

Fellowship in the truth

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ -- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Eph 4:11-16

Introduction

The above passage has been used as an apologetic for a number of purposes; such as to support the idea of authoritative Charismatic apostles and prophets dominating the church. This is not what Paul is speaking about at all.

Essentially, Paul is explaining how the church is maintained, strengthened, and equipped so that it grows, not just numerically, but in spiritual might and wisdom.

‘Equipping’ (*katartismos*) means to make complete, to furnish, to perfect, to equip, to be fully qualified, a process of adjustment that results in a complete preparedness, to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something. A person who is so equipped becomes completely qualified for every good deed; one who has been fully trained.

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:17

We pray, that you may be made complete. 2 Cor 13:9

The means of the equipping is not primarily vested in leaders; it is based on the principle of fellowship in the body; on mutual edification, on the sharing of individual gifts for the benefit of all.

This principle answers all problems in the church and it is why the design of church gatherings in the NT are small ‘families’ meeting in homes led by a couple of equal elders. The modern practice of huge churches being dominated by authoritative leaders from a platform who merely give challenging or attractive speeches has not a shred of Biblical support whatsoever.

Paul shows us here that even the issue of demonic attack in the form of deception is defeated by the brethren caring for one another and sharing knowledge and truth to prepare brothers for the adversity of spiritual attacks. The issue is preparedness, not responsive fixes. The local church and individual Christians become strong in faith and understanding when they prepare themselves long before the attack begins.

Let us examine what Paul has to say.

Ministry is multifarious and plural

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The work of ministry in a Biblical church is nothing like the modern version. Today a single man, or sometimes a few men, supposedly train the church by simply giving a sermon for 30-40 minutes on a Sunday, as if that is going to be sufficient instruction about anything. This is merely entertainment not training. Sermonic instruction is ineffective.¹

There is no sanction for sermonic teaching in the NT church; none at all. Show me where such sermonising is the main form of training the brethren. If you mention Acts 20:7 I will respond by saying that the word translated as 'preached' here does not mean giving a sermon but is the word *dialegomai*, meaning: to converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss and debate. It refers to a question and answer format; a discussion with interaction with those spoken to.

The apostles never instructed the churches through formal, prepared sermons – never. Preaching in the form of proclamation was the means whereby apostles and evangelists witnessed to outsiders in the market places where such speeches were common. Sermons are for witnessing, not for instruction.

All churches benefit from the various types of gifting in leadership revealed here; but notice that the purpose is edification of all: 'for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ'. Everything done by leaders should be for the purposes of edification of the body. There is no other purpose. Leaders edify the saints to enable them to minister; to enable them to minister and serve each other.

The main types of ministry roles in the church are: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

'Pastor-teachers' (they are one ministry)² is another term for elders. From his other letters we learn that there is only one church leader and that is an elder.³ Furthermore, there is always a plurality of elders (proportionate to church numbers) never a single man – and there is no such thing as a 'senior pastor'. All elders are equal and all teach and shepherd (pastor).

'Apostles' is just another word for missionaries. Apostles have no authority over the church as apostles. The modern Charismatic 'apostle' is properly an archbishop, having authority over many local elders. This is completely wrong. The word 'apostle' means 'to be sent as a delegate', like a messenger or an ambassador. The authority of an apostle resides in the church elders that sent him to build a church somewhere else.

¹ The great theologian and pastor RL Dabney said after many decades of ministry that he believed that only about 4% of his teaching through sermons ever stayed with his listeners. This is why the apostles never used this method in churches.

² One ministry of elders is to be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24). Another aspect of eldership ministry is counselling the saints with the benefit of knowledge of the truth (shepherding). Thus elders are pastor-teachers.

³ Also referred to by Paul as a 'bishop'; that is an overseer. 'Elder' was a term more familiar to Jews; 'overseer' was more familiar to Greeks.

When churches get too big for a house they split and grow like cell-division. Apostles are the ones sent to plant a new church and get it established until they can function on their own.

Evangelists are those who are gifted to both preach the Gospel with power to outsiders and to encourage the body to witness to Christ. History is filled with great evangelists who brought many into the kingdom through their proclamation to Christ.⁴

Elders (pastor teachers) will, of course, evangelise, but their commitment is to the edifying of the body. It would be a distraction for them to go off on evangelistic missions. This is the job of evangelists. (Note how many churches fail in this when pastors go off for long periods abroad on some missional endeavour.)

