CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The Church That Works

Here We Grow, Part 1

A full building is not the same as a church that works. The apostolic and prophetic gifts give a church its foundation, bring fresh revelation, and release every ministry gift to build up the body.

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SERIES
Here We Grow, Week 1 of 3

MAIN TEXT
Ephesians 4:11-16

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01

Sermon Transcript

Amen. Well, I'm excited to talk with you today on a message that I think's going to be critical for us moving forward. The next three weeks I'm going to be talking on a series called Here We Grow. Here We Grow. Ephesians chapter 4, if you'll join me there.

> **EPHESIANS 4:11-16** ESV
>
> 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, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the
> knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, 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. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in
> every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

Ephesians 4:11 says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds..." Some of your Bibles say pastors. I actually prefer that shepherds is a better translation. Just in our modern culture, I do prefer the word pastors and teachers. Verse 12, "To equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 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."

Verse 15, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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." Over the next few weeks, what we're going to do, while our series is called Here We Grow — and you can say that different ways, by the way. You can say, "Here we grow!" Here we grow. Or you can say, "Here... we grow."

And sometimes it feels that way, when your favorite... I've seen some of y'all getting kicked out of your favorite seats lately. When your favorite seat gets messed up and your favorite parking place gets messed up, and that's... You can feel some of those pains when — you know, it's great to have a full auditorium until the air conditioners aren't working right, and then you go, "Well, you know, if 50 less people came, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world." And so you just feel some of those growing pains.

Well, what I want to do over the next few weeks is, I essentially want to have a church-wide staff meeting. I want to talk to you the way that I would talk to the staff in our meetings. We meet once a month in person, once a month virtually, and basically what I do whenever we have a staff meeting, I do three things. The first thing I do is I teach. The second thing I do is I share where we're going, and then the third thing I do is I just tell them what I need from them. This is just, "Look, this is just what I need from you." And so those are the three things.

Well, I'm going to take those three things, break them up over three weeks. And so today I'm teaching. Today I'm going to teach, and today what I want to talk about is the church that works. So if you need a title for the message, it would be The Church That Works. Now, that phrase is polyvalent. Y'all like that word, right? Polyvalent. That's good right there. Polyvalent means that the phrase can take on different meanings depending on the context that you use it in. So in one way, the church that works could mean there's a church that works, and because everybody comes together and they do their part.

And I want you to know that we need that. We need everybody to come together and do their part. We're growing, and because we're growing, we need more people doing more things. So we would invite you to join the team here at Saraland Church. We need you, to the point that we're even praying for people to come into our church that have church experience, that know how to build churches, because we are building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people. It's not just happening. It's not just something we believe in.

We're actively building that type of church right now. So we do need that, but that's not what I'm talking about today. I'm talking about the church that works in the sense that I want to talk to you about what goes into a church that creates objective success, where you can look at a church and you can go, "That church works." Whatever's happening there, it's working. What they do seems to meet the objective that they have. Have you ever noticed that you go into some church environments — maybe you came out of one, maybe you're watching online and you're in one.

By the way, we're hearing this a lot. We're starting to hear it through messages we're getting to the church Facebook page, and we're hearing it from people who are getting told this. Some of y'all's friends have said this to y'all, and I'm about to out y'all. I'm sorry that y'all shared this with me. But we're hearing a lot that there are people who are going to other churches, but you're listening to these messages for spiritual development. If you're listening to me for spiritual development, and you're in driving distance of this church, you're going to the wrong church. So we would like to invite you to Back to Church Sunday on August 23rd at 10:30 AM.

I'm serious about that. We're starting to hear this from people, that people are watching us. But have you ever — so maybe you're in this situation, but have you ever been in a church and you just thought, "This doesn't seem to, like, work"? This isn't working. It's something's not connecting. It honestly seems like a lot of churches — and I mean this with love, 'cause I'm over here leading one. I feel all the same pains everybody else feels. But it does seem like a lot of churches get stuck in the muck of filling a building.

Just, we've got to keep the building filled. And you might be thinking that that's directed at large churches, but let me go ahead and just rip the Band-Aid off here for a moment. That's actually worse in small churches than it is in big churches. Because there are — I had a friend, he's in Michigan. He was touring a church that had built a new building, that the building sat thousands upon thousands of people. And he asked them one day — he was getting a tour, and two staff members were giving him the tour.

And so he asked one of the guys, he goes, "What are y'all running here?" And the guy goes, "Probably about 10,000." And the other guy goes, "It's probably closer to 7." And my friend goes, "Man, if I lost 3,000 people, I think I'd know it." Sometimes in larger churches, you can actually lose a few hundred people and it not really move the needle a whole lot. And so in smaller churches, you actually tend to find people who get into the muck and the routine of just trying to keep the building filled.

And there's nothing wrong with that. I want a full building right now. I'd like to have some people sitting Indian style in front of me on the floor right now. And I'm sorry — criss-cross applesauce. I'm sorry. So I want some people sitting on

the ground today. And I would love to have a full building. But the issue sometimes is how they get the full building. How they keep the building filled. I hear people talk a lot about how churches are like a country club. And I just want to tell you this: I've been doing this a long time.

I've worked in churches all across America. I ain't ever been in a church that was like a country club. There are not churches out here — they're very rare if they're out there — where there's a handful of rich people who come into the church, and they kind of determine how everything goes. And if you happen to be a rich person, and you wanted to come here and try to control me, I would invite you to give it a good four or six months and see where you get. But that's not usually what it is. It's usually not a country club.

I don't worry so much about the country club. I worry about the garden club, and the book club, and the baking club. Because churches, a lot of times when they get worried about filling the building, what they do is they turn into the Hobby Hub. That was good preacher alliteration right there. Hey, let's just be in agreement since I'm not feeling good. Any time I take a drink today, y'all just go, "Yes. Amen. Hallelujah." I might be looking for a space. Thank you, Barry. I need you. Y'all follow Barry this morning. Follow the leader.

And so these churches will turn into the Hobby Hub. Hey, one of the things I've noticed in churches generally, like everywhere — and I'm a little more sensitive to it than the average bear, but I have a feeling everybody recognizes it. Have you ever noticed that you go into a lot of churches and the music is, like, awful? You're not wrong. Let me come preach on this side of the room. This is where me and Barry got the sensitivity right now. I'm telling you, you get into some churches and the music'll just be horrible.

But it seems like everybody's okay with it. And here's what it is. Everybody's not okay with it. What happens is, these churches, they turn into these places where everybody gets to do their little hobby. So you lose excellence. You lose the edge. You lose a measure of "we're going to do this unto the Lord." We actually do a lot in churches — woo, now I'm off the notes. We do a lot unto ourselves. We don't do it for the Lord. We do it for us. It makes me feel good. I like to do it. It's a thing I want to do.

