

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

[Eph 4:1-16 NASB95] 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this [expression,] "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of 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 a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him who is the head, [even] Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- There is a significant difference between a crowd and a body.
- A crowd may gather in the same place, but its members do not necessarily share the same purpose. People in a crowd can come and go without affecting one another. A body, however, is interconnected. When one part suffers, the whole body feels it. When one part refuses to function, the whole body becomes weaker. When every part works properly, the whole body becomes stronger.
- Paul does not describe the Church as an audience gathered to watch gifted people perform. He describes it as a living body in which Jesus is the Head, spiritual leaders equip the saints, and every believer has a vital role.
- Ephesians 1–3 explains what God has done for us in Christ. Ephesians 4 begins the practical response: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Ephesians 4:1
- The word "therefore" connects our beliefs with our behavior. Because God saved us, adopted us, reconciled us, filled us, and joined us together in Christ, we must now live in a manner worthy of that calling.
- We were not merely called out of sin. We were called into a body.
- Ephesians 2:11–22 explains that Jesus reconciled formerly divided people and made them "one new man." Ephesians 3 declares that the Church displays the manifold wisdom of God. Now, in Ephesians 4, Paul explains how this new people must live together.
- The passage moves through four ideas: The character that protects unity. The truth that establishes unity. The leadership that equips the Church. The participation that produces maturity and growth.

How does the Church protect its unity, function within Christ's structure, and become strong enough to advance His mission?

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

Ephesians 4:1–16 teaches that a strong and advancing church must guard its unity, honor its structure, embrace its ministry, and grow into maturity.

- I. Guard the Unity - [Eph 4:1-3 NASB95] 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**
- a. Paul begins with character before he discusses calling, gifting, leadership, or ministry. Spiritual gifts without spiritual character can divide the very Church those gifts were intended to strengthen.
 - b. Unity Requires a Worthy Walk - The word translated “worthy” carries the idea of something corresponding appropriately to something else. Our conduct should correspond to the calling we have received.
 - c. Paul identifies the attitudes required for life together:
 - d. Humility refuses to make everything about itself. Gentleness handles people carefully rather than harshly. Patience gives others time to grow. Tolerance in love remains committed when relationships become difficult. Diligence actively works to preserve unity.
 - e. Unity does not maintain itself. It must be deliberately protected.
 - f. Unity Is Given by the Spirit - Paul does not tell us to create the unity of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has already united believers to Christ and to one another. Our responsibility is to preserve what the Spirit has produced.
 - g. This does not mean ignoring sin, suppressing truth, or avoiding necessary correction. Biblical unity is not pretending that problems do not exist. It is handling those problems with truth, love, humility, and a commitment to restoration.
 - h. [Jhn 17:20-23 NASB95] 20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, [are] in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.
 - i. [Phl 2:1-4 NASB95] 1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not [merely] look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
 - j. [Col 3:12-15 NASB95] 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things [put on] love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.
 - k. [1Co 1:10 NASB95] 10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