That leaves us with prophets. Prophetic ministry was vital in Paul's day because there was no Scripture available to anyone. Hand-written scrolls were very expensive and very many would be required even for part of the OT. Few people, even the rich, would have had copies of the OT. Some would have had copies of apostolic letters and perhaps the sayings of Jesus. It would be 300 years before the canon of the NT would be finally settled, let alone copies of it distributed. Only after the invention of printing and the scholarship of the Reformation were the Scriptures available to the common man.

Thus we see prophetic ministry in the NT narratives. Prophets bring to people the word of God. Today, prophetic ministry is found in the teaching and preaching of church leaders whereby there is especial revelatory power in the words. It is when elders teach with 'fire' to bring spiritual illumination.

It is important to note that the office of prophet is nothing like that claimed by Charismatics – a seer with authority over churches like Elijah. That sort of prophet died with John the Baptist.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Matt 11:13

The law and the prophets *were* until John. Lk 16:16

There is no office of prophet with authority over the Lord's people in the New Covenant because all the Lord's people have access to the Holy Spirit and know the Lord.

None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. Heb 8:11

The current practice in Charismatic churches of supposed prophets leading churches and denominations is a grave error. In any case their ministry is always useless; I have never seen / heard / read a Charismatic prophet with any gravity, true spiritual gifting, and ability to expound truth. This is why their foretelling prophecies always fail and why they spout multiple heresies.⁵

Finally, it is important to note that Jesus gives the gifts of men to the church, not other men; 'And He Himself gave'. I have lost count of the number of leaders in the church that I have known who should never have been there. They were appointed by men and had no observable gifting. So often insecure, formal, authoritarian leaders (like Charismatic

⁴ Such as George Whitefield, Alexander Peden, and Daniel Rowland. Unless evangelists are also gifted to be elders they must never lead churches. Some evangelists were also gifted pastors such as CH Spurgeon.

⁵ I have listed multiple failed prophecies by famous prophets in various papers, such as 'Charismatic Catastrophe'.

apostles) appoint 'Yes-men' into lower leadership positions to secure their authority and inhibit questioning. They consider that gifted people would be a threat.

Jesus gives men to the church and the church recognises this gift and then appoints them to office. Fleshly appointed leaders have proved to be a scourge to the churches. Leadership arises upwards; it is not imposed downwards.

The goal of being equipped

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

If there is a weakness in modern Christianity it is a lack of genuine focus upon Christ. Christ is to be pre-eminent in the church,

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. Col 1:18

Jesus is the centre of the church and that is why every local church must celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday in memoriam of the cross. Even this simple fact is everywhere ignored today.

As Jesus is the centre of the church he is also in the centre of God's purposes for the universe. Jesus is the complete expression of God (Heb 1:1-3), the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form (Col 2:9).

The amazing thing is that even though Jesus is God manifest; we are complete in him (Col 2:10).

The objective of the fellowship of the church is to bring all the saints into complete maturity according to the measure of Christ: 'Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'. The work of fellowship and edification is to make saints more and more like Christ in the process of progressive sanctification.

We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor 3:18

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Cor 4:6-7

'Perfect' means 'mature, completeness, brought to its end'. The goal of the saint in the church is, through fellowship, be gradually changed to be more and more mature; more and more like Christ.

The church together, the whole invisible, universal church throughout history, comes towards the 'fulness' of Christ. That is, it takes the whole church, millions of people, to make a proper representation of Christ's fulness. All those millions of people each witness to a certain part of Christ.

This process involves first: the unity of the faith.

This means the unity of the truth that is believed ('the faith' is often a synonym for all the truths of Christianity). Unity in the truth is important in the local church and that is why the devil assaults the church with deception after deception. He knows that if we are united in the truth the church is unstoppable.

This is why Paul continually tells believers to 'think the same thing'; this is what the Greek means in 'being of the same mind'.⁶

The modern idea of plural truths and theologies that must all be tolerated is an evil lie. There is one truth emanating from God, therefore there is one theology because God is not divided. We must all strive to discover what the Bible teaches by relying upon the Holy Spirit and fellowship in the truth. Thus the church should have one theology that all believe; anything short of this is a failing and dangerous.

The second thing is the knowledge of the Son of God

The goal of knowledge is not simply gaining understanding of facts and doctrines; it is growing in the knowledge of the Son of God.

The purpose of learning truth is to learn more about Jesus Christ. Jesus is the complete manifestation of God in human form about whom we have records. Thus to learn about God we must learn about Jesus. Knowing the Son enables us to know the Father.