And so you get into some of these churches and it'll be horrible because you'll have four or five people who kind of get together, and they kind of mosey along through the songs. And nobody's any good at it. And everybody knows it's not good, but nobody's upset. And the reason nobody's upset is because that is a reflection of what's actually happening through the whole church. You've got people on stage doing that, but then you've got people who've got a little — you know, MawMaw's not upset about it because she runs the book club.

Okay? And Hector don't have a problem with it because he's over the barbecue ministry. And so you've got people who are doing all their little things in the church, and everybody's okay that it's not going well because we all got our little thing that we do, and we enjoy it. But that type of church, it don't work. It's a cycle of we're growing two people every 36 months, and nobody's getting saved. And the preacher couldn't preach his way out of a wet paper sack. And it's just a lot of this over and over, and it doesn't — there's people in the building, but it doesn't work.

It's not working. And that's not exclusive to small churches, by the way. Large churches can do this as well. 'Cause I do want to let you know that in large churches you can do the right things, and ultimately grow a church and not do any of the things that a church ought to be doing. Now, the ideal is that you do both things. You do the things that grow a church, and you, like, are the church at the same time. So this can happen in any situation. And let me just come back to the music thing for a minute, 'cause I can tell some of y'all think — y'all got some opinions y'all have already formed on the music thing I just said.

Let me just tell you, I know what the pushback on that is, when we got bad musicians in the church and nobody can do anything. Let me just tell you: "Well, that's how they worship." No. No, it's not. It's been a long time. I've been doing this a long time. And I'm just going to tell you, I done seen some stuff. Okay? That ain't how it goes. I was in Michigan, and I had a drummer who'd been playing at the church for eons. He'd probably been playing there, what, 20 years? I mean, he'd been playing a long time, and he wasn't any good. And we got up to the point where I just had to make a decision, 'cause I had him, and then I had two kids that could play the paint off the wall.

I don't know what it was, but I had an anointing for drummers. Barry, I've got an anointing for good drummers showing up. You ought to be complimented by that today, in Jesus' name. And so I had drummers showing up, and I just got to the point where I had to do something, and I removed him from the team. I did remove him. And he left the church. And you think, "Well, you ran him off from the church 'cause you wouldn't let him worship." No, no, no, no, no. Let me tell you how he left the church. He left the church 'cause he decided to leave his wife and go be with the girlfriend who he'd had for 10 years that nobody knew about.

But he was playing church as long as he could so he could keep playing the drums. And for any of the musicians watching, his hi-hat sounded like — okay. Just so you know. Now, that wasn't for y'all. That was for the musicians that watch and know. And so, no, he was pretending to worship. It was a pretense. So don't think this — sometimes the church can just be a Hobby Hub. And it's dangerous to the mission. It's dangerous to what the Lord wants to do in a community. It can happen in small churches.

It can happen in large churches. So what is a church that works? Well, it's kind of easy to identify a church that doesn't work. You can almost feel it, so long as you aren't seduced by it. This is prophetic. I've just realized I'm in a different realm. So as long as you aren't seduced by it, you can easily recognize it. But what are the markers of a church that works? Well, one, it's theologically grounded. There's some measure of theological — if not accuracy, at least conviction. Everybody's going to be off a little bit. So there's some theological groundedness.

The church is known in the area. They are doing enough to be known. People are aware of them. A church that works develops people. It is much less important to me that we launch ministries than we do launch people. I would much rather have multiple entrepreneurs raise up out of the preaching ministry of this church every year than to launch some ministry that does something. I think ministries are great. I think programs are great. We need those things. They are means. They are not ends, because the ends are always that people are developed.

Okay? So they develop people. They reproduce into other churches. A church that works should be doing something that somehow is getting into other churches that they're adopting and doing. One of the things that I am grateful for here, because of all of the people that serve in our media ministry, is we are already making an impact in other churches around the nation. We are getting calls. We're getting asked, "How are you doing this? How are you getting these results? How are you making this happen?" And that is all because of our media ministry.

You ought to give them a hand clap of appreciation right there. But then also, a church that works is big enough to sustain ministry. It's either growing or it's thriving. There's an axiom in church leadership that says healthy things grow. That's not true, because cancer grows too. So you don't always grow. Now, just let me be clear. We need to grow. Don't — we haven't arrived. But there is a point where you get to some level where you may not be growing, but you're at least thriving. There's thriving ministry happening.

And so you need to be big enough to sustain ministry. That's a church that works. So what takes you from a church that is not working to a church that works? And that's what I want to talk to you about today specifically. I want to talk to you

about the fivefold ministry. I want to talk to you about the fivefold ministry. We don't get a lot of this conversation, particularly in the Assemblies of God. When you're Pentecostal, we are the most evangelical of the Pentecostal world in the Assemblies of God, which means we put in the most safety protocols out of all the Pentecostals.

We try to make sure that things don't get off the rails, and we're very cautious. And one of the cautions that we've taken is we tend to not embrace the fivefold ministry. And the embrace of the fivefold ministry we do is so careful that we almost don't actually honor it and release it into our churches. You ever handled something so carefully that you dropped it before? You're just trying to make sure you're so mindful of it that then ultimately you break the bowl. And I think sometimes that's how we are with the fivefold ministry.

So today I'm not going to do that. We're just going to go with what the Bible says. Somebody say, "The Bible says." The Bible says. And so we're going to look at what the Bible says. So today we're going to talk about the fivefold ministry a little bit. And the fivefold ministry, you can pretty much identify it all on your hand here. You've got the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers, okay? Now, the evangelist is the one who's got the longest reach. The evangelist is able to reach people who are far from the Lord, far from the church, and generally far from a church lifestyle.

So they can go into a Chili's and never preach the gospel, and somehow the waitress gets saved. I don't know how it happens, but that's an evangelist. An evangelist does that. And then you have the pastor. The pastor's the ring finger. He's married to the community. He loves the people. Married to the community, loves the people. Just cannot get enough of the people. He is in it. He's going to be at all the birthday parties, and he is going to be at all of the receptions, and everybody who graduates, he's giving them money, and he's doing all — he's married to the community.

Now, I want you to know, I want to just rip the Band-Aid off here. I have said this before: I am not a pastor gift. I'm the pastor. I'm not a pastor. Well, what does that mean? Well, it means exactly what I just said. That is not me. I just want to prepare you. I said that, I think, two days before I got voted in here. So everybody's known this. So there's the pastor gift. There's then the teacher. The teacher's the pinky finger. The teacher's the only one that's small enough to get big concepts into your ear. But also is the one who has the least stature.

