

“GOD’S DIVINE BLUEPRINT”

Text: Ephesians 4:7-16

Subject: God’s Way To Grow Healthy People And A Healthy Church

Introduction

Fact: God’s ultimate will for you and His church is one agenda, “**make disciples**”.
“*Therefore go and make disciples.*” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Fact: A disciple is clearly described in Scripture

1. A disciple is a believer. (Acts 16:30-20)
2. A disciple is a learner. (II Timothy 2:15)
3. A disciple is a follower. (Matthew 16:24)
4. A disciple is a witness. (I Peter 3:15)
5. A disciple is a reproducer. (Matthew 28:19)

Fact: The purpose of growing healthy disciples is..

- To enable people to reproduce after Christ’s kind.
- To see people go from consumers to producers.
- To watch people’s mindset grow from “**What’s in it for me?**” to “**What’s in it for God?**”

Fact: The biblical (acts 2) way to make disciples is...

- Reach people through our existing web of relationships.
- Teach people the Word to grow and mature.
- Train leaders to minister in small groups.
- Build community through establishing small groups (to connect people with people).

Question: Why do spiritually healthy people love to give and serve and disciple others?

Answer: Because healthy Christians look beyond “**events**” that bring crowds (to the “**process**” that builds disciples).

- Healthy saints want **spiritual substance** – not vanity fair!
- Healthy saints want **internal change** – not just good feelings!
- Healthy saints want **lasting fruit** – not just busy activity!
- Healthy saints want **God’s glory** – not ego gratification!
- Healthy saints want **Christ like character** – not performance!

Fact: Ephesians 4:7-16 is God’s blueprint to grow a healthy person (and a healthy church).

Fact: Ephesians chapters 1-3 deal with doctrine (chapters 4-6 deal with duty).

Fact: Chapters 1-3 reveal our wealth as believers (chapters 4-6 reveal our walk as believers).

♦ In 4:1-16, How to walk in **unity**.

♦ In 4:17- 5:17, How to walk in **purity**.

♦ In 5:18 – 6:9, How to walk in **harmony**.

♦ In 6:10 – 24, How to walk in **victory**.

Question: What has God given us to be healthy believers? **Answer:** Two things:

1. (V. 7) God has given us His “**grace**”.
2. (V. 11) God has given us His “**gifts**”.

1. We’ve been given “grace”:

“*But unto every one of us is given grace.*” (v. 7, which means):

- God has distributed (to every believer) His grace to function somewhere.
- God has given you a gift to minister (and the enablement to use that gift),
- God has willed it that every believer have a contribution to invest in his Kingdom.

Question: “But pastor, I don’t deserve this.”

Answer: (v. 7) “According to the measure of the gift of Christ” means:

- ◆ It is a gift (or, Jesus purchased your gift by his merits at Calvary (not yours))

(We’ve All Been Given “Grace”)

2. We’ve been given “gifts”:

“And he (Jesus) gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.” (v. 11)

Fact: God reveals five gifts He has given to His church (for an intentional purpose).

- **Apostles** – those who go into virgin territory to plant a new body of believers.
- **Prophets** – those who proclaim God’s Word to warn and awaken the body of Christ.
- **Evangelists** – those called specifically to bring unbelievers to decisions.
- **Pastors** – those called to assume long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a local body of believers.
- **Teachers** – those gifted by God to clarify and communicate the truth so that others can learn it, apply it and grow.

The question is:

- ◆ Why has God given us **grace** (undeserved favor to grow us and be fruitful)?
- ◆ Why has God given us **gifts** (spiritual leaders to lead, feed and protect the flock of God)?

(In other words)

Question: What is to be the end result of **gifts** and **grace**?

Answer: The end result is something that leaves us healthy and fruitful.

I. You Are “Prepared” (V. 12)

*“To **prepare** God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”*

Question: Why has God given us **grace** and **gifts**?

Answer: To **perfect** (prepare) God’s people for **service**.

Fact: The Greek word for perfect (KATARTISMOS) means:

1. To equip and prepare
2. To make whole and complete
3. To restore to its original condition.

Question: Why has God given us his grace (v. 7) and spiritual leaders (v. 11)?

Answer: “To **prepare** us for the **work of the ministry**”.

(In other words)

- Healthy sheep want to be taught and trained to minister to people and,

- Healthy shepherds (who are secure in God) don't want to do it all, but want to equip a great team to minister to people.

(In other words)

Spiritual leaders have **two choices**:

1. Try to do it all by themselves, thus failing to equip others and burning themselves out. (**Restricting** people) or,
2. Pray, study and equip the saints to serve. (**Releasing** people.)

Question: What happens if the leader prepares the people to serve and minister?

Answer: (V. 12c) "...So that the body of Christ may be built up."

