

# Building The Church According To Divine Specifications

When my wife and I were looking for a house to buy, we found one we liked and signed a contract, agreeing to purchase it. Before we took possession, we had the house thoroughly inspected. During the inspection a structural problem was discovered and it was recommended that a structural engineer examine the property. Two engineers made independent inspections and both came to the same conclusion. The materials used to provide support in the house were insufficient to carry the load. There was no guarantee that the house would stand indefinitely. Fortunately, this was enough to nullify our contract and we were released from any obligation to proceed with the purchase but it left the owners with an unsaleable house.



When an engineer designs a building he provides the specifications for the construction. That is, he specifies what type of materials are to be used, what size they are to be, what their weight is to be, what their strength is to be, etc. For example, when deciding what to use between the first and second floors of a building, materials must be selected which will be strong enough to bear the weight that it will be supporting. The engineer specifies what is to be used and it is imperative that the builder use what the engineer specifies, or else the building may not stand.

In a similar way, God has provided some specifications for building the church. If we want our local church to be strong in the Lord and effective in His work, then we must meet God's specifications as we edify the church. If we do not, then we could suffer serious internal damage and be greatly limited in our effectiveness.

Ephesians 4:12-16 presents this important principle. Jesus Christ gave some gifts to the church. Apostles and prophets laid the foundation. Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are to add structure to the church. In doing so, they must work at bringing each believer and each local church up to the specifications provided by God.



## The Purpose of Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers

In Ephesians 4:12, the word "for" is used three times in the English Bible:

**FOR** the perfecting of the saints,

**FOR** the work of the ministry,

**FOR** the edifying of the body of Christ.

The first of these carries the connotation "for the purpose of," or "toward." The second and third of these carry the connotation "with the ultimate goal being," or "unto."

Expressed with these connotations, the verse says:

**TOWARD** the perfecting of the saints,

**UNTO** the work of the ministry,

**UNTO** the edifying of the body of Christ.

The effect of this is to divide the three statements into two categories, suggesting that the first statement, **FOR** the perfecting of the saints, refers to the main purpose of Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers; and that the other two,

**FOR** the work of the ministry,

**FOR** the edifying of the body of Christ,

refer to two goals for the saints that are to result from the main purpose. In other words, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are to move the saints toward perfection so that the saints are able to do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ.

To perfect something (Strong's #2677) is to adapt it perfectly to its intended purpose, or to bring something up to its intended specifications. The verb form of the word (Strong's #2675) is used in Matthew 4:21 to refer to the mending of fishing nets. The nets were damaged in some way and needed to be restored to their proper condition in order to be usable in catching fish. This same verb is used in Galatians 6:1 to refer to restoring believers who are overtaken in faults. Such believers are ineffective in their Christian testimony until the faults are eliminated and the individuals are restored to integrity in their walk with God. Thus in Ephesians 4:12, to perfect the saints is to mold their lives so that they meet the biblical specifications for Christian service.

When the saints are perfected, or brought up to God's specifications, they will be able to do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ effectively just as God intended. Thus the role of Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers and the role of the saints at large is clearly distinguished. Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are not supposed to do all the work. Their purpose is to perfect the saints. It is the goal of that purpose to equip the saints so that the saints can do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ. According to Ephesians 4:16, all saints are supposed to participate in these two things. Concerning the work of the ministry, this verse says: "*by that which **every joint** supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of **every part**...*" Concerning the edifying of the body of Christ, it says: "*maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.*" The fisherman's purpose was to mend his nets. But the goal of the mending was to make the net able to catch fish. The Evangelist's, Pastor's, and Teacher's purpose is to perfect the saints. But the goal of this perfecting is to make the saints able to do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ.

### **The Specifications For The Perfecting Of The Saints**

So what are the specifications unto which the saints are to be perfected? Ephesians 4:13 begins, "*Till we all come...*" It then uses three prepositions [each of which have the same connotation from Strong's #1519], to outline three primary specifications for the saints:

**IN** the unity of the faith and of the  
knowledge of the Son of God,

**UNTO** a perfect man

**UNTO** the measure of the stature of the  
fulness of Christ.

**Specification #1: The unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.**

The word unity means oneness or sameness. This may be a little confusing to some, because the present day popular definition of unity is a feeling of togetherness based upon a mutual tolerance of differences. This specification God has assigned to believers is something far different than that. In saying that saints are to have unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, The LORD is addressing the need for doctrinal unity among believers which consists of sameness in what we believe and know.