We celebrate them the least. We acknowledge them the least. Coincidentally, I'm going to preach about them the least. So they're just the least. They're the least among the gifts, but they have a powerful ministry because they can take big concepts, and suddenly you leave understanding it, okay? Then you have the apostle and the prophet. Now, the prophet is the pointer finger. The prophet points the direction of where the church ought to go and what ought to happen because of things that they foresee happening in the culture. They can foresee things, and they understand direction.

This is not always specific. It is not always predictive. It's not always a word. A lot of times prophets operate under senses. They can sense things happening. So that's the prophet. And then you have the apostle. The apostle's the thumb. The apostle is a pioneering gift. It does pioneer things. It's the one that says, "We can do that." But it's also a governing gift. The apostle is more separated from church ministry than most of the gifts. It doesn't get out as far as the other gifts, but what it does is it's able to govern throughout all of the gift sets.

It's able to touch the prophet, and the evangelist, and the pastor, and the teacher, and make significant impact in those ministry gifts as to release them into the fullness of their anointing. That's the apostolic. So I do want to just say this, because a lot of times when we talk about fivefold ministry, we think of them as a hierarchy, that you have the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. These are not hierarchical gifts. These are gifts to the body.

There is another hierarchy of how church is run, and there's a whole theology there, and frankly, I just don't have time for it today, but I really enjoy this stuff, and I could go... We can do three hours.

I just don't think y'all are ready for it today. Maybe next week when the AC is fixed. Amen? So it's not a hierarchy. You can actually have an apostle who is under the authority of a pastor. You can have a prophet who is under the authority of a teacher. There is an authority structure, and then there are gifts. These gifts are released into the body. Sometimes you will have people who are not in a technical ministry role or, like, a ministry leadership role, and they'll still operate in these gifts. However, most often it's going to happen with people who are leading the church.

So church leadership tends to be pastor-focused. This comes from the Reformation. This has been this way for several hundred years. There was a lot of objection to how the Catholic Church was running and abusing its power, and so the reformers kind of got around this idea that everybody is a shepherd. Everybody is a pastor. Unfortunately, that has limited the church to a great degree, because everybody ain't the same. Everybody is not the same. And so you'll hear pastor used for everything. That's why we've got youth pastors and kids pastors, and then they... You know, we got the senior pastor, and the lead pastor, and the associate pastor, and the executive pastor. And then they get up to the district council office in the Assemblies of God, and we used to just call them brother.

That's kind of how we identified them. We said, "You're brother..." And then everybody started calling them pastor. And they aren't pastoring any church. But we're calling them pastors. And so everybody's just using this — we're pastoring everything. Sometimes you'll hear evangelist used because it's not a scary word. You'll hear teacher used because it's not a scary word. Y'all didn't amen when I drank that water. I said yeah. So I told y'all to listen to Barry this morning. And so you'll have — evangelist isn't a scary word, teacher isn't a scary word, but when we get into the apostolic and the prophetic, all of a sudden that's scary. It's scary enough it'll make a Baptist crawl under the pew.

It's a scary word, but it's a Bible word. The phrase apostle and prophet are used in Ephesians two more times outside of this gift set. So the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher are mentioned once. The apostle and the prophet are mentioned three times. This morning what I want to do is I want to look at those three mentions of the apostle and the prophet. If you're ready, say "I'm ready." I'm ready. Okay, turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. Some of y'all are wondering, "Why in the world are you preaching this?"

Well, 'cause I want a church that works. Look at your neighbor and say, "This church is going to work." This church is going to work. The church is going to work. Ephesians chapter 2. You say you've been here a year and the church ain't working. It's getting there.

> **EPHESIANS 2:19-22** ESV
>
> 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the
> household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the
> cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In
> him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians chapter 2, verse 19 says, "So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

You can write this down. Number one, the apostolic and prophetic provide foundation. And I know, because I've preached out of 1 Corinthians chapter 3 quite a few times in recent days, I know some of you are thinking, "Well, I thought Jesus was the foundation."

> **1 CORINTHIANS 3:11** ESV
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> [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

And he is. He is the foundation of the believer's life. He is the foundation of our faith. But when it comes to an organization called the church, the foundation is actually set forth by the leaders. It is set forth by the apostles and prophets.

It is built on a foundation of apostolic and prophetic leadership. This foundation is able to take the gospel — that is a key thing you need to hear. This foundation is able to take the gospel and build an organization from it and around it. It's one thing to build an organization, it's an entirely different thing to build a church. Some of you have been in organizations that have called themselves churches. And some of you have been in churches that aren't very organized. We've been in both of them. But the apostles and prophets are able to bring that foundation.

To some great degree, I'm not sure whether we know the difference oftentimes, whether we're looking at a church or an organization, because you can build an organization with all the trimmings of a church and not fulfill the mission of a church. Because you can build an organization that is built around singing the songs, preaching the messages, receiving the offering, giving the announcement, having the stuff for kids, doing the outreach ministry, and yet never fulfill the things that have to be fulfilled by a church that works. Namely, the one that I notice is that people are not developed.

That is the one that I notice is always seeming to be where we lack. But this passage that we just read tells us the markers of a church versus an organization. What we just read said that a church is being joined together — by the way, just in case you were wondering, that is all people. It's being joined together. It's growing into a holy gathering that's Spirit-filled, and it's being built in him. That's Jesus-centered. Folks, we don't just rip stuff out of Google and throw it on the wall around here. When we say we're building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people, we believe that that is the foundation upon which you can build a church that works.

Come on, somebody. Started talking about apostles and everybody's checked out. The mission of the local church can quickly drift into sustaining operations. It is very easy for churches that have big, scary bills. I just looked at a $4,700 Alabama Power bill. And after I spent 45 minutes in the fetal position crying, I got up and I just prayed in the Holy Ghost. But when you have stuff like that, it's easy to just get into just sustaining operations and just thinking about what has to happen next. How do we keep the train on the tracks?

How do we keep moving? But we can't confuse keeping the doors open with opening the doors. We can't confuse running the air conditioner with keeping a fire burning in the house of our God. An apostolic foundation anchors the machine in the mission. There is a measure of stuff that we do around here that is like keeping the machine running. But if the machine ever loses its anchor in the foundation of the mission, if we ever get off of what we're actually called to do, if we ever have good church but we're not developing better people, then we have missed the mark, and an apostolic foundation anchors you down into that.

That's why we want it. That's why we need this. This is why the fivefold ministry is important, is because it keeps the church working. God forbid we be a church that is growing, but not a church that is working. Maybe I'm just preaching

to myself today. I don't know. Ephesians chapter 3, join me there. Ephesians 3:4.

