



**THE ORCHARD**

**Series: Exploring Christianity: The Foundations of Our Faith**

**Title: What is the Purpose of the Church?**

**Passage: Ephesians 4:1-16**

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Introduction:

- Good morning everybody
  - For those of you who do not know me
  - My name is Eric and I am the youth pastor here
  - And today I have privilege of sharing the word
  
- The last nine weeks we have covered the fundamentals of Christianity
  - These are the things that are essential to know and understand
  - Things that have been debated for thousands of years in Christian tradition
  - And things that are extremely important for our Christian walk
  
- However, as John Calvin stated, *“Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of life.”*
  - If we take these things we have learned and leave them as
  - Simple facts and truth that we believe and do not act
  - It would be better that we had never learned them



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- It is better to be ignorant of the truth than it is to know and not live it out.
  - The word of God is not preached in this Church that it might be hidden away, but that it is lived out and practiced.
  
- This is why I am so excited to unpack this final doctrinal truth
  - “What is the Purpose of the Church?”
  
- This could not be a bigger or more important question.
  - This is the question that addresses,
    - “Why does God do what he does?”
    - “Why did God save me?”
    - And “What is the purpose of my life?”
  
- This is the question that address the life of the believer
  - It is the question that defines the trajectory of our life
  
- Today, more than ever before people are desperate for meaning and purpose in their lives
  - We all feel the spiritual ambition in our hearts
  - We all want to serve a higher purpose than just us
  - And we all want to be proud of the way we have lived our lives



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- And the truth that Bible teaches is that our purpose rests in serving & glorifying God through the visible and universal Church
  - But then the question remains, “What is my role in that?”
- I think Ephesians 4:1-16 is the best text to address this question because it is one of the clearest and most direct passages that gives the calling, means, the goal, and the outcome of the Church.

### 1. The Church Must Walk a Life Worthy of our Calling

*“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

- Paul starts this passage with urging the church of Ephesus to “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*”
  - In other words he is reminding the Church that the way you live your life matters.
- It is not just about how you find Christ
  - But it is also extremely important how we act after Christ.
- I think that it is a common phenomenon where many people find Christ in an amazing way.
  - They are radically ripped away from their sinful past



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- And are now brought into the loving arms of the Father
  
- It is the most intense and life changing season that people can ever experience
  - But once they have been born again they feel as though the journey is over.
  - They have reached the destination and completed the purpose of their life.
  
- And now all there is left is waiting for Christ to come back
  - That the obligation now is to simply sit back and have a good life.
  
- But is not even slightly true
  - The Christian walk merely starts at regeneration.
  - Being drawn to Christ is the first day of your life.
  - It is first step of the pilgrimage
  
- But so what does it mean to *“to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,”*
  - What it means is to live in a Holy (or set apart) and dignified way
  - To live in a way that shows that we have truly been changed by Christ.
  
- It is also important to note the word *“called”* in this passage
  - What Paul is doing is reminding those in Ephesus that calling is the beginning of salvation



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- And that those who are called are not random
- But are the elect of God
- And elect of God must not return to the ways of the world, but remain in Christ.
  
- But now what if you do not like the path that lies ahead of you?
  - What if you know what God wants you to,
  - But do not think you have the strength
  - Or that you do not have the desire?
  
- What I would point you to is the example Christ set
  - The example he set on this day many years ago. What Christians call palm Sunday
  - As Christ walked into Jerusalem he may have been welcomed
  - But in less than a week the very people who celebrated Christ
  - Would be celebrating the release of Barabas and the crucifixion of Christ
  
- I can't image Christ wanted to walk that road
  - With empty cheers
  - And hypocritical devotion
  - But he did



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- But if he didn't walk that road then what hope would we have now?
  - The road he walked may have been a terrible one
  - But the reward it brought could not have been better
  - And nothing could have glorified The Father more
  
- Let us learn from Christ
  - Let us emulate him
  - Let walk whatever path that lies before us
  
- Let us walk with joy
  - So that we might demonstrate the trust we have in God
  - That we might glorify his name

## 2. The Church's Foundation must be in Triune Unity

*4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

- In this next section we see seven unities that the Church must maintain
  - These being one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and one Father
  - And importantly these all fall into Trinitarian categories or in other words they represent different aspects of the trinity



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- For the Spirit
  - There is one Spirit and one Hope
  - For the Son there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism
  - For the Father there is one God and Father of all
  
- Now this is not accidental
  - It is revealing to us that the Church's unity comes directly from the Triune God
  
- Paul here is not simply teaching that we must work for unity
  - But he is declaring that unity must exist because of God's nature
  - For the Church to be divided is fundamentally opposite to what it is supposed to be
  
- The Church is the body of Christ
  - How can Christ be divided against himself?
  
