



**Truth Seekers
Fellowship**

Equipping The Faithful To Be Fruitful

PHASE 3

MilktoMeat Book 6

Living THE LIFE Part 02

Serving As The Body of Christ

AWARE > ALIVE > AWAKE > FREE > FAITHFUL > FRUITFUL



LIVING THE LIFE

Part 2: Serving As The Body of Christ

“I am The Way, The Truth and **The Life**;

No one comes to the Father

except through me.”

Jesus the Messiah

[John 14:6]

| AWARE | ALIVE | AWAKE | FREE | FAITHFUL | **FRUITFUL** |

Living The Life | Part 2: Serving As The Body of Christ

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For
Tom Murray
who taught us the importance of
teaching the truth, in the right order, at the right time.

And many thanks to
all our students over the years
who have served as our
editors, encouragers and supporters.

CHRIST we proclaim
by warning and teaching all people with all wisdom
so that we may present every person mature in Christ.
Toward this goal we also labor,
struggling according to His power
that powerfully works in us.
| Colossians 1:28-29 |

The MilktoMeat Map		
Phase 1 Discovering The Way	1. Recovering The Master Story	Aware
	2. Enlightened By The Gospel	Alive
Phase 2 Walking In The Truth	3. Realizing Your New Identity in Christ	Awake
	4. Rooted and Growing in Christ	Free
Phase 3 Living The Life	5. Empowered In the Spirit	Faithful
	6. Serving as The Body of Christ	Fruitful

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Introduction to MilktoMeat

“Christ we proclaim,
warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,
so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

~ COLOSSIANS 1:28 ~

Who is This Study For?

We have designed this study around a simple idea: *these are the truths that we wished someone had taught us as new believers, new followers of Jesus.*

» *If you are a new follower of Jesus, or*

» *If you have never been trained how to follow Jesus, or*

» *If you want to learn how to train others to follow Jesus...*

then you are PERFECT for this study.

***This study follows our first Phase of workbooks, Discovering The Way. Since the sequence is central to this study, we would highly recommend doing Phase 1 first if you have not already. You can order that set and find out more at www.tsfnmemphis.org/milktomeat.**

What is The Story Behind MilktoMeat?

Do you want to grow spiritually but aren't sure where to start or what will work? For over twenty years we have been developing and refining MilktoMeat based upon what makes a difference in people's lives. Many men and women, from various walks of life, ages, and backgrounds have been transformed while going through this study. This study is an invitation to experience how Father God working in Jesus Christ through the power and presence of His Holy Spirit will transform You.

We believe that this is a powerful tool and resource for anyone who wants to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). We pray that this study will become a means for you to connect more deeply with Father God's love and purposes for you in Christ so that you *make your life's journey worthy of your destination!*

Tom Murray, the founder of Truth Seekers Fellowship, began to follow Jesus in his late twenties. At that point, he was what all new followers of Jesus are: *a blank sheet of paper*. Although Tom was hungry and willing to pursue spiritual growth, he found that his early years as a student of Jesus were not as fulfilling and productive as they could have been. Tom got bits and pieces of important truth and practices, but he had no one to lead him and train him in a logical and sequential way with the goal of spiritual maturity in sight.

After many years of searching, learning, and growing through trial and error, Tom decided to put together a study that would, “*teach others what I wish older, more mature Christians had taught me as a new believer*.” This study and curriculum became MilktoMeat. The guiding principle behind all of MilktoMeat is simple: *teaching the truth in the right order at the right time*.

What are Our Core Commitments?

» **Bible Based** | The Bible has been given to us by God to instruct us in His Ways and give us hope. This study is **Bible Based** because we are confident that the Message of the Bible (the Written Word) gives us hope by guiding us to Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures *we may have hope*.

2 Timothy 3:14–15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

» **Christ Focused** | Jesus Christ is the Creator, Savior, and King of all creation and therefore the ONLY Way that leads us to the One True God. Therefore, this study is **Christ Focused** because we are confident that He is Creator, Savior, and King of all Creation and therefore central to all things:

Hebrews 12:1–2 ...Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.