> **EPHESIANS 3:4-5** ESV
>
> 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Ephesians chapter 3, verse 4 says, "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Number two, you can write this down. The apostolic and the prophetic bring revelation. It brings revelation. In part, revelation is Holy Ghost inspired vision. In part, that is what revelation is. It's Holy Ghost inspired vision. Without an apostolic and prophetic foundation, churches end up with a mission statement that sounds like word salad and a vision that is immeasurable. Part of why you might sense in churches at times that this church isn't working, when you can sense something's not clicking, things aren't moving like they ought to be moving — part of that reason is that you can sense that there's a gross incongruence between what's printed in the big letters on the wall and all of the activity in the church.

I've been in those churches that were big. Massive. 10,000 people, and you walk past this giant lettered statement on the wall that you never see show up anywhere in the church. There's an incongruence between what we say we're about and what we're actually about. That's not good. That's why you need an apostolic and prophetic foundation that has revelation that can make vision and mission congruent with the actual activity of the church. For instance, I'll just tell you this. I just saw this, and I don't think he watches what we're doing down here. But I'm sure he ain't the only one with this.

But I just saw a preacher — I just stumbled upon him, and he was doing a thing on the mission and vision of their church, and he got up and he told his whole church, he said, "This is what we're about." And I assume this is printed on banners and everywhere. He says, "We're here to save the lost, disciple the saved, and send the discipled." And that sounds awesome. That's like saying we're just here to do everything. I mean, that's the whole thing. That's the big whole thing. Denominations doing that, I get. A local church, 400 people, you're going to make that happen?

No. Here's the problem. Sometimes you can be so broad that your vision is actually impossible to accomplish. You can be so broad that you can do nothing, think you're doing something, because you've got this big broad thing, and so anything you do is moving in that direction, and actually everything you do is moving nowhere. You have to be careful of that. Broadness can be synonymous with vagueness. You have to be careful of this. Maybe I'm just preaching to preachers today. I don't know. I hope y'all are listening.

Except that one guy. The reality check that we have to realize is that — and y'all need to hear this, this needs, I need this heard in this church. I need this heard for people coming to this church. I need this heard. If you do everything, you end up doing nothing. Churches cannot be the center for everything. That doesn't work. That's not a church that works. Those that try to do everything end up doing nothing. In fact, baptism is a really great example of this. Now, we baptize people here, amen. But in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul — keep in mind, baptism's part of the Great Commission.

> **MATTHEW 28:19-20** ESV
>
> 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

But in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul says, "I don't baptize people."

> **1 CORINTHIANS 1:14-17** ESV
>
> 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

He says, "Other people can baptize folks. I don't baptize them. I preach, I teach, I establish churches. I do not baptize people. I've baptized a handful of them, and the only reason I'm telling you about that is because, well, I feel like I have to." You know, but he said, "I don't baptize people." Baptism is part of the Great Commission. Baptism is a good thing, but even the Apostle Paul said, "I can't do everything." It is reasonable for a local church to say, "We can't do everything. How do we play a part in the mission of the church universal?"

And so the apostolic and the prophetic is able to identify the church's specific role in the kingdom. It's able to identify a church's specific role in the kingdom. And now revelation is, on one hand, is vision, but revelation is also fresh bread. It's fresh bread. They used to have them little pamphlets of Our Daily Bread that you could read. The Daily Bread. Did you know that — I just learned this — that you're not supposed to reheat leftovers and then put them back in the fridge.

If you reheat leftovers and put them back in the fridge... So, like, you can have leftovers, reheat them and eat them, but you cannot reheat leftovers and then put them back in the fridge, and then reheat them again and put them back in the fridge and reheat. Because every time that you do that, it's not bacteria. The bacteria gets cooked off, but you're actually releasing toxins into the food. There's a term for this called fried rice syndrome. This is real. It's called fried rice syndrome because bacteria you can sense, you can smell it.

But when the toxins are being released in food, you won't be able to smell it, you won't be able to sense it. You'll think the food is fine. And so what happens is, people do this a lot with fried rice. They'll get takeout and they'll reheat fried rice. They'll put it back in the fridge, reheat it again, put it back in the fridge, reheat it. And then on the third or fourth day when they do that, they think they're having leftovers, and actually they're just prepping to go to the ER in the next 45 minutes, 'cause it'll get you all kinds of sick. That, because there's toxins that are released.

And listen, I want you to hear me. I understand that preachers — everything ain't all original. Everything didn't come out of the secret place. I, like any other preachers, I hear stuff, I pick it up. I like little phrases and little quotes, and I adapt stuff and I'll take stuff. But man, I'm just telling you, at some point there are moments where messages have been reheated and reheated and reheated and thrown back in the fridge and back in the fridge and back in the fridge. And at some point you can get up and preach and not have a fresh word from God, and actually release toxins into your church, because you've let it go on and on and on.

And listen — hear me, okay? I get it. People are going to borrow stuff from people. I'm going to do it sometimes, too. It's funny to me, though — I just said this on the phone yesterday to a preacher friend of mine. This ain't in the notes. It's funny to me, though, that you know what preachers get the most upset about? Is when we steal each other's stories. But we treat stealing points like it's no big deal. Who cares if I borrow somebody's story about going out to Las Vegas? I only got so many stories. Why are we not concerned that we didn't get in here and get the points and get the meat of the Word for the sermon?

Why is that not the thing that we're upset about? And it bothers me, because there's so many preachers that I hear and I can listen to, and not only do I know that they didn't come up with it, I know the source material. I know where it came from. Ashleigh — when we had Ali, for those of y'all that don't know, our youngest was born about four months early. She was born at 24 weeks, very premature. Ashleigh was staying in the hospital with her pretty much every Sunday. I would go in and do ministry, and she would stay. And Ashleigh started watching a preacher online before preachers were all online, amen.

So there was only five of them, and she would watch preachers online. And then we went to a church a few years later, and we're sitting in the auditorium, and this guy starts preaching. And Ashleigh hands me her phone, which I thought was strange, and then I look down. This guy's preaching everything. Ashleigh's a prophet. No. She had heard a guy preach this online several years ago. I'm telling you, I get you got days. I struggle with that, folks, because what I don't want to do is preach something that's not fresh, and it ends up going out and being toxic.

I don't want to borrow other people's sermons and call it manna that we know spoils the next morning.

> **EXODUS 16:19-20** ESV
>
> 19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses.
> Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

My God. Sorry, that's — I'm a little feeling that right there. We need fresh bread. We need fresh revelation. That's why we need the apostolic and the prophetic released in the church, because it is through them that revelation comes, that they can see, they can sense, they can hear, they can receive. And we need that released into the church. I'm not saying I'm an apostle. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I am going to say I got some stuff going on.