- But so, does that mean that the church can never be divided?
  - Well, if you have ever attended a church likely you have seen no shortage of issues
  - So, how can this be?



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- When we see conflict in the Church it is not making Paul a liar
  - But is an indicator that the Church has shifted to focus on us as opposed to Christ
  
- The Purpose of the Church is that we must be one
  - We must not allow our tribal differences and frustrations to create division
  
- The solution to this is a simple one
  - We must focus on Christ and not ourselves.
  
- We must be a church that is driven by one Spirit
  - If we do not have the Holy Spirit we are not part of the Church
  - And no matter what you think of a person if they have the Spirit in them, they are your brother or sister
  
- We must have one Hope
  - To have one Hope means that the Church must be unified in looking forward to the second coming of Christ and to eternity with him
  
- We believers are not promised a life of riches or acknowledgement
  - We are not promise to be seen
  - Or even celebrated



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- But what is essential for the Church
  - Is that we remember our glory will come
  - And our future glory will be shared by all who believe
  
- The Church must have one Lord
  - What marks the Church as holy
  - And the reason for our hope
  - Is not what we have done or what we will do
  
- But what unifies and marks the Church is who we belong to
  - The Church has one Lord and one reason for joy
  - That our Lord came for us
  
- And not that he came vaguely for the hope that some might be smart enough or good enough
  - But Christ came for you by name.
  - When Christ was pinned to that tree your name was in his mind
  - Of this Charles Spurgeon shared, “When Jesus Christ shed His blood, it was not for a crowd of uncertain strangers, but for you, yes, for you by name. If you trust Him, He can say to you, ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love.’”



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- The Church also must have one faith & one Baptism
  - Not because these things earn us salvation or cause unity
  - But because Faith and Baptism are a sign of the unity we have in Christ.
  - A sign that the same power that is at work in me is at work in you
  
- And Lastly the Church must have *“One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”*
  - What must be held at the center of all
  - What must be known to build the unity of the Church
  - Is that our God and Father is over all, through all, and in all
  
- In other words, whatever the Church has ever done has been lead and guided by our God and Father
  - And that is meant to give us courage and hope
  - This describes the extent and majesty of God’s complete and utter sovereignty
  
- What this means is God does not simply leave the Church to our own devices
  - But that He is always governing and guiding the Church so that we might do the work he prepared for us
  - He is not passive, but active with us



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### 3. The Members of the Church must use their Gifts

*7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8*

*Therefore it says,*

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,  
and he gave gifts to men.”...*

*...11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,  
12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”*

- One of the big questions that often comes up when talking about, “What is the purpose of the Church?”
  - Is, “I understand that the Church's purpose is to glorify God, but what am I supposed to do?”
  - And I think this question is one of the biggest struggles that many people have.
  
- What we see in verse 11 is that Christ “*gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry*”
  - Christ saved us so that we might do the work he prepared for
  - So that we might accomplish the mission that we were selected for
  
- One of the things that I think the Church struggles with is the mentality we have for our work
  
- I think that we like to think with the mindset we have in sports
  - The mind set where we find who we think is pinnacle of perfection



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- And then do everything they do
- Do everything you can to be like them
  
- And there is nothing wrong in sports to teach kids to copy who are great
  - But in the Church
  - And in the purpose of the Church
  - This is actually is a bad thing
  
- Because if we spend all our time
  - Trying to be like Martin Luther
  - Trying to be like John Piper
  - Trying to be like Colin Smith
  