God says that sameness in belief and knowledge is necessary for the saints to be effective in their works of ministry and edification. This imperative of sameness is illustrated by the necessity of a person's two eyes working together. If one eye sees far away and the other eye sees near, the eyes must be adjusted by corrective lenses or else the person's vision will cause great annoyances.

This specification not only requires that all saints believe and know the same things, but that they believe and know the same correct things. Even if both eyes have the same focus, they may be out of focus together. In this case, the same corrective lense is required for each eye in order to provide proper vision. So it is that believers must be brought together unto the same correct doctrinal focus in order to do the work that God intends for them to do.

### **Specification #2: A perfect man.**

This word perfect (Strong's # 5046) has a slightly different connotation from the word perfect (Strong's # 2677) used in verse 12. It means to finish something, or bring it to its desired completed form. It bears the idea of full maturity.

Maturity is a significant factor for effectiveness in Christian ministry. 1 Timothy 3:6 specifies that a novice should not be put into the office of bishop or elder because the instability that results from his immaturity bears the potential of pride and makes him susceptible to falling and vulnerable to the condemnation of the devil. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 specifies that carnal believes are so unstable that they tend to cause envy, strife and divisions. Such immature people should never be let loose in the responsibilities of doing the work of the ministry or edifying the body of Christ. Consider: does the school system assign students to the responsibility of teaching? Does the military assign privates to the responsibility of determining battle strategy? Should the church assign spiritual novices to roles of teaching and leadership? Too many churches make the mistake of assigning important responsibilities to immature Christians simply because they are available and willing. But God says, to be effective in the work, a saint must meet certain specifications.

### **Specification #3: The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**

The word measure suggests the idea of a standard by which a thing can be evaluated. The measure, or the standard, is the ultimate desired level of qualification to which a saint is compared in order to determine his progress and suitability for service. That measure is the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is the nature and character of Christ Himself. It only stands to reason that if the saints are the body of Christ, then there ought to be some likeness of Christ in the body. Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to "*grow up into him in all things...*" It is the purpose of Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to bring a person into Christ and then to help him grow up unto Christ's example. Only when this specification is met can the saints then be effective in their assigned responsibilities.

### **The Result Of Not Meeting The Specifications**



One of the images that remains with me from my childhood is of a full grown man I saw walking around in his back yard clothed in a diaper. When I asked my mother about this, she informed me that this man's mind had never developed and he would remain all his life as a 1 to 2 year old child. What a sad picture. Yet this is exactly the spiritual image the Bible gives us of those who do not grow up into Christ in all things. Ephesians 4:14 says, "*that we henceforth be no more children...*" When a saint is not brought up to God's specifications, he remains a spiritual child, needing to feed on the milk of the Word, leaving him unskillful in the use of the Word of righteousness and unable to discern between good and bad (Hebrews 5:12-14). It also makes him vulnerable to the enemy.

Ephesians 4:14 describes this potential consequence of spiritual immaturity. There are enemies of Christ who use sleight, cunning craftiness, and deceit to destabilize immature saints. Sleight is a word associated with throwing dice and symbolizes the idea of cheating. A gambler entices a victim with the prospect of equal opportunity in winning at a game of chance. But the sleight of the gambler rigs the outcome so that the victim is certain to lose. Cunning craftiness is false wisdom. It is the seemingly wise rationale used to convince the victim to play, but is grossly misleading in substance. Deceit is a deliberate plan to lead someone down a wrong path, to convince them that something false or bad is really true and good. Believers that have not met the specifications of doctrinal unity with the truth, spiritual maturity, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ can be easy prey for the enemy. Such saints are tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, rendering them utterly ineffective in any attempt to serve Christ. Sadly, the deception has been so thorough in present day Christianity, that many believers have fallen headlong into the snare of the enemy, yet have no idea that they have been deceived. They have been led to believe that doctrine does not matter and that experience is more notable than truth. This false wisdom has convinced many to play in a religion which offers no real victory. While they wander aimlessly without an ounce of spiritual conviction, they are kept from finding out the divine specifications and the structure of the church is weakened badly, inching ever more closely to total collapse.