And so when I release something into this house, I'm telling you, it's fresh bread. It's a fresh word. It's something that came from the secret place. My messages don't come from a message book that I bought at LifeWay Christian Stores or from the internet. AI don't give this stuff to me. I do put my messages in there and ask it if it made sense, though. 'Cause sometimes I'm worried, you know? But I get into the secret place, and I pull these messages out. We need fresh revelation. We need fresh bread. We need a fresh wind in the church in Jesus' name.

Ephesians 3 goes on and it tells us that people are actually strengthened in their inner being by revelation.

> **EPHESIANS 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Revelation isn't just fancy, it isn't just original, it isn't just fun. It is important to the believer. It is important to the people in the church. Revelation makes a church work, in Jesus' name. Ephesians 4:11, let's go back to where we started this morning. I'm going to get done here in just a second. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11. Thank you, Holy Ghost. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, the teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 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."

Let me just pause right there and hold this for a moment. That is so important right now with the release of ministry through one-minute videos. I just need y'all to know we're living in a world now where people are getting a lot of their theology through one-minute clips or two-minute clips on the internet, and there is so much that comes out that in two minutes can sound so convincing, but it's false. It's in error. It's wrong. And it's misleading. It's misguiding. Sometimes it's even heresy.

And so we need a powerful move in our local churches of the fivefold ministry, an apostolic and prophetic foundation, to make sure that people aren't being led astray. Verse 15: "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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." Number three, you can write this down: the apostolic and prophetic empower every ministry gift to fulfill its designed purpose.

When the apostolic and prophetic bring a foundation and bring revelation, all ministry gifts start working together to build up the body. We talk a lot about the fivefold ministry, and we focus in on the equipping of the saints. And a lot of times I find that this is pastors trying to get out of certain types of ministry that's being required of them. I find that, you know, when a pastor doesn't go to the hospital to visit people, he'll say, "Well, my job's actually to equip you for the work of the ministry." And that's how it gets used.

Folks, if I don't come see you in the hospital, it's either because I didn't know or I had something else going on. If I can come see you in the hospital, I will come see you in the hospital. Folks, I was in the hospital five years ago, and you know what happened? The world kept moving on. So if I don't come see you in the hospital, it's not 'cause your preacher don't love you, it's not 'cause the church is too big, it's because sometimes people just can't drop everything 'cause something's going on with you. Y'all about getting some reality this morning, amen.

Y'all need to hear some stuff. My wife doesn't know what kind of conversation she's going to be having after church with y'all, amen. Sometimes it's just, that's just the way it is, man. But we're not using this to say, "No, I'm the preacher and I'm going to equip you, and I don't come to the hospital because I send Bo." That's not... But I will keep an eye on everybody, amen. You know? Hallelujah. No, no. So a lot of times people use it for that. But actually, what we need to focus on is that the body gets built up in such a way that there's unity, maturity, and stability in doctrine.

It's not so much about equipping people for the ministry, which is important, but what the benefit of the body is that you, like, mature. The benefit for the body is, like, you're able to actually take the Word, incorporate the Word, use the Word, stand on the Word, execute the Word, and, like, get results in your life. That's the purpose. The purpose is — we keep coming back to this a lot — power. That you'd actually be able to operate in real, sincere power in Jesus' name. And when there's no apostolic and prophetic gift operating in the church, chaos ensues.

And you've seen this. If you've been in any church ever, you have seen this. When the apostolic and the prophetic gift do not operate in a church, chaos ensues, and there's peripheral nonsense going around in every corner of the church. We talk a lot — we would think that big churches would be the ones where the apostolic and the prophetic flow the most. They are the most guilty of this. Large churches have a tendency to let everything under the sun go on, so long as we put it under the banner of a small group, and anything can happen anywhere.

I got caught in a conversation one time at a church where this guy stops me. And by the way, I like big churches. If 15,000 of y'all would come next week, you know, we'll figure the parking out over the next few weeks, but we're ready for you. I like big churches. But listen, I was in a church one time, I got cornered by this guy. He starts going on and on, and starts telling me how barcodes are the mark of the beast. Barcodes. Barcodes. Y'all, are y'all hearing? Every time you buy Oreos, you're participating in the world system of the mark of the beast, y'all.

And so he was telling me all this, and I'm like, "What is this?" So I was talking to the pastoral staff about it. I was new at the church, and they all roll their eyes behind the scenes, and it's all, "He's off on the barcode thing again." Except that we're letting this guy teach a small group, we're letting him lead a ministry, and we ended up hiring him to be one of the maintenance guys at the church. Because when there's no apostolic and prophetic foundation, we just let anything happen. We just let anything go on. That is not okay. That is not the way that you lead a powerful movement and a church that works.

You don't do that. That doesn't work. The people who teach in this church — and by the way, I only have two of them sitting in this room right now — I'm hyper-aware of what they're doing. I'm hyper-aware of what's being taught. We're about to release some teaching ministry in the church, and you want to know what they're going to teach? My stuff. We're not going to let people get off here. We're not going to have one small group off in the corner. Man, I'm just on it today. I told y'all, I should have warned y'all, when I'm on medicine, I get fun. And I'm on a lot right now, amen.

Isn't that true, though? We're not going to have some small group off in the corner teaching some nonsense that now I got seven people running around the church talking about some garbage that isn't true, and now I gotta put this thing back in the can. We're not doing that. We're actually going to honor the Word. We're going to honor the Lord. We're going to honor the Scripture, and we're not going to get off into nonsense that somehow involves charts. There's always a chart. Every time. Without the apostolic, what happens is, a lot of times pastors, the pastor gifts, let people run wild.

Because pastors can love people so much that they won't hold them accountable. They will do no structure. Without the prophetic, evangelists will end up hosting what is no more than philanthropic outreach events where we give people food, but there's never a point at which the gospel might be encountered. But the prophetic holds that accountable. We need the fivefold ministry. We need a release of the apostolic and the prophetic. Y'all, y'all get $10, both of you. Y'all understood the assignment. Why am I preaching a message like this? Well, one reason is I don't like to just do stuff and not let you know.

I do a lot that I just make the decision out of the Word, and I kind of just lead from here. I've noticed a lot of people like to lead and just kind of see where everything's going to fall as they lead, and then kind of just see if they can massage their way into it. Well, what I've been doing for the last year that just seems to be working for me — and I mean, it seems to be going well. I keep waiting for it to blow up in my face, so it's a little bit of a test I'm running. But I've just been really honest with y'all, and y'all responded really well every time I'm honest.