- l. A church may experience powerful spiritual gifts and still damage its witness through pride, competition, gossip, and division. The same Holy Spirit who gives gifts also produces love, patience, gentleness, and self-control.
 - m. The evidence of the Spirit is not only how loudly we worship but also how lovingly we walk together.
 - n. Application: Release the offense you have been carrying. Forgiveness does not declare that the wound was acceptable; it refuses to allow the wound to control the future. Refuse gossip. If you have a problem with someone, speak to that person with humility rather than speaking about that person to others. Stop viewing unity as agreement on every preference. Biblical unity is a shared commitment to Jesus, His truth, His mission, and His people.
 - o. "I will not become an instrument of division in the body Jesus died to create."
- II. **Honor the Structure – [Eph 4:4-11 NASB95] 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this [expression,] "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers,**
 - a. The Church's unity is not merely institutional or relational. It is theological. We are one because we share: One body, One Spirit, One hope, One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and Father
 - b. Our unity is centered on the Triune God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Unity Does Not Mean Uniformity - After emphasizing our oneness, Paul immediately discusses the different measures of grace given to individual believers: "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." Ephesians 4:7
 - d. We share one Lord, but we do not all have the same assignment. We belong to one body, but we do not all perform the same function. Unity does not erase our distinctions; it brings those distinctions under the lordship of Jesus.
 - e. Jesus Gave Leadership Gifts to His Church
 - i. According to verse 11, the ascended Christ gave:
 - 1. Apostles — Pioneering and foundational leaders who establish, extend, and strengthen the work of the gospel.
 - 2. Prophets — Spirit-sensitive voices who communicate God's truth and call the Church into faithful alignment with Him.
 - 3. Evangelists — Gospel proclaimers who reach the lost and stir the Church toward evangelism.
 - 4. Pastors — Shepherds who care for, guide, protect, and nurture God's people.
 - 5. Teachers — Those who explain Scripture and ground believers in sound doctrine.
 - f. These ministries are not human inventions. Verse 11 says, "He gave." Jesus established leadership within His Church because the body needs direction, instruction, protection, and equipping.

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

- g. Structure Must Remain Under Christ - Submission to spiritual structure is not blind loyalty to human personalities. Jesus remains the Head of the Church. Therefore, healthy spiritual authority must:
 - i. Operate under Scripture.
 - ii. Reflect the character of Christ.
 - iii. Equip rather than control.
 - iv. Serve rather than exploit.
 - v. Be accountable rather than untouchable.
 - vi. Build people rather than promote personalities.
- h. Biblical submission means recognizing the responsibilities Christ has assigned, receiving godly instruction, cooperating with the Church's shared mission, and refusing rebellious independence. It never requires participation in sin or the protection of abusive conduct.
- i. [Heb 13:17 NASB95] 17 Obey your leaders and submit [to them,] for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.
- j. [1Th 5:12-13 NASB95] 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.
- k. [1Pe 5:1-4 NASB95] 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as [your] fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to [the will of] God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- l. [1Co 12:18 NASB95] 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.
- m. [Act 20:28 NASB95] 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- n. Application: Replace the consumer question, "Does this church meet all my preferences?" with the covenant question, "Where has Jesus placed me, and how can I strengthen His body?" Allow trustworthy spiritual leaders to pastor you. Do not let a painful experience with an unhealthy leader prevent you from receiving the protection of healthy leadership. Support the Church's structure by communicating clearly, following established processes, honoring responsibilities, and refusing to work around leaders when you disagree.
- o. "Jesus is the Head, His Word is our authority, and His order strengthens His Church."

III. Embrace the Ministry - [Eph 4:12 NASB95] 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

- a. This verse corrects one of the most damaging misunderstandings in the modern Church: the belief that pastors do the ministry while everyone else watches.
- b. Paul presents a different pattern:
 - i. Leaders Equip the Saints - The word translated "equipping" carries the idea of preparing, restoring, completing, or putting something into proper working condition. Fivefold ministers are not given to replace the ministry of the saints. They are given to prepare the saints for ministry.

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

1. Apostolic ministry equips believers to advance.
2. Prophetic ministry equips believers to discern and obey.
3. Evangelistic ministry equips believers to reach the lost.
4. Pastoral ministry equips believers to care for people.
5. Teaching ministry equips believers to understand and communicate truth.
- ii. Every Saint Is a Minister - The phrase “work of service” translates *ergon diakonias*—the work of ministry. Ministry belongs to the saints, not only to those holding titles.
 1. You may not stand behind a pulpit, but you have a ministry.
 2. You minister when you pray and serve others inside and outside of church service.
- c. There are no unnecessary members in Christ’s body. Some ministries are public and others are quiet, but every faithful act contributes to the strength of the Church.
- d. Spirit-Empowered Ministry - The Holy Spirit does not empower only preachers. At Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out upon the entire gathered community. Sons and daughters prophesied. Young and old received. Servants were included.
- e. A Spirit-filled church is not a church where one gifted person does everything. It is a church where the Holy Spirit activates the entire body for witness and ministry.
- f. [1Co 12:4-7 NASB95] 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all [persons.] 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- g. [Rom 12:4-8 NASB95] 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, [each of us is to exercise them accordingly:] if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
- h. [1Pe 4:10-11 NASB95] 10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, [is to do so] as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves [is to do so] as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- i. [Act 2:17-18 NASB95] 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy.
- j. [2Ti 2:2 NASB95] 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- k. Application: Identify one area where you can begin serving consistently. Do not wait for a title before accepting an assignment. Stop measuring ministry by visibility. Heaven’s evaluation is based on faithfulness, not platform size. Reject the lie that you have nothing valuable to contribute. Jesus gave grace “to each one.” That includes you.
- l. The Church was never intended to be a cruise ship carrying passengers. It is a rescue vessel where every person has a station.

