

## We Need You! - Ephesians 4:1-16

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Why go to church when you can listen to worship music and sermon podcasts at home? Because the local church is the hope of the world if, and only if, we each play our part by pursuing unity with one another and serving one another with the gifts Christ has given us.

Why do we go to church? There's lots of answers the Bible gives to that question – let me just give you the simple answer Paul gives us in our passage today:

### **We go to church on Sundays because the church needs us**

- By "us" I don't mean the Jennings – I mean each and every one of us
- Grace Bible Church – this family represented in this room – we need you, and you, and you, and me

### **Let me prove it – read 4:15-16**

- The body is the church and how does the body grow up in Christ?
- "by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part"
- In other words – the church needs each and every one of us doing our part if the church is going to grow up into what God intends.

### **And why do we care about Grace Bible Church growing up into what God intends?**

#### **No better way to answer that than quote Bill Hybels**

- One of the most influential church leaders of the last 50 years... *quote*
- That truth is particularly relevant this week – a week of such tragedy – massacre in Vegas following on the heels of massive hurricanes in Puerto Rico, Florida, and Houston. Tragedy everywhere we turn. So much evil and suffering in this world.
- What hope is there? THIS. The local church. We are the hope of the world... because we have the Gospel that saves and the Spirit and the Word that transform sinners into saints.
  - o Jesus said, "You are the light of the world"
  - o He said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"

### **So why do you need to come to Grace on Sunday morning?**

#### **Because the world needs Grace and Grace needs you!**

#### **Grace can't be the hope of the world unless we all show up and do our part!**

- If we stay on the sidelines, GBC will fade into irrelevance like so many churches in America
- 2016 Gallup poll – 72% of Americans say that the influence of religion on American life is decreasing – the church is becoming less and less relevant to the nation we live in.
- Some of that decline is due to societal trends outside of our control
- But much of it is the fault of Christians who allowed selfishness, worldliness, and fear to rule their hearts and keep them from investing in their local churches and communities.

We don't want that to ever happen at Grace.

**Just the opposite: We want Grace Bible Church to shine brighter and brighter as the hope of the world that God has called us to be**

**And that will only happen if we each play our part**

**What Is Your Part To Play In Making Grace The Hope Of The World?**

## 1. Pursue unity with other believers

- Read 4:1-7
- **v1 – theme verse for the whole second half of Ephesians**
  - o ch1-3 – Christian doctrine = what’s true for us through Jesus
  - o ch4-6 – Christian practices = how we should live based on that truth
  - o Truth: God called us all together to salvation in Jesus
  - o Practice: Now let us together live worthy of that calling
  - o Does NOT mean “pay it back” – you cannot ever pay it back, and even if you don’t live worthy, you won’t lose it – it wasn’t a loan!
  - o It means we strive to live in a way that matches the way God saved us
    - We are gracious as He is gracious
    - We are good as He is good
    - We are loving as He is loving
  - o Our behavior as a church family towards each other and towards the world should match God’s behavior towards us and the world
- **Paul unpacks that worthy lifestyle in v2-3 and the big idea is UNITY**
  - o Let us preserve / protect our unity as one body of Christ
  - o v4 – one body, one Spirit, one hope – we were called by God to be part of this one family – the church
  - o And God challenges us to protect that unity against attack and division
- **Common theme in the New Testament**
  - o It goes all the way back to Jesus – His prayer for us on the night He was betrayed...
  - o Read John 17:22-23
  - o That’s what Jesus wants for us... what He’s asking the Father for... for our unity – that we would be one family united together.
  - o **Jesus wants us to strive for unity – to work for it and protect it**
  - o Look at the plea Paul makes for unity in 1 Cor... Read 1 Cor 1:10
  - o Urges us to fight for unity
- **But here’s the hard part: UNITY ALWAYS REQUIRES SACRIFICE**
  - o read v2 again
    - **humility** and it’s parallel, **gentleness** = NOT thinking less about yourself, but thinking about yourself less – focusing more on the needs of others
    - **patience** = slow to speak, slow to be angry, but quick to listen – that’s hard – patience is painful to develop
    - showing **tolerance** in love = bearing with others who bother you or burden you – you don’t just grudgingly tolerate them, you support them in love and show them mercy
  - o All of those things are hard and painful... but that’s the price of unity
  - o Unity requires sacrifice – I must be willing to sacrifice myself – my rights, my desires – if I’m going to unify with others
  - o Probably the most significant passage on sacrificial unity is Phil 2...
    - read Phil 2:3,5-8
    - Unity means I sacrifice my preferences, rights, and desires to put others preferences, rights, and desires first.
    - Unity means I follow the example of Christ who chose humility, suffering, and death for the good of the church – so must we.
  - o Unity doesn’t come easy – the history of the human race proves that
    - Disunity is our natural state
    - Unity’s something you have to fight for and sacrifice for – it takes WORK
- **Now let’s get practical – how do we pursue that sacrificial unity?**
  - o What exactly do we need to do?
  - o I’ll give you 2 wrong answers and then 2 right answers