I tell y'all what I'm going to do, we do it, we get the results we said we were going to get, and y'all seem to be cool with it. I've really enjoyed that, 'cause I've been told for 20 years that you can't lead a church like that. And so what I want to do

is I just want to tell you, man, we want to see a release of the apostolic and the prophetic in our church. And so you say, "Well, when is that going to happen?" 364 days ago. This is how we've been leading. These are the decisions that we made. When we came in, some of y'all felt this.

We're just celebrating a year here. When we came in, we took ministry and did this. And some of y'all felt that more than others, but we — whoosh. I got up one — either a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night — and said, "I am taking control of everything." I think those words, 80% of that sentence came out of my mouth. I mean, I've used some strong language on this. Where we took control of some stuff. So why? So that we could build foundation. So that we could make sure that we controlled what was revelation and what was nonsense.

I had to control some of that. And so now we're starting to see the fruit of it, this apostolic and prophetic ministry. Here's what I want to talk to you about before we close. We're about to start going through some growth pains. We're already in them a little bit. We're in some growing pains. We're feeling some stuff. This is what I want you to hear. And I'm not picking on anybody, so I want to be clear when I say this. We've had a lot of meetings one-on-one with people, and one of our growing pains is we're not doing any more Coffee with the Pastor.

Like, we just can't do any more of these meetings. It's eating up too much time, and so now we're having to kind of get more people together in groups and do that. So, but we've been meeting with a lot of people, and one of the things we hear is people are coming here because churches they were trying out in the area were just too big. And I just need to be clear with y'all, like: this church is going to be big. This is going to be a big church. In fact, we're already a big church. We're just a little church.

We're a big little church. We don't do things like little churches do. We let little churches do what they want to do. You let little small churches do what they want to do. We're bigger than a small church. We just don't have a lot of people coming yet. We're just waiting on everybody... Y'all, where y'all at? August 23rd — I thought that was what you were saying on the other side of the camera. And so we're going to feel some of those growing pains. I need you to hear me. As the church grows, we're not going to have some of the problems that some of y'all have experienced in bigger churches.

Some of you have been in bigger churches, and you have felt yourself slip through the cracks and not be known. Or you've been going and going and you're five years down the road, and you're going, "I'm coming all the time, and I'm serving, and I don't feel like I have grown at all. There is nothing working that I'm getting out of what we're doing. It's just not doing anything." I need you to hear me. We're not going to have those problems, because we're not going to just grow an organization. We're not just going to have a church that does churchy things.

We're not just going to sing the songs and do the stuff and have the Hobby Hub and do... That's not who we're going to be. We're building on an apostolic and a prophetic foundation, and because we have strong foundation, and because we have revelation that's coming forward, the fivefold ministry — especially pastors and evangelists and teachers — are going to be equipped in a way where the work in the body is going to be fruitful. Whether we have 100 people coming to church or we have 10,000 people coming to church, we're going to have a fruitful ministry. As we enter these growing pains, this is what I want some of you to do.

I want you to buckle up and hang on and get ready and enjoy the process. I don't want to hear anybody saying, "This church is getting a little too big." No. It's getting just right. It's getting just right. When we have 300, 400 people showing up, that's not too big. That's starting to feel less... We're starting to be able to do something. By the way, you need to run

300, 400 people before you can really be viable. Some of the stuff we're doing right now, we are reaching way out of our ability to get it done, and we're just going for it and trying to make it happen.

We're running like we're a church of 350 right now. On Sundays. But on Monday, I sit up here by myself in the office. So yeah, I want 500 of your best friends to come to church. But as we grow, I don't want you to start... Don't get worried. We're building on an apostolic foundation, a prophetic foundation. We're letting... Revelation is releasing into this church. We're leading from the Word. God's going to do a great work in this house. God's going to do a great work in this church. Next week, I'm going to be sharing some things that we're going to be doing coming up towards January.

Some things that are coming towards January. The following week, I'm going to share with you just some very direct things that we need to see happen here in our church. Three weeks from now, very transparent message you're going to get from me. And so you do not want to miss that. And then the next week, Back to Church Sunday. Whoo. Y'all are going to invite 100,000 people. It's going to be great. We're going to have — everybody's going to have somebody sitting in their lap. Back to Church Sunday. All right. I about preached y'all to death.

Are you excited about the Word? Give the Lord a hand clap of praise.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message opens a three-week series called Here We Grow, framed as a church-wide staff meeting. In a staff meeting the pastor does three things: teach, share where we are going, and say what he needs from the team. This week is the teaching week.

The subject is the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11, with a focus on the two gifts many Pentecostal churches handle most nervously: apostles and prophets. Name the nervousness, then go straight to the text. The three points come from the three places Ephesians pairs apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11).

Much of this message speaks to leaders and preachers. Let it. Then bring it home in the close: the church is growing, and growing pains are coming. The final section is specific to this church's season. Adapt the dates, numbers and plans to your own church.

Introduction

> EPHESIANS 4:11-16 ESV
>
> 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, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, 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. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

Some Bibles say "pastors" in verse 11; the ESV says "shepherds." Either way, these are gifts given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Our series is called **Here We Grow.** You can say it two ways: "Here we grow!" or, with a sigh, "Here... we grow." You can feel the growing pains already: someone is in your favorite seat, your parking place is gone, and the air conditioners are struggling to keep up with a full room.

A CHURCH-WIDE STAFF MEETING

For the next three weeks, this is a church-wide staff meeting. When I meet with our staff, I do three things:

- I teach.
- I share where we are going.
- I tell them what I need from them.

We will take one each week. Today, I am teaching: **The Church That Works.**

That phrase is *polyvalent*: it can mean different things depending on how you use it.

- **A church where everyone works.** Everybody does their part. We need that. We are growing, and we need more people doing more things. Join the team.
- **A church that objectively works.** You look at it and say, "Whatever's happening there, it's working." What it does meets the goal it has. **That is what we are talking about today.**

When Church Doesn't Work

Have you ever been in a church and thought, "This doesn't seem to work"? Something is not connecting.

A lot of churches get stuck in the muck of **filling a building.** You might think that is aimed at big churches, but it is actually worse in small ones.

Illustration: "Probably about 10,000." A friend in Michigan toured a church with a building that seated thousands. He asked one staff member how many they were running. "Probably about 10,000." The other staff member said, "It's probably closer to 7." My friend said, "If I lost 3,000 people, I think I'd know it." In a large church, a few hundred people can come and go without moving the needle. Small churches feel every seat, and they can get stuck in the routine of just keeping the building filled.

There is nothing wrong with a full building. I want one. The issue is **how** a church fills it and keeps it filled.

THE HOBBY HUB

People like to say churches are country clubs, run by a handful of rich people. I have worked in churches all across America, and that is rare. I do not worry much about the country club. I worry about **the garden club, the book club and the baking club.** When churches get worried about filling the building, they turn into **the Hobby Hub.**

Have you ever wondered why the music in so many churches is so bad? This is why. Everybody gets to do their little hobby, so you lose excellence and you lose the edge. We stop doing it unto the Lord and start doing it unto ourselves: "It makes me feel good. It's my thing."