Which means:

- The body will be built up and edified!
- The body will grow healthy and strong!
- The body will see the reward of needs being met!

II. You Are "Perfected" (V. 13)

*"Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect** (mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

Question: Why has God given us grace and gifts (spiritual favor and spiritual leaders)?

Answer: Three reasons in verse 13:

1. **"To be unified in the faith"** (which means to come into agreement with the Word).
2. **"To know Jesus better"** (which means to grow and grow and grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus).
3. **"To be perfected"** "Attaining the full measure of perfection." V. 13)

Question: What is "**perfection**" in verse 13?

Answer: The word "perfection" means: "mature and whole".

- It isn't a sinless perfection, but a state of spiritual adulthood in comparison to childhood in Christian living.

Question: Why desire to become perfected?

Answer: (V. 13) "...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

(Which means)

- To advance in godliness to **become wholly like Jesus.** (Repeat)

(In other words)

- God pours out grace and puts spiritual leaders in our lives – **to help us become more like Jesus!**

What a revelation of truth here

(That kingdom minded growing disciples never pray)

- ♦ "Entertain me today." ♦ "Pamper me today." ♦ "Tell me stories today."

Instead (Kingdom minded healthy disciples say):

1. "Holy Spirit, talk to me about anything in my life that is not like Jesus." (and)
2. "Pastor, teach me the pure Word of God so that I can advance in godliness of life."

Why pray this?

1. So that we can be **prepared** for service.
2. So that we can be **perfected** into the image of Jesus.

III. You Are "Protected:" (V. 14)

*"Then we will **no longer be children** tossed back and forth by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."*

Question: Why has God given us his grace (v. 7) and His gifts of spiritual leadership (v. 11)?

Answer:

1. To prepare us for service.
2. To perfect us into the likeness of Jesus.
3. To **protect** us from being led astray.

Question: What is it that God wants to protect us from?

Four dangers in verse 14:

1. **"Winds of doctrine"** (which is)
 - Some religious fashion (teaching) that appeals to the flesh and seems to be blowing most strongly at the time.
2. **"The sleight of men"** (which is)
 - Trickery and fraud to take advantage of another.
3. **"Cunning craftiness"** (which is)
 - To be manipulated by error that looks like truth.
4. **"Deception"** (which means)
 - To use pretense to lead someone astray.

What a revelation here:

That God has given us spiritual leaders to protect us (with the truth).

- From religious hucksters who prey on people
- From charlatans, merchandisers and false prophets.
- From religious fads that come and go.
- From chasing after novelty and the sensational.
- From anything that doesn't promote godliness of life.

Remember: To the extent that man is seen – God isn't!!!

IV. You Are Progressive" (V. 15)

*"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things **grow up into Him** who is the Head, that is Christ."*

Question: What does it mean to "**speak the truth in love**"?

Answer: The Greek word for speak is (ALETHEUO) which means:

- ◆ To speak and act truthfully (and) ◆ To be truthful at all times

Question: How are we to speak (and live) the truth?

Answer: “In love” (the opposite of harshness and abrasiveness).

Question: What causes someone to be harsh and abrasive?

Answer: Unresolved injury and issues internally. (James 4:1-3)

Question: How can you be healed?

Answer: Only by accepting full responsibility for what’s inside of you!

Remember:

- To the degree I blame someone else for what’s inside of me, to that same degree I will not be changed and cannot be healed. (Repeat)
- It is pride that justifies holding onto past offences (pride blames its condition on what someone else has done). (Repeat)

Question: Why is this “truth and love” issue so important?

Answer: The rest of verse 15:

“..**May grow up into Him.**” (Which means)

“To advance in godliness of character that resembles Jesus.”

Fact: The words “into Christ” here mean:

- “Keep your eyes on Christ (your perfect example) and off of other people”!

(In other words from verse 15)

- To the degree I am truthful, to that same degree I will grow in Christ.
- To the degree I walk in love (and forgive every offender) to that same degree I will grow in Christ.
- To the degree I concentrate (keep my eyes) on Jesus, to that same degree I will grow in Christ.

V. You Are “Productive” (V. 16)

*“From whom the whole body fifty joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, **maketh increase of the body** unto the edifying of itself in love.”*

Question: What is the result of following the **divine blueprint** from God?

It is clear and plain

1. Each individual will become mature, stable, obedient and fruitful. (then)
2. The local church body will become a coordinated team with every member contributing to the whole. (Then)
3. The Lord will see to it that the church “**maketh increase of the body**” (or)
 - The church will **grow** God’s way (through **nutrition**) not by **attrition** (which is called “the rotation of the saints” from church to church).

Oh beloved...

“According to the effectual working of every part” includes you!

- You are invited to participate with God!
- You are included in God’s plan!
- You have been gifted to add something to eternity!
- You have potential and a purpose for being here!

Amen, Bill Kirk