» **Life Transforming** | Father God Works in Christ His Son through the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. When anyone is presented with the truth and goodness of God in the glory of Jesus Christ, that person will be affected. The Lord-God has revealed Himself to us in His Written Word—*The Bible*—and this Word points us to the Living Word—*Our Savior and Lord Jesus*—so that we can see Him. We are confident that Father God has given us His Word and is working in Christ through His Spirit to set free, heal, and transform anyone who is willing to turn from their old way of life and to trust and follow Jesus Christ who leads us in *the way of true life*.

2 Corinthians 3:17–18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

What is the Larger Structure of MilktoMeat?

MilktoMeat is divided into three Phases: 1) Discovering the Way, 2) Walking in the Truth and 3) Living the Life. Each of these Phases consist of two 7 Session study units. These units are designed to lead you in the process of Spiritual Transformation that takes place as you grow in your relationship with Father God in Christ.

» **Phase 1 | Discovering the Way**

In this first phase, our goal is *to build a frame of reference* for life by recovering The Master Story of the Bible. This Master Story sets the context for understanding The Gospel—the Good News about Jesus and The Kingdom which enlightens our lives. We focus on the three core life questions: 1) *Where have we come from?* 2) *Why are we here?* And 3) *How will our lives turn out?* We then turn to explore the major Gospel Questions: 1) Why Did God Create Us? 2) What Went Wrong? 3) What Did God Do? 4) What is God Doing? 5) What will God Do? and 6) How Should We Respond? Our Father God working in Christ through The Spirit has provided answers to these questions that give us the one thing that we need more than anything else: **HOPE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Recovering the Master Story* and *Enlightened by the Gospel*

» Phase 2 | Walking in The Truth

In our second phase, we explore what it means to trust and follow Jesus ALONE as our only Savior. We focus on our **new identity** and **position** in Christ and how this new reality fulfills our need for 1) *Security*, 2) *Significance* and 3) *Fulfillment* as people created in the image and likeness of God. We also explore issues related to The Great Spiritual War in which we find ourselves, broken and wounded by sin, but now being transformed to be like Jesus. Our lives are journeys of FAITH; we are all **trusting** someone to show us The Way. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Realizing Your New Identity in Christ* and *Rooted and Growing in Christ*

» Phase 3 | Living The Life

In our final phase, we consider what it means to be a life-long disciple/student/apprentice of Jesus. We focus on the significant role everyone “in Christ” has. “In Christ” we are each gifted and empowered to serve *as* the Body of Christ (The Church) *in* the World where Jesus is leading His mission to seek and save those who are spiritually lost, dead, and enslaved in the Dominion of Darkness. God is love. As we come to know Jesus Christ truly, following Him wherever He may lead, we too become people characterized by His self-sacrificial **LOVE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session studies: *Empowered by The Presence of the Spirit* and *Serving as The Body of Christ*.

Session 1

To What Has Father God Called Us?

- Core Truth:** In Christ we have been called into a deep and transformative relationship with the Lord God—Father, Son and Spirit. Through this calling, we are now a New Priesthood for God, people being built together into a New Temple in which the Spirit of God dwells.
- To Remember:** He (Father God) is the one who saved us and called us with a **holy calling**, not based on our works but on His own purpose and grace,...(2 Timothy 1:9-10)
- Objective:** In this first session of the last study in MilktoMeat, we set the context for understanding the nature of the Church—the Body of Christ—and its ministry (service). We have been called into work which is focused toward the coming Kingdom in which the truth, goodness, and glory of the Lord God will define all reality.

WORDwork | Day 1

Welcome to the last workbook in *MilktoMeat*! We have come a long way and if you have worked your way through all the previous studies, we hope you feel a real sense of accomplishment. In these final sessions, we hope to connect together many of the truths we have discussed throughout this study so you can have a clear vision of where to go from here.

Very early on, we said that Father God is calling us up and into something much larger than we can fully comprehend or imagine right now. In the Scriptures, this larger reality is revealed as *The Kingdom*. The Kingdom is present among Christ's people, but it is also coming *in full* one day soon.

The Lord Jesus instructed us to:

Matthew 6:33 “...seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Jesus says this in the context of teaching His students not to *worry* or be *anxious* about what we will wear or what we will eat. As beloved children of our Heavenly Father, He will provide for our needs. But the main point that Jesus makes here is that *pursuing, seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness should take priority over all other things*. In doing this, all other things will be added.

By now, you know enough and should have some idea of how to do that. Here in our last study unit, we will focus on pursuing this priority of “Kingdom Righteousness” in the context of *The Church* which is *the Body of Christ*.