So four or five people mosey through the songs, nobody is any good, everybody knows it, and nobody is upset. Why? Because the stage reflects the whole church. Maw Maw is not upset because she runs the book club. Hector does not mind because he is over the barbecue ministry. Everybody has their own little thing. There are people in the building, but nobody is getting saved, and the church is not working.

"Well, that's just how they worship." No, it is not.

Illustration: the drummer. In Michigan, I had a drummer who had played at the church for about 20 years, and he was not good. I also had two kids who could play the paint off the wall. Eventually I had to make a decision, and I took him off the team. He left the church, but not because he was not allowed to worship. He left because he decided to leave his wife for a girlfriend he had been seeing for years that nobody knew about. He had been playing church so he could keep playing the drums. It was a pretense.

The Hobby Hub is dangerous to the mission. It can happen in small churches and large ones. A church can do all the right things to grow and still not be the church. **The goal is to do both: grow a church and be the church.**

THE MARKERS OF A CHURCH THAT WORKS

It is easy to recognize a church that does not work, as long as you are not seduced by it. Here is what a church that works looks like:

- **Theologically grounded.** If not perfect accuracy, at least real conviction.
- **Known.** People in the area are aware of it.
- **Develops people.** It is much less important to me that we launch ministries than that we launch people. Ministries and programs are means, not ends. The end is always developed people.
- **Reproducing into other churches.** Something it does is being adopted by other churches. (Our media team is already getting calls from churches around the nation asking how we do it.)
- **Big enough to sustain ministry,** growing or thriving. People say "healthy things grow," but cancer grows too. We need to grow; we have not arrived. But there is a point where a church may not be growing and is still thriving.

The Fivefold Ministry

So what takes a church from not working to working? **The fivefold ministry.**

We do not hear much about this in the Assemblies of God. We are the most evangelical corner of the Pentecostal world, which means we have the most safety protocols. One caution we have taken is to handle the fivefold ministry so carefully that we never really honor it or release it in our churches. Have you ever handled something so carefully that you dropped it? Today we are just going with what the Bible says.

You can count the fivefold ministry on one hand:

- **The evangelist (middle finger): the longest reach.** Evangelists reach people far from the Lord, far from church and far from a church lifestyle. They walk into a Chili's, never preach a sermon, and somehow the waitress gets saved.
- **The pastor (ring finger): married to the community.** Pastors love the people. They are at every birthday party and every reception. (I have said it before: I am *the* pastor, but I am not a pastor gift.)
- **The teacher (pinky finger): small enough to get into your ear.** Teachers take big concepts and make them understandable. They are the least celebrated, but they have a powerful ministry.

- **The prophet (pointer finger): points the way.** Prophets see what is coming in the culture and sense direction. It is not always specific or predictive. Often prophets operate by sensing.
- **The apostle (thumb): pioneers and governs.** The apostle says, "We can do that." It does not reach out as far as the other gifts, but it touches every one of them and releases them into the fullness of their anointing.

These are not a hierarchy. They are gifts to the body. A church has an authority structure, and it has gifts, and those are two different things. An apostle can serve under the authority of a pastor; a prophet can serve under a teacher. The gifts can operate in people without a ministry title, though most often they show up in those leading the church. (The authority structure is a teaching for another day.)

Since the Reformation, church leadership has tended to be pastor-focused. Everyone became a "pastor": youth pastor, kids pastor, senior pastor, lead pastor, associate pastor, executive pastor. We still use "evangelist" and "teacher," because they are safe words. But "apostle" and "prophet" sound scary. Scary enough to make a Baptist crawl under the pew.

It may be a scary word, but it is a Bible word. In Ephesians, evangelists, pastors and teachers are mentioned once. **Apostles and prophets are mentioned together three times** (Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11). Let's look at those three mentions and see what makes a church work.

1. The Apostolic and Prophetic Provide Foundation

> EPHESIANS 2:19-22 ESV
>
> 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members
> of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself
> being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in
> the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The household of God is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

"Wait, I thought Jesus was the foundation." He is: "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus is the foundation of the believer's life and of our faith. But when it comes to the church as an organized body, the foundation is set by its leaders: apostles and prophets.

This foundation is able to take the gospel and build an organization from it and around it. It is one thing to build an organization. It is something entirely different to build a church. You can build an organization with all the trimmings of a church (the songs, the messages, the offering, the announcements, the kids' program, the outreach) and still never do what a church has to do. The one I notice most often: **people are not developed.**

This passage gives the markers of a church rather than just an organization. A church is:

- **Being joined together:** that is for all people.

- **Growing into a holy temple:** that is Spirit-filled.
- **Being built in Him:** that is building on Jesus.

We did not pull our vision off Google and paint it on a wall. We believe this is the foundation for a church that works.

The mission of a local church can quickly drift into **sustaining operations.** Big bills come in, and it is easy to start thinking only about keeping the train on the tracks. (I just looked at a $4,700 Alabama Power bill. After 45 minutes in the fetal position, I got up and prayed in the Holy Ghost.)

But **we can't confuse keeping the doors open with opening the doors. We can't confuse running the air conditioner with keeping a fire burning in the house of God.**

An apostolic foundation anchors the machine in the mission. Some of what we do keeps the machine running. But if we ever have good church and are not developing better people, we have missed the mark. God forbid we be a church that is growing but not a church that is working.

2. The Apostolic and Prophetic Bring Revelation

> EPHESIANS 3:4-5 ESV
>
> 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

The mystery of Christ "has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5).

REVELATION IS HOLY GHOST-INSPIRED VISION

Without an apostolic and prophetic foundation, churches end up with a mission statement that sounds like word salad and a vision that cannot be measured.

Part of why a church can feel like it is not working is a **gross incongruence between what is printed in big letters on the wall and all the activity in the church.** I have walked past giant lettered statements in churches of 10,000 that never showed up anywhere else in the building. Revelation makes the vision and mission congruent with what the church actually does.

Illustration: "Do everything." I recently came across a pastor sharing his church's vision: "Save the lost, disciple the saved, send the discipled." It sounds awesome. But that is like saying, "We're here to do everything." A denomination, maybe. A local church of 400? **Broadness can be synonymous with vagueness.** You can be so broad that everything you do feels like it is moving in that direction while it is actually moving nowhere.

Here is the reality check: **if you do everything, you end up doing nothing.** Churches cannot be the center for everything.