All studying needs to be centred upon knowing Christ. Learning theology is not a cold, sterile, arduous task; it is learning how to love Jesus because of who he is and what he has done. Doctrinal development does involve hard work and application; but its joy is that it leads you to know more about Christ.

The result is: 'a perfect man'

This is the practical goal of the individual and the local church - to come to the measure of a perfect man; that is, Christ.

The perfect representation of God in physical form is the Lord Jesus Christ. The perfect representation of Christ in corporate form will be the church when she is fully sanctified.

The mature, glorified church will be a corporate man; Jesus is the head and the church is his body.

The failure of being equipped

That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

If we fail to be equipped we will be deceived and dominated by the enemy. Christians who do not progress in the truth, in being like Christ, are in bondage.

What are the characteristics of being in bondage to the enemy? They are:

⁶ Rm 12:16, 'Be of the same mind toward one another'. 1 Cor 1:10, 'speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment'. Phil 2:2, 'Fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind'. Phil 3:16, 'let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind'. Phil 4:2, 'be of the same mind in the Lord'.

- Acting like children.
- Tossed to and fro.
- Carried by every wind of doctrine.
- Carried about by the trickery of men.
- Carried about by cunning, craftiness.
- Carried about by deceitful plotting.

These six items relate to a perfect storm of deceitful attacks on Christians (six is the number of man). These six features of depraved man show what happens when you are not equipped.

Acting like children

This is immaturity. In fact the Greek word means ‘a little child’. It is not just being youthful but being infantile.

People who fail to grow in truth and grace are immature. Being immature means that you have no strength to perform the way you should.

Being immature means that you will be dominated by something stronger. The enemy will run rings around you and ruin your life making you useless for ministry.

Tossed to and fro

This means being thrown about as if you are on the waves of the sea, having no foundation.

It refers to those who have no root; no stability. One can only have a stable foundation in the Christian life if one is equipped in the truth and the grace of Christ.

The Greek word can also mean mental instability. So many Christians are fundamentally unstable in their minds regarding God’s truth. It is because they have never been equipped; their minds are not renewed.

Carried by every wind of doctrine

Being ‘carried about’ has the implication in the Greek of to be in doubt, to be unstable, to be driven by external forces, to be hesitant, to be carried here and then there; led this way and then that way.

This is characteristic of so many modern churchgoers who have no doctrinal stability in their lives. The fact that so many isms can arise from nowhere, gain a large following, deceive many for a time, and then vanish, shows that hordes of church people are unstable and easily carried away.

‘Doctrine’ means teaching or instruction; in Christianity it is the truth as it is in Christ, set out in rational ways that man can understand. But here it refers to the teachings of heresies. ‘Wind’ refers to violent agitation; a strong tempestuous force.

So we have strong, tempestuous forces driving people to accept every sort of evil, heretical deception. This accurately describes modern churches, which are filled with every sort of foul heresy known to man. Today, every example of heresy that ever existed in the church throughout history is now present in some form or another, even very weird errors like Docetism. For example:

- AMYRALDISM: Free Offer (Four-Point) Calvinists; New Calvinists.
- ARIANISM: Christadelphianism; Jehovah’s Witnesses.

- ADOPTIONISM: Christadelphianism; Jehovah's Witnesses.
- ARMINIANISM (denial of the doctrines of grace): almost everyone except consistent Calvinists.
- ANTINOMIANISM: very many people within the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements; Higher Life; Wesleyan Methodism; the Holiness Movement and many others.
- ANTI-TRINITARIANISM: William Branham; Oneness Pentecostals.
- EBIONISM: Messianic Christianity; Jewish Roots.
- GNOSTICISM: modern mystical movements; many cults, much within Pentecostalism and Charismania; the Cosmic Christ Movement.
- HINDUISM: many radical Charismatics (e.g. Toronto Blessing; Todd Bentley).⁷
- MORAL GOVERNMENT THEORY (Grotianism): Fullerism (certain Baptists); followers of CG Finney; many Anglicans.
- MONTANISM: Charismania; especially the focus upon prophets and ecstasies.
- MODALISM (Sabellianism & Dynamic Monarchianism): certain Pentecostal movements (e.g. Oneness); Christadelphianism; Jehovah's Witnesses.
- MYSTICISM: Quakers; many within the Charismatic Movement (e.g. Richard Foster); Pietists; Quietists; frontier Methodists; the Emerging Church; Charismatics and New Calvinists following Catholic mystics.
- NEO-PLATONISM: modern mystics and Gnostics.
- OCCULTISM: many aspects of the Roman Church, Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements; Latter Rain and Manifest Sons of God theologies.
- PELAGIANISM: Finneyism; revivalism; many cults and sects.
- PLATONISM: Cambridge Platonists; Idealism; all those following a dualistic system.
- SABELLIANISM AND SOCINIANISM: Unitarianism; to some degree Open Theism.⁸
- SEMI-PELAGIANISM: Roman Catholicism; all Arminian devotees.