Up to this point, we have been emphasizing the *individual, personal* nature of following Christ. Now we will consider how we follow Christ *together*, as His people. The Lord Jesus has entrusted us with His **Vision** for the World and His **Mission** in it. It is vitally important that we learn *to see* these things the way Jesus does and understand *how* He desires for us to do the work He has entrusted to us. *We have been called to represent The Kingdom and Father God's excellence to the world and we want to be faithful in that work.*

As usual, read through the passage on the next page and then work through the questions and discussion.

1.1

We Have Been Called to be Saints.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3 From Paul, **called** to be an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, **2 to the church of God** that is in Corinth, **to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints**, with all those in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. **3** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

? 01 In verse 1, how does Paul refer to himself?

? 02 In verse 2, how does Paul address the church of Corinth – who are they “in Christ”? What are the “called” to be?

? 03 What is Paul’s attitude toward this church as revealed in verse 4? Is he positive or negative?

In this greeting to the church at Corinth, Paul describes himself as “**called** to be an **Apostle** of Jesus Christ by the will of God...” Then he addresses the “**church** of God that is in Corinth...” We have picked this passage because it briefly touches on several key ideas that we will be developing in this study unit: 1) Calling, 2) Gifting, and 3) the Church.

First the word “called.” Paul says that he has been called to be an Apostle of Christ and the church at Corinth has been called to be Saints. In both cases, it is Father God who does the calling. Paul’s calling as an Apostle is related to the *gifts* of Christ that are given through the work of the Holy Spirit. We will be discussing these spiritual gifts a little later. The church at Corinth has been called to be saints and so let’s refresh our memory about the significance of this statement.

As we have mentioned several times now, the church at Corinth was one of the most *immature* and problem filled churches in the early days of the spread of the Gospel. The majority of people who made up that church came out of *pagan worldviews*. Because they had not learned to leave all of their past ways of life behind, they were divisive, unforgiving, and immoral. They were taking one another to court to get their way. Some were still visiting pagan temples and

“worshipping” with pagan prostitutes. There was even a man who was engaged in an illicit relationship with his step-mother. Sounds like a First Century soap opera, right?

Yet, Paul addresses this group as those who were **sanctified** and **called to be Saints!!!** When we think of *holy people*—saints—we usually think of the medieval portraits of monks with halos around their heads. We think of Mother Theresa and others who have separated themselves from “normal life” in order to serve God in humility—we definitely do not think of *immature* and *immoral* Christians. But this is exactly what Paul calls this less than exemplary group of believers.

When someone or something is set apart for God, *as His possession for His service*, then this person or thing is *sanctified*. In Christ, we have been set apart *to* and *for* Father God so we have been *sanctified*. If you remember, the words for “sanctified” and “saint” are from the same root word in Greek and we could translate these words more literally as “to make holy” and “holy ones.”

This church has problems, no doubt. But Paul knows that the only way that their *immature* and *sinful behavior* can be changed is through first developing a vision, a clear understanding of their true position before God and their true identity in Christ.

This status or position of holiness and “Sainthood” is not something the Corinthians church has earned. Their holiness is a status that has been given or granted to them by God. It has been granted to them by the work of Christ. Notice what Paul says:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Think about the circumstances **of your call**, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. 27 But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, 29 so that no one can boast in His presence.

30 He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, “*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*”

Here, the Scriptures make it clear that *Father God is the one who chose us for His purposes*. Consider this passage carefully. Why has God chosen this group

of believers? Because they were wise and powerful and “worthy” of His choosing? No! In fact, God chose them because they were none of these things. God chose the “*nobodies*” of the Corinthian church in order to display the power of His grace and the glory of His wisdom.

God your Father has called you with a holy calling to be His child, His possession, in fellowship with Him in His Son Jesus through the Holy Spirit. God’s calling is not reserved for those who are going “into ministry.” In reality, all of us who have trusted Christ have been called to both fellowship and service *to* Father God and *for* Father God (ministry). Realizing that He has called us each for His purposes helps us to understand the significant role that He has set us apart and equipped us for in His present work in the world.

Lastly, notice that Paul addresses “the **church of God** at Corinth.” The main idea, the main thread that will bind all of our discussion in this workbook together is the Church, the Body of Christ. Notice that as Paul addresses this church as those “**called** to be saints” they also “**call** on the name of the Lord Jesus.” It is our common calling *on* Jesus and His calling *of* us that binds us together.