Baptism is a great example. Baptism is part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). We baptize people here. And yet Paul writes, "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17). He baptized only a handful (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Even the apostle Paul said he could not do everything. It is reasonable for a local church to say, "We can't do everything. What is our part in the mission of the church universal?"

The apostolic and prophetic identify a church's specific role in the kingdom.

REVELATION IS FRESH BREAD

Illustration: fried rice syndrome. You are generally told to reheat leftovers only once. Reheat, put it back in the fridge, reheat again, and so on, and you are asking for trouble. Heat kills many bacteria, but some leave behind toxins that heat does not destroy, and every round of cooling and reheating gives them more time to build up. You cannot smell or taste it; the food seems fine. It is common enough with leftover rice that it has a name: fried rice syndrome. You think you are having leftovers, and you are actually prepping for a trip to the ER.

Preachers, everything we preach is not wholly original. We all hear things and pick them up: phrases, quotes, ideas. But some messages have been reheated and put back in the fridge so many times that a preacher can stand up with no fresh word from God and actually release toxins into the church.

Preachers get upset when someone steals their stories, but treat borrowing someone else's points like it is no big deal. Why are we not more concerned that we did not dig out the meat of the Word for ourselves? I can listen to many preachers and not only know they did not come up with it, but know the source.

Illustration: Ashleigh's phone. When our youngest, Ali, was born at 24 weeks, Ashleigh stayed with her in the hospital most Sundays and started watching a preacher online. Years later, we were sitting in another church when the preacher began, and Ashleigh handed me her phone. She had already heard that exact sermon online.

I do not want to borrow other people's sermons and call it manna, when we know manna spoils by the next morning. Kept overnight, "it bred worms and stank" (Exodus 16:20). **We need fresh bread. We need fresh revelation.**

That is why we need the apostolic and prophetic released in the church: through them revelation comes. They see, sense, hear and receive. My messages do not come from a sermon book or the internet. They come from the secret place.

And revelation is not just novel or fun. Paul prays that believers would "be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). **Revelation makes a church work.**

3. The Apostolic and Prophetic Empower Every Ministry Gift to Fulfill Its Designed Purpose

Go back to where we started.

> **EPHESIANS 4:11-16 ESV**
>
> 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, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, 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. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

Pause on verse 14: "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). That is urgent right now. Many people get their theology from one- and two-minute clips online. Something can sound convincing in two minutes and be false, misleading, even heresy. We need an apostolic and prophetic foundation in our local churches so people are not led astray.

Where there is apostolic and prophetic foundation and revelation, all the ministry gifts start working together to build up the body, "when each part is working properly" (Ephesians 4:16).

We talk a lot about "equipping the saints," and sometimes pastors use it to get out of ministry: "I don't come to the hospital; my job is to equip you." (If I do not come see you in the hospital, it is because I did not know or something else was going on. It is not because your pastor does not love you.)

But the point of the passage is that the body gets built up with **unity, maturity and stability in doctrine.** The benefit to the body is that you mature: you take the Word, stand on the Word, live the Word, and see results in your life. You operate in real power.

When the apostolic and prophetic gifts do not operate in a church, chaos ensues, and there is peripheral nonsense in every corner of the church. Big churches are often the most guilty: almost anything can go on under the banner of a small group.

Illustration: the barcode guy. At one church I was new on staff, and a man cornered me to explain that barcodes are the mark of the beast. Every time you buy Oreos, you are participating in the world system. The pastoral staff rolled their eyes behind his back: "He's off on the barcode thing again." But they let him teach a small group, let him lead a ministry, and eventually hired him to the maintenance staff. With no apostolic and prophetic foundation, nobody was willing to say, "This isn't going to fly."

That is not how you lead a church that works. I am hyper-aware of what is taught in this church. We will not have a small group off in the corner teaching nonsense, and the nonsense always seems to involve a chart. We are going to honor the Word.

- **Without the apostolic, pastors let people run wild.** Pastors can love people so much that they will not hold them accountable or build any structure.

- **Without the prophetic, evangelists host philanthropic outreaches where nobody gets saved.** People get food, but there is never a point where they might encounter the gospel. The prophetic holds that accountable.

We need the fivefold ministry. We need a release of the apostolic and the prophetic.

Conclusion

WHY PREACH THIS?

I do not like to make decisions and leave you in the dark. Many leaders just lead and hope they can massage their way into it later. For the last year, I have been honest with you. I tell you what we are going to do, we do it, we get the results we said we would, and you have responded well every time.

So when does this release of the apostolic and prophetic start? It started 364 days ago. When we came in, we took control of some things, and some of you felt that. Why? **To build a foundation,** and to make sure we could tell what was revelation and what was nonsense. Now we are starting to see the fruit.

GROWING PAINS

We are already in some growing pains. One example: we cannot do any more one-on-one Coffee with the Pastor meetings. They take too much time, so we are moving to meeting with people in groups.

In those meetings, we keep hearing that people came here because the churches they tried in the area were too big. Hear me: **this church is going to be big.** In fact, we are already a big church; we are just a big little church. We do not do things the way little churches do.

Some of you have been in big churches and felt yourself slip through the cracks. Five years in, coming and serving, you felt like you had not grown at all. **We are not going to have those problems,** because we are not just growing an organization. We are not going to be the Hobby Hub. We are building on an apostolic and prophetic foundation, with revelation coming forward, so pastors, evangelists and teachers will be equipped and the work of the body will be fruitful, whether there are 100 people or 10,000.

So buckle up, hang on and enjoy the process. Do not say, "This church is getting too big." It is getting just right. Some of what we are doing right now reaches beyond our ability, and we are going for it anyway. We are running like a church of 350 on Sundays, while on Monday I am sitting in the office by myself.

We are building on an apostolic foundation and a prophetic foundation. Revelation is being released in this house. We are leading from the Word, and God is going to do a great work in this church.

WHAT'S NEXT

- **Next week:** where we are going, including some things coming toward January.
- **The week after:** some very direct things we need to see happen in our church. A very transparent message.
- **Then:** Back to Church Sunday. Invite everyone.

OPTIONAL: A FRESH WIND FOR THE REGION

This close is in the original notes but was not preached on August 2, 2026. Use it if time allows.

People are coming to our church, and we keep hearing, “It’s different.” That difference is the flow of apostolic and prophetic anointing. Mobile County has churches coming out of its ears. The last thing it needs is another church. But it could use a fresh wind of the Spirit to blow through this region and shift the current: fewer churchy people, and more people consecrated to the name of the Most High God.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16	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, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, 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. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.
EPHESIANS 2:19-22	19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
EPHESIANS 3:4-5	4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11	11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:14-17	14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
EPHESIANS 3:16	16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

MATTHEW 28:19-20	19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
EXODUS 16:19-20	19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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