- We forget that we were not all created for the same job
  - Some were created to be *prophets*
  - Some were created to be *evangelists*
  - Some were created to be *shepherds*
  - And Some were created to be *teachers*
  
- And God did this so that we might do “*the work of ministry*”
  - In other word the only way the Church can do the work we were made to do
  - Is if we all play our parts



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- And to try and be who you are not
  - Does not just hurt you
  - But it hurts the mission of the Church
  
- The most important thing for the mission of the church is that you can
  - Be who Christ made you to be
  - And do what Christ made you to do
  
- Because to try and be someone else is to declare that God made you wrong
  - Which he did not
  
- But then the next natural question is how can I know who I was meant to be?
  - How do I know if I am being called to the mission field
  - Called to the local church
  - Called to the corporate life
  - Or called to be stay at home parent
  
- I will admit I cannot tell you
  - And in fact the only person who can truly discern your role is you



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- But I don't think that we need to over complicate it
  - I don't think you always need a dream
  - Or to hear the audible word of the Lord
  
- My simple advice are the words of St. Augustine
  - "Love God and do whatever you please:
  - for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved."
  
- When you have been born again
  - And desire to honor God
  - And desire to play your part in his kingdom
  - Then what you want to do will indicate, what you are supposed to do
  
- If you want to go to the mission field, go and do it
  - If you want to serve the local church, go and do it
  - If you want to serve in the corporate world, go and do it
  - And if you want to be a stay at home parent, go and do it
  
- But now what if you know what your soul desires



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- You know what part you play in the Church
- But you are not sure if you are good enough to do it?
  
- The fear of inadequacy is one of the most potent deterrents we can face
  - It does not question what we want
  - Or question what we believe
  - But it questions if we are the right one
  
- For questions such as this
  - I think there is no better place to look than to the example of Christians before us
  - Because this is not a struggle or doubt that is unique to us
  
- One of the most important and influential Christians of all time was man named John Knox
  - John was someone who did not seek ministry
  - And in fact when he was first publicly called to ministry by another minister
  - He broke down in tears and fled the room
  
- It did not matter that the minister saw his potential
  - And it did not matter that the Church saw his potential
  - Knox could not believe that he was worthy or good enough for this call



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- However, God was not done with Knox
  - Later Knox wrote that, "he could not run where God had not called him," and declared his feelings of inadequacy by saying, "'How small was my learning, and how weak I was of judgment, when Jesus Christ called me to be his steward"
  - And so despite his fear of inadequacy, Knox accepted the call lifted by the Church and his shepherd
  - Within a week, he started to teach & changed Scotland in a way that no one could have expected
  
- He became the leader of the Scottish Reformation
  - And was pivotal in turning Scotland from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism, he founded the Presbyterian Church, and trained a generation of ministers
  - But this only happened because didn't wait until he felt ready
  - But stepped forward in faith because he knew he was called
  - And God handled the rest
  
- So for those of us who know what we have been called to do
  - But are afraid that you are not good enough
  - Take that next step
  - Trust that God was correct in giving you a heart for the work you desire
  - Trust that those who encourage you see what God has designed you to do



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### 4. The Church must Mature

*13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

- However, even though we have all been prepared and equipped for our purpose in the Church
  - It does not mean that we have no more need to grow
  
- Verse 13 states, that God will continue to build up the Church, “*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood*”
  - What this is means that God did not only choose us to serve
  - But he also chose us to mature
  
- Now the difference between physical maturing and spiritual maturing
  - Is that physical maturing will never stop
  - And will happen without any external stimulus
  
- However, spiritual maturing is something that can stop
  - It is something that God has decided grows with external stimulus
  - It is something that according to verse 11 needs, “*the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers*”
  - In other words we need every tool the church offers



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- And if we do not, we will stay as babes in our faith
  
- Yes, we are still saved
  - And yes of course God still loves us
  - But we will remain as spiritually immature as the day we were born
  - And we will never see the beautiful and powerful spiritual being that we could be
  
- I think there is nothing more sad than that
  - The thought we have been given everything to know God deeper
  - And be more like him
  - But to stay where we are
  
- To stay a seed
  - And never be planted in the ground so that we never see the mighty oak we were meant to be
  
