

Question #4: Personal Insight from Ephesians

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One personal insight from the book of Ephesians that has been meaningful to me is the function that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are to perform for the body of Christ as mentioned in 4:11-16. A major thrust of the letter up until this point has been the high view concerning the oneness of the Church (2:16-19; 4:3-6) and that the relationship of its members would be that of love (3:18-19). It is the speaking and pastoral gifts given to the leaders that are meant to equip the members of the body to function properly. The leaders are not meant to usurp the function of the other members, but rather to empower them in their functioning.

Chapter 4, verses 11 through 16, presents a fascinating progression in describing this function and growth of the body. The teachers and other gifted leaders were given as gifts in order to equip the saints for their ministering work (4:11-12). As the saints minister, this causes the growth of the body (4:12). Part of this growing process is that each member would but would grow into a full-grown understanding of the Christian faith, no longer being babes deceived by new doctrines and teaching (4:13-14). Furthermore, the functioning of the body's members would include speaking honestly and lovingly to each other (4:15). The body's ultimate growth and maturing has to do with the cooperation and sharing of each part of the body (4:16). Every member of the body needs to be nurtured as held in high esteem.

If the oneness of the body is so important, it seems that a major portion of the job of the teachers should be to encourage understanding, love, and unity among the members of the body. Surely the foundational truths of the gospel must be firmly grasped so people are no longer tossed about by false teaching. But Christians at different levels of maturity should exercise love and understanding towards fellow members of the body. I think that this truth needs to be sounded out more and more among church leaders. We need to renew and speak this motto: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."