### **The Result Of Meeting The Specifications**

There is another image presented in this text that is more hopeful and encouraging. Ephesians 4:15 says that instead of being spiritual children, saints who speak the truth in love may grow up into Christ in all things. Children at certain stages enjoy dressing up in their mother's and father's clothes and pretend to be grown up. We have all seen the pictures of the little girl clapping around in her mother's high heels, completely enveloped in her mother's dress and weighed down with multiple layers of jewelry. Beside her stands her little brother, practically disappearing in his father's large shoes, arms and legs of his father's clothes flopping this way and that, eyes shielded by a hat that has nearly covered his head. But as that little boy and little girl grow up, those same clothes that looked so humorous and misfitting to their small stature, gradually fit better and eventually seem to look just right on their maturing physiques. So it is when a new believer finds himself in Christ for the first time, the stature of the fullness of Christ is overwhelming. But as he grows up into Christ in all things, the stature of the saint gradually conforms to the stature of Christ, equipping him to serve in the ministry of the church.

This is facilitated by speaking the truth in love. Please note that it does not say speaking love in truth. Someone may say, "I truly love you." But that is a whole different concept from saying, "I love the truth, and I will tell you the truth and nothing but the truth and I will tell it to you in a loving manner." Philippians 1:14-17 says that some preach Christ of envy and strife; others preach Christ of contention; and still others preach Christ of love. Note that all of these

are preaching Christ. All are speaking the truth. It is not a question of substance, but of manner in which the truth is being preached. Some use this context to suggest that we ought to tolerate the differences in the messages that are being preached today about Christ. But in this Scripture, all preachers were saying the same thing. They were not, however, using the same tone of voice to speak those same words. The truth can be communicated in different ways, but spiritual maturity is facilitated most effectively when the truth is spoken in a loving manner.

When the truth is spoken in love, believers are encouraged to receive the truth with great desire. Then as the truth is received, godly character is developed within and spiritual maturity is expressed without and the perfected saint becomes skillful in the work of the ministry and in edifying the body of Christ.

### **The Work Of The Ministry And Edifying The Body of Christ**

When the saints are brought up to code and meet divine specifications, the body of Christ will function according to God's design. Ephesians 4:15 says that Christ is the head of the body. Verse 16 says that it is by means of the resources the body receives from the head that the work of the body is rendered productive. The suggestion of the text is that only those believers who meet divine specifications will have the ability to draw from the head the resources that are necessary for effective Christian ministry.

God's desire is that the whole body draw these resources from the head. If the whole body is not drawing what it needs from the head, the whole body will not be able to contribute to the work of the church. If a person's arm does not receive messages from his brain, the arm becomes paralyzed and unable to perform even the most simple task. The person then becomes handicapped because part of his body is not able to contribute to the person's productivity. If the majority of his body stops receiving messages from his brain and paralysis overwhelms most of his body, the person becomes extremely limited in what he can produce. With so much spiritual ignorance and immaturity in the truth plaguing the church today, it is no wonder that much of the church seems lifeless and ineffective. The work of the ministry is hardly being done at all, and the edification of believers is being attempted with such low grade materials, that most outsiders see little reason to enter such a wobbly structure.

But if a local church would get serious about meeting divine specifications, that part of the body of Christ could show signs of real life and be tremendously effective. God says that if each joint is properly connected, and every joint is doing its job, working just like it is supposed to, then the body by the contribution of all its members each of whom is supplied by the head can fortify its own internal structure and add to its effectiveness in the world.

### **Conclusion**

The cry goes out to present day Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to rediscover their divine purpose. Jesus Christ gave gifts to the church. These gifts consist of Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. To these He gave a purpose, that they would perfect the saints, equipping them to do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ. If the work of the ministry is not being done and the body of Christ is not being edified in the truth, that means the saints are not properly equipped to get the job done. If the saints are not equipped, that means Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are not fulfilling their purpose. If Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are not fulfilling their purpose, what are they doing?

We found out that the structurally unsound house we almost bought was built in a township that had no building code in place at the time. There were no specifications for what was required in constructing a home and insuring its soundness. Without the code in place, the builder apparently did not have the wisdom to determine on his own what specifications he should follow in order to build a solid structure.

Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers do not have the same excuse. God has provided all the specifications necessary for building a sound and productive body of Christ. All we have to do is follow the building code He has provided in His Word. Failure to do so is not the result of an unfortunate lack of wisdom, but of an irresponsible neglect of the resources God has made available. This is no time to lay aside the Word of God and make up our own rules in the service of the church. We must return to the book of divine specifications and build the church accordingly.