that in this church. Don't wait to be asked, but start doing it. Start using your gift to build up this body.
 - Do you love studying the Scriptures and digging in deep.
 1. Find two or three folks who need help studying the Bible and start getting coffee and reading the Bible together.
 2. You don't need permission.
 - Has God gifted you to lead others with vision and conviction.
 1. Than you need to come forward and express interest in leading in this church.
 - Has God given you a heart of compassion for the marginalized in our community?
 1. Has he given you ideas of how we could serve and show mercy to those who need it?
 2. We need you to step into a role here that helps us be a church that leverages our resources for those who need it.



- I could go on and on...
- iv. This is why we are doing the RED Workshop.
- RED is not about filling out our volunteer needs on Sunday morning.
 - RED is about helping you discover how God has gifted you and figuring out how you can be specifically used in the work of ministry here at Grace Hill and building up of the body.
 - I hope new initiatives and ministry are born through RED here at Grace Hill.
 - I hope people are empowered to use their gifts and passions through RED.
 - So, if you have not signed up for RED, you can this week. It begins next Sunday!

d. Exhortation #3: The saints must be convinced that we are better together.

- i. When we look at our text today, we clearly see that growing in maturity, growing in Christlikeness, is done as a team.
- But, I don't think our biggest hindrance to growing together is our unwillingness to give, contribute, or utilize our gifts.
 - I believe our biggest hindrance will be our reluctance to receive the ministry of the church into our own lives.
- ii. I personally need to be convinced that I need all of you so that I can grow in maturity.
- You need to be convinced that you need all of us so that you grow in maturity.



- iii. And this is hard for us, because again, we've bought into this idea that the expectation is that we can live out this Christian life all on our own without help.
- That the mark of maturity is the lack of need of help...and that is a lie.
 - Can I repeat that?
- iv. So, where are you struggling?
- Are you struggling with doubt and wondering if this is all true?
 - Are you struggling with studying the Bible and being bored by it?
 - Are you struggling with praying and believing that God listens?
 - Are you struggling with being faithful in the work place?
 - Are you struggling with anxiety?
 - Are you struggling with having patience with your kids?
 - Are you struggling with being a godly husband or godly wife?
 - Are you struggling with temptation to look at stuff online that you shouldn't?
 - Are you struggling with a silent, secret addiction?
- v. What is stopping you from receiving the ministry and the building up of your faith that can come from your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- If we were to examine our hearts, it's usually pride or fear.



- Pride in that we don't want to admit weakness and let other people see that we can't have it all together on our own.
 - Or fear that if we were to seek help, we would be met with judgement and condemnation.
- vi. But this is the church that we're talking about!
- What is the one thing that we all have in common?!?
 - Every one of us have stood before God deserving of his judgement and wrath yet we were met with God's grace in the blood of Jesus.
 - As Jesus bled on the cross, he accomplished forgiveness and redemption from our sins.
 - And we all called upon Jesus seeking forgiveness and trusting in what he did.
 - And so, we're all the same!
 1. The same in our guilt and the same in the grace that we've received.
 - The church should be the last place where anyone would respond to a plea for help with judgement or condemnation.
- vii. We all have to be convinced that we need one another...that we're better together.
- e. Would you pray with me that at Grace Hill, we would reject our desire to be seen as strong individuals and that we would devote ourselves to being strong together as we follow Jesus.

VI. PRAYER



VII. BENEDICTION

- i. Grace Hill, look to your left and right. See the people of the church. These are the people that you have been called to love. These are the people you have been called to encourage. These are the people that you have been called to point to Jesus.