We could continue in a long catalogue, but there is no need here. There are many people today that are carried away with every wind of heresy.

Carried about by the trickery of men

Kubeia: this has reference to dice playing and thus deception and sleight of hand; being cheated and defrauded.

So many modern heresies, church movements, and sectarianism are based upon fraud and trickery. Pentecostalism has been riddled with trickery and fraud. To this day there are people posing as having the 'word of knowledge' (which they interpret as prescience)⁹ when in fact information was relayed to them by an earpiece. All forms of fraud to gain money through offering healing and hope is trickery: such as 'miracle sawdust' and 'miracle handkerchiefs' offered by certain Pentecostals.

Carried about by cunning, craftiness

Panourgia: 'trickery, deceit, cunning; capability for every negative work, craftiness'.

⁷ For example, the slaying in the Spirit phenomenon and the associated extreme behaviour (screaming, crying, shrieking, jumping, roaring etc.) as a result of being touched during hypnotic passivity is straight out of Kundalini yoga; something that is restricted by Hindu gurus due to its potent and dangerous force.

⁸ Open Theists follow several features of Socinianism but are not Sabellians.

⁹ In fact it means teaching.

The purpose of deception is to lead you astray, to move you away from the path of truth. Many methods are used in deception but they are all crafty. They use cunning in order to trick you. Whether the human perpetrators know this or not (some do) the demonic force behind the lie is using stealth and cunning to trap you into bondage.

If you have not been equipped through fellowship in the truth you are open to accept lies told to you. Deception is clever. Sometimes a message will contain 90% of truth and only 10% of error, but that is enough to trap you. A small amount of poison injected in an apple will still kill you.

Carried about by deceitful plotting

Methodician: 'trickery; scheming methods to deceive; craftiness, cunning, deception stratagems for attacks, tricks'. *Planos (Plane)*: deceit. Thus 'scheming to deceive'.

Paul has used three Greek terms to make the same point (trickery, cunning, deceitful plotting): that the devil will use all means in order to deceive those who are not prepared to stand against error.

Conclusion

Church ministry is vital to equipping the saints. If you are not properly equipped you will be deceived.

The purpose of growth

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.

This is a restatement of the goal of being equipped; Paul restates it because it is so important.

The purpose of growth is to grow up into all things in Christ. The church together grows and matures into being an effective testimony to Christ; to representing Christ on earth.

It achieves this through speaking the truth in love. Everything in church ministry is speaking the truth and nothing else; no personal agendas, no corporate agendas, no demands for money, no propping up men, no worship of men, no commitment to some external organisation – it is truth and nothing else.

The motive behind speaking the truth is love for the brethren. You impart the truth that the brethren need at that time in order to safeguard and develop them. Because you care for the brethren you speak the truth to them.

There is often a great temptation not to speak the truth on occasion, because it might upset someone. True love for people will ensure that you speak the truth to them always and do not water it down for fear of offending this or that person. Nothing is more dangerous than failing to equip a person because you were scared to upset them.

Admonishment is also a form of speaking the truth. This is when the truth is imparted as a warning or a reprimand. Paul tells us to admonish each other many times (Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:12; 2 Thess 3:15; Titus 2:4). Even admonishment requires the truth as a foundation (Rm 15:14). You cannot minister admonishment unless you have been equipped with the truth.

The process of growth and equipping: fellowship

From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

It is vital to note that the growth of the body arises from 'the whole body', just as in human physiology. Growth does not come from outside systems, methods, ideas and resources – which is the opposite of all current church growth doctrines.

It is the body, working as it should, which enables growth to occur. This is not just numerical growth but maturity of the members. The body 'edifies itself'.

Notice that no word for leadership occurs in this verse. Leaders tend to get in the way of edification and growth by imposing their will upon churches. If left to function as it is designed to do without any hindrances, the body will grow. Elders are fathers that serve, protect and nourish the members so that they can function; they do not dominate people.