- **WRONG: Get rid of denominations and separate churches**
  - Have every believer in town part of just one big local church
  - The church has grown a LOT since the 1<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Far too many Christians in BCS for us all to meet in one building or for one group of elders to be able to lead all of us. That would be crazy!
  - We need lots of churches in a town of this size.
  - And if we're going to have lots of churches, it's perfectly acceptable for each of those churches to have their own distinctive practices and ministries and strategies – we don't all have to look the same.
    - Remember: God loves diversity, just for the sake of diversity!
    - There's not one kind of fish... there's thousands of kinds of fish – all unique – all beautiful.
    - I believe God is pleased by the diversity of local churches in this town...
  - SO LONG AS... we all work together!
    - He's not ok with us competing or building our own kingdoms.
    - But He loves it when diverse local churches work together to spread the gospel and bless the world.
    - That's why it was SO encouraging to see so many churches in this town work together to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey. Created a whole website – [bcscare.org](http://bcscare.org) – to centralize the opportunities of all our local churches to get the maximum number of volunteers and donations. God does big things when we work together.
  - So we don't need to eliminate denominations and become 1 big church – that's not how you build unity
- **WRONG: Agree on everything**
  - First off, I don't think it's possible to agree on everything, ever! We'll still have our individual preferences and opinions even in heaven as far as I can tell.
  - We don't have to agree on everything... we only have to agree on the essentials.
  - And my list of absolute essentials is really short:
    - The Deity of Christ – 1 Jn 2 tells us that church leaders who deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, are in league with the antichrist – so that's a pretty big deal!
    - The Gospel – Paul tells us in Gal 1 that if any religious leader teaches a different gospel than salvation through faith alone in Jesus alone – let him be damned
  - Those are absolute essentials – we must agree on those to be part of God's church
  - Then we have our second level beliefs – important but not essential – worth debating and defending, but not worth excommunicating someone over
    - Our exact beliefs about the Bible, about depravity, election, sanctification, the practices of the church, the major end time events
    - You can still be a Christian and a member of God's church even if you disagree with us on any of these. We still want to walk in unity with you and work together with you to reach the world for Christ.
    - If you're interested in our position on these 2<sup>nd</sup> level issues, you'll find them all in our church's doctrinal statement online
  - And then we have everything else that doesn't even make it to level 2...
    - styles of worship, creation views, opinions about tattoos and movies and drinking, political views, movies we like, food we eat, stuff we wear... we don't have to agree on any of that. We can certainly discuss these and any other issues, but we can't let any of them become a cause for division. You don't split a church over worship styles or political views.
  - Augustine: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."
- So we don't build unity by wiping out denominations or agreeing on everything. Instead...

- **1. Forgive believers who've hurt you**
  - o This one is hard... really hard at times. It takes sacrifice.
  - o Most if not all of us have been hurt in the past by another believer. We're human. We make mistakes. We get angry, selfish, insensitive. We hurt one another.
  - o When you are hurt, you have a choice, a hard choice: hold on to the offense or forgive.
    - Be clear: forgive does not mean you let it happen again
    - It means you choose not to rehearse the wrong over and over
    - It can be really hard – sometimes we need help to work through forgiveness – may need counseling
  - o But are you willing to try to let go of that offense and be reconciled to the believer who hurt you?
  - o If not, the church can't become all God wants it to be
    - When a believer doesn't forgive it's like a wrench being thrown into a set of gears – everything grinds to a stop. Instead of the church having a positive impact on the community it gets sidelined by bitterness, tension, anger.
  - o So for the good of the church, will you try to let that offense go?
    - Will you ask God to help you forgive those believers who've hurt you?
    - Will you ask Him to help you give that believer a fresh chance?
- **2. Get to know believers who are different than you**
  - o Again, this takes sacrifice. Our natural bent is always towards sameness – we will become friends with those who are like us. We attract people who look and act like us.
  - o It takes intentionality to resist this bent and become friends with someone who looks, speaks, thinks, or acts differently than you do.
  - o So will you reach out to other believers of different races, ages, economic status, education level, political position, nationality and get to know them.
    - Go to lunch or coffee; invite over for dinner; go serve together on one of our hurricane relief trips
  - o Do something with a believer different than you... that's how you build the unity of this body so that Grace Bible Church can become all God intends us to be – the hope of the world.