Let’s give a definition for The Church that we will explain and expand as we go along:

Key Definition: **The Church / the Body of Christ** is the Spirit-unified fellowship of people called and redeemed from the nations through the unique saving work of Jesus Christ. Although there is only ONE Church/Body, there are many *churches* - fellowships of Christ followers who meet in a specific time and place to glorify Christ and grow in grace and truth.

All of us who are IN Christ are part of His Body, THE Church. On the “local” level, we gather with one another in many different *churches*—*assemblies, fellowship, gatherings of believers in a specific time and place*. In Paul’s day, as in ours, there were many different *churches* gathering in many different cities and homes throughout the Roman Empire. Yet they were all bound together Spiritually as part of the Body of Christ. It is important that you see the distinction between The Body/Church and the *churches*. We will discuss both ideas as we move forward.



Is there anything new to you in what you read today? Did anything stick out to you? If so, what and why?

WORDwork | Day 2**1.2 We are Called Into Fellowship With Christ.**

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. 5 For you were made rich in every way in Him, in all your speech and in every kind of knowledge 6 just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed among you 7 so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- ? 04 Based on what you see in verses 4-7, how spiritually “rich” was this church?
- ? 05 According to verse 8, what would Father God do “to the end” for this church? What will be the result of this?
- ? 06 According to verse 9, how can Paul be sure that this will take place?
- ? 07 Into what was this church called according to the end of verse 9?

Yesterday, we took a look at Paul’s greeting of the church at Corinth. Today we continue on with his “thanksgiving” for the church. These first eight verses from 1 Corinthians are some of the most powerful in the New Testament. They give us great insight into both *who we are* and *who Father God is*. They also illuminate our relationship with Him In Christ.

First, take note that Paul is giving thanks for this church, assembly of believers. Again, remember that Paul is going to have to address many difficult matters with this church. Yet he is thankful for them because he sees Father God's work *evident* among them; the "good news"—the testimony about Christ—had been confirmed among them and so their lives are secure in the truth of Christ.

The Corinthian church was also extremely blessed by Father God in many ways: speech, knowledge, and spiritual gifts. All of this is built on that word *grace*. Father God blesses not because we are deserving but because He IS gracious and generous beyond our comprehension. In Christ, this church was made spiritually rich.

Yet even though they were spiritually enriched, they were not yet *spiritually mature*. Paul adds a little sobering "punch" where he says, "...as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ is returning for His people and at that time there will be a day of judgment, *evaluation*.

Then Paul says something absolutely remarkable: "He [Father God] will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be *blameless* on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The *day* of our Lord Jesus Christ" is one of Paul's ways for referring to the time, day, when Jesus returns to gather His people and set things right. We have discussed this passage and "blamelessness" several times now. But it bears repeating: When we finally see Jesus face-to-face, we will be blameless *because* Father God is strengthening us and working in us for that very purpose!

Paul can say this and believe it with absolute confidence because, "**God is faithful.**" We hope you are seeing that the hope of our salvation is based in Father God's *faithfulness* and power, not in our own. Our Father sees us not just *as we are* but also *as we will be*. He has begun His work in us and *He will be faithful to complete it*.

Lastly, Paul says that the church was called into *fellowship* with Jesus. To have *fellowship* with someone is to share life with someone. Not only has this church been *called to be saints*, they have also been *called into fellowship with Christ*. Paul believes that the foundation for *healing* and *restoring* and *growing* this immature assembly would be **realizing** *their new identity and position in Christ*. Once this vision was cast, they would realize that their actions did not line up with who they *are* and who they had been *called to be* by their Holy Heavenly Father.

Fellowship is not a word that we should throw around lightly. The word fellowship has a basic meaning of "sharing something in common." We have fellowship with people with whom we share similar interests or spheres of relationship.

We have fellowship with our co-workers. We have fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ

As Children of Father God, we have been called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Some teachers and groups have popularly defined this idea *conditionally* in a way that does not square with the Scriptures. In this view, we have fellowship with God when we behave correctly, but when we sin we do not have fellowship with Him. *Clearly, our faith and love for God do affect our relationship with Him. Our sin and immaturity grieve Him.* But