The body needs supplies just as a human body and these supplies come from the joints and the members: 'the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body'. Individuals are gifted and empowered by the Spirit and this power then operates in the body through the various members.

Each part has its share; every member has a role to play – even those that consider themselves to be without gifts. It is the job of leaders not to impose restrictions but to enable members to understand their gift and then encourage them to minister in it. The members and the joints need to be allowed to 'work effectively'.

The joints are the connections between different members of the body. Remember that each member is gifted by God to function in a certain way, just as the organs of the body all have a vital purpose for life. When the members are functioning in fellowship with other members (joints) growth occurs.

Unity is also effected by the joints of members not by some external force applied to the body (like an organisation or a powerful leader). Members are knit together in love as they work and function together.

Paul explains all this in 1 Corinthians by also using the human body as an illustration.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling?

18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

19 And if they *were* all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

20 But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body.

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

23 And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty,

24 but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that *part* which lacks it,

25 that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with *it*.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Cor 12:11-27

Paul's teaching and illustrations are very clear and it is only the stubborn, fleshly, will of men that contradicts this teaching which leads the churches into the mess that they are in.

Teachers

I must add an important note here about teaching ministry.

What Paul has in mind is first the edifying that goes on in the local church through fellowship. This is primary. However, there is a wider church and fellowship with the wider church is also beneficial.

This can mean having fellowship with the gifted people from other local churches and learning from them. This is good.

But another issue to learn from the men that God gave the church in previous generations. We have access to their teaching through the preservation of books. When seeking the truth, it is very helpful to learn from past church teachers (theologians) who sometimes struggled for decades to determine vital truths. Ignoring the value of what was discovered in previous generations is extreme folly. A serious Bible student will endeavour to gain a decent library of valuable past works that will help him form a knowledge of the truth.

Conclusion

Everywhere the modern church is in a mess; every denomination, stream, group, sect, cult and fringe church movement is a complete mess. Those that are based on formal institution models are just as messed up as those based upon informal, Postmodern forms. Charismatics are very severely messed up and act more like pagans; but established churches are also messed up, having almost no spiritual life at all.

There are a few independent groups that are closer to the truth, but even these have very severe problems, depending on which theology they are based upon. Consistent Calvinists tend to be hidebound by tradition, men-worship, formality and a lack of spiritual liberty. Reformed-denying Strict Baptists are equally formal, affected by tradition, have little spiritual life and in addition fail to evangelise.

The reason for all these failures is a denial of the passage we have examined.

Virtually all churches are centred upon men rather than trusting in Christ and the Holy Spirit. They are structured around formalities, liturgies and tradition rather than being guided by the Spirit. They are restricted in ministry to the formal service of appointed leaders (whether gifted or not) - and often just one man - while the congregation is frozen out. They are bound by prepared ministry, prepared orders of service, prepared formalities and usually on hierarchical authoritarianism.

You cannot deny God's instructions in very clear passages of Scripture (not just this one) and expect your church to do well. Modern churches are following all sorts of formats that arise from: the world, the flesh, commerce, the military and demonic principles – and ignore the clear instruction of God.

For example hierarchical leadership structures originate in demonic principles of organisation, which are then transferred to, for example, the military or commerce. These are pyramidal leadership structures that centre authority in a single man, which is passed down through layers of other privileged men and forced upon serfs at the bottom. The serfs at the bottom then give all their spare money to pay for these unbiblical jobs instead of giving to the poor as God intended. Meanwhile ministry is removed from the serfs and only authorised for the higher echelons of leadership. All this is demonic and worldly. It is evil.

The answer is to obey God and rely upon small churches meeting in homes where small groups of equal, teaching elders lead the church as a family where everyone is considered to be gifted in some way and encouraged to minister that gift as God leads.

All the needs of the church are then met through the fellowship of gifts. Some will excel in evangelism and personal witness. Some will be gifted in counselling and helping members. Some will be teachers and everything they say is instructive and edifying. Some are able to meet the needs of the saints in hospitality and care. All work for the common good in their own way.

The principle of interdependent fellowship is revealed throughout nature, from the symbiosis of insects and flowers, to cosmic interactions in the vast reaches of space. Even the moon's interaction with the earth is vital for our climate.

God could not have been clearer in instructing us. Mutual edification screams out to us wherever we look, and especially in apostolic writings, about how to do church. Despite this, the Lord's people have continually failed to listen, look or obey. No wonder the church is in a mess. We must be equipped through fellowship.

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