## 2. Use your gifts to serve others

- **For those of you who've been living under a rock... this is a Mr. Potato head**
  - o When they were younger my kids LOVED him
  - o Spread out all his parts on the floor and then assemble him
  - o Problem: easy to lose parts! Nose would fall behind the dresser. Mouth would get lost in the closet.
  - o No good because Mr. Potato head needs all his parts to be Mr. Potato head
  - o Without all these unique parts – he's just a potato
- **So it is with the church!**
- **Read 4:7 – this is the big idea of this second section**
  - o Jesus has given a unique gift of grace to each and every believer
  - o Not talking about the gift of salvation – He's talking about spiritual gifts
  - o That becomes clear a few verses later
- **But first Paul takes a little theological rabbit trail – read 4:8-10**
  - o The idea of Jesus giving His people gifts leads Paul to quote the book of Psalms
  - o And then describe how Jesus in His death, resurrection, and ascension has fulfilled that passage
  - o It's a very difficult passage to interpret – one of my DTS profs wrote His entire PhD dissertation on v8-10 – 4 years of work on just these 3 verses!
  - o My professor concluded that this is probably describing Jesus descending to earth in human flesh, dying, rising from the dead, and then ascending to heaven in complete victory over all His

- enemies – Satan, death, and sin – and now in heaven, celebrating His victory by sharing the spoils with His people – us
  - Jesus celebrates His victory by giving us gifts... spiritual gifts that we can use to serve others
- **Read 4:11-13**
- **Paul begins by listing just a few spiritual gifts – particularly gifts that are given to the leaders of the church**
  - Apostles are gifted to plant churches in new and unreached people groups; prophets are gifted to encourage and exhort God’s people; evangelists are gifted to proclaim the gospel widely; pastors and teachers explain scripture to build God’s people
  - Each of these leadership gifts is meant to help all of God’s people discover their own unique gifting
- **That’s the point of v7 – “to EACH ONE OF US grace was given”**
  - **Every believer has a spiritual gift that enables them to serve the body**
  - By “every believer” we mean “every believer without exception”
  - Back in early elementary school I didn’t feel particularly gifted...
    - Couldn’t run fast, kick well, make class laugh – in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade that was all that seemed to matter!
    - But all that changed in 3rd grade – invited into “Gifted & Talented” program
    - For one period a day you left... magical place called the “GT room”!
    - Full of experiments and projects you could study, build, take apart
    - Right up my alley!! I was born to engineer – natural – teachers praised my ability
    - That was life changing to realize that I had a gift that made me special
  - So it is in God’s family... we each have been individually gifted by Jesus with one or more spiritual gifts that make us special
  - Variety of gifts listed in scripture including but not limited to...
    - apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring, teaching, leadership, wisdom, mercy, exhortation, administration, service, giving, faith, tongues, healing
  - A few of these are clearly supernatural – tongues, healing – you don’t tend to see these much in established church settings like the Bible Belt – though you do still see them in missionary settings
  - But the gifts that we do see here – teaching, evangelism, wisdom, mercy, giving... usually are connected to a natural ability we have
    - Ben Stuart or Timothy Ateek would be great teachers even if they weren’t believers
  - **What Jesus does: redeems that natural talent that would have been used to serve self**
    - transforms it into a capacity to serve others in a way that glorifies God and grows His church
- **That’s the point of v14-16 where we started this morning – read v14-16**
- **Our gifts enable us to serve one another to the glory of God**
  - This end of v16 is the goal – the whole body – the whole church would grow to be more like Jesus – to reflect His love to the world better and better
  - But that growth only happens if the first half of v16 is true – if each of us uses our gifts and talents to serve the body
  - we each have a necessary part to play
  - College students: may be tempted not to become part of Grace Bible Church or any church in town because you’re only here for a few years. So you come on occasional Sundays but that’s it. But what you don’t understand is that WE NEED YOU! We, as a church, can only grow to our full potential if EVERY believer here is using their gifts to serve the body... and that includes you students. You are essential to us fulfilling our mission to help people find and follow Jesus. We need you. SO even if you’re a Senior and only have this year left... we still strongly encourage you to discover your gifts and use them here at Grace. You will grow and you will help us grow.

- Adults, that's true for all of you even if BECAUSES is only a temporary residence before your next move. Whether you plan to be with us for 10 years or 10 months, we need you!
- **Application: we need you to know and use your spiritual gifts!!**
  - We're counting on it!
  - Discover Your Ministry this week... 10/11 7pm in the SW Foyer will cover Spiritual Gifts
  - Online gift survey at [www.grace-bible.org/giftsurvey](http://www.grace-bible.org/giftsurvey)
  - You may also be able to discover your gifting just by asking yourself a couple questions:
    - What do other people say you are good at?
      - They may have already figured out what your gifts are
      - Here's a quick plug: do people rely on you to fix their electronics? **A/V**  
**MINISTRY!**
    - What kinds of people do you have a heart for?
      - This might be a particular age or stage of life (e.g. Junior High'ers, widows), a socio-economic or ethnic group, or a group of people you have some connection to (e.g. parents of kids on your child's soccer team).
      - Your heart will often reveal how God has wired you to serve.
  - Discover your gifts and then use them
  - And if you need help figuring out how to use your spiritual gifts at Grace – come talk to us
    - Any staff member would LOVE to talk with you about that!
- And for those of you who are already serving: Thank you!
  - What you are doing for Grace is more significant than you may realize
    - It has not just a church-changing impact, but a world-changing impact
  - I encourage you: don't lose heart in doing good!
    - What you do for GBC matters even if you can't see it or feel it
    - God sees and God cares and will bless your labor in ways you might never see
- Let's close by praying for our church – that God would use each of us to bless GBC so that GBC can bless the world