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

m. You do not need a title to have a ministry, but you do need a servant's heart.

IV. Grow into Maturity - [Eph 4:13-16 NASB95] 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him who is the head, [even] Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- a. The goal of unity, leadership, equipping, and service is spiritual maturity. Jesus is building a body that increasingly reflects His own character and fullness.
- b. Maturity Brings Stability - "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." Ephesians 4:14
- c. Immaturity is easily influenced. Spiritual children chase personalities, controversies, trends, and sensational claims. Mature believers remain grounded in Scripture and connected to the body.
- d. A believer who refuses instruction, accountability, or connection becomes vulnerable to deception. Isolation may feel like independence, but it often produces instability.
- e. Maturity Speaks Truth in Love - "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15
 - i. Truth without love can become cruelty. Love without truth can become compromise. Spiritual maturity brings them together.
 - ii. We do not protect unity by avoiding every difficult conversation. We protect unity by addressing problems in a Christlike manner.
- f. Maturity Requires Every Part - "The whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part..." Ephesians 4:16
- g. Notice Paul's language: The whole body is connected. Every joint supplies something. Each individual part must work properly. The body grows through love.
- h. The Church does not reach its full strength when only the pastor functions. It grows when every believer accepts their place and fulfills their assignment.
- i. Your inactivity does not only affect you. Something God intended to supply through you may be missing from the body.
- j. [Col 2:19 NASB95] 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.
- k. [1Co 14:20 NASB95] 20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.
- l. [Heb 5:12-14 NASB95] 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
- m. [Mat 18:15-17 NASB95] 15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen [to you,] take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the

Ephesians - Fullness: Every Part Matters

Dr. John Carmichael

church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

- n. [1Co 12:25-27 NASB95] 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but [that] the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if [one] member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.
- o. Application: Test teaching by Scripture rather than accepting everything that sounds spiritual. Ask whether your response to conflict reflects emotional reaction or spiritual maturity. Become dependable. Fulfill your assignment, communicate when something changes, receive correction, and work cooperatively with others.
- p. "I will take my place, supply my part, and strengthen Christ's body."

- **The Church advances when its leaders equip, its people serve, and every member protects the Spirit-given unity of the body.**
- Jesus is not merely gathering a crowd. He is building a body.
- He is the Head. He gives direction to the Church. He appoints leaders to equip the saints. He distributes grace and spiritual gifts to every believer. Then He calls every member to serve, mature, and contribute to the health of the whole body.
- The enemy understands that a divided church is a weakened church. That is why he uses offense, gossip, pride, competition, suspicion, doctrinal instability, and resistance to godly authority. If he cannot stop people from attending church, he will try to prevent them from functioning together as the Church.
- But when believers walk humbly, protect unity, honor godly structure, receive equipping, and perform their ministries, the Church becomes strong.
- We will not all have the same role, but we share the same Lord.
- We will not all possess the same gifts, but we are filled by the same Spirit.
- We will not all perform the same function, but we are advancing the same mission.
- The Church becomes what Jesus intends when every part finds its place and faithfully supplies its part.