- To stay as children and not mature is to not just miss the good things God has
  - But it is to also be led astray by the lies of humans
  - According to verse 14 *“So that we are not tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”*



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- One of the paramount reasons that we must not stop growing spiritually
  - Is so that we will be able to see through the fog of the world
  - So that we might know what is good and true
  - And be wary of the traps that have been laid to turn us from Christ
  
- I think also secondarily this truth should grow our compassion to those who have been lead astray
  - It isn't that they are stupid
  - It isn't because they are malicious
  - Or even because they are lazy
  
- But it is because while they were babes in their faith
  - They were taken advantage of
  - While they were children evil words deceived them
  
- This should be a reminder for the Church our purpose is not only to protect our own and ourselves
  - But also that we might be light that permerates through the fog and darkness
  - So that those who have been mislead might find their way home
  - So that we might thwart the plan of those who meant evil for the children of God



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### 5. The Church must Speak in Love

*15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

- Verse 15 stands as strong counter to the lies of the world we see in verse 14
  - The world may deceive
  - But we must speak the truth
  
- One of the primary purposes of the Church is that we must be a source of truth in world
  - And more correctly we must be THE source of truth in the world
  
- This echos the truth that Christ shared in the sermon on the mount
  - **14** *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*
  
- The Church is the light to the world
  - That people might see us
  - And see Christ



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- And that the truth we declare
  - The truth that we embody
  - Might fundamentally change the way the world sees everything
  - C.S. Lewis shared this: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”
  
- However, verse 15 does not only command us to speak the truth
  - We are commanded to speak the truth in love
  - But what does that mean?
  - What is the difference between truth and truth in love?
  
- On this Thomas Watson stated, “Truth without love is like a sharp sword in a madman’s hand.”
  - Without love truth is a weapon
  - It hurts and wounds
  - It is weaponized and manipulates
  
- But truth in love is the very essence of Christ
  - John 1:14 states, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth.*”
  - God in flesh
  - Came in grace and truth



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- And as Christ demonstrated truth in love
  - We the Church are called to emulate Him
  - Because this is the mission for which we were saved
  
- Christ came full of grace and truth
  - And so we must go out into the world full of grace and truth
  - Sharing with all who will hear
  - And loving all who we see and know

### **6. The Church will then Grow**

*16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

- Lastly, in verse 16 we see the result of the Church doing and behaving as Christ commanded
  
- When we;
  - Walk a Life Worthy of our Calling
  - Have our Foundation in Triune Unity
  - Use our Gifts
  - Mature
  - And Speak in Love



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- The body grows
  
- And to me this is a beautiful thing
  - Because God does not have to bless our labor
  - He owes nothing to us
  - And we owe everything to him
  
- But the promise he makes in this verse is that when we do what we were called to do
  - He will grow our family
  - He will bring home our brothers and sisters
  - And increase the number of our laborers
  
- And the beauty of that is that the sole responsibility is on God
  - we simply must do what we have been commanded to do
  
- But the important part is in the first half of the verse, “**16** *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly,*”
  
- The only way that Church can fulfill its purpose is if we all do what we were meant to do
  - Not just some of us



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- Not just those in vocational ministry
- But all of us
  
- Christianity has never been about lone wolves
  - Or about hero's saving the day
  - It is about a group of people
  - Who were at one time strangers
  - Who were all equally alienated from God
  
- Who have now been saved by Christ so that we might labor as equal co heirs and children of the living God
  - There is no Christian who is higher
  - And there is no Christian who is lower
  - We all must play our part
  
- Because it is only when each part is working properly
  - That we complete our mission and our goal
  
- And so what I want to leave you with
  - Is less of, "What is the Purpose of the Church?"
  - And instead is, "What are you doing for the goal of the Church?"



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- Christ did not make a mistake when he saved you
  - Christ saved you to use you
  - So where do you feel God leading you
  - What part of the Church do you think you were made to serve?
  
- But most importantly
  - Don't just stop at knowing
  - But do it
  - Be who you were meant to be
  
- Because there is no one the Devil is more afraid of
  - Than the the Believer who walks the road set before them
  - Following in steps of Christ
  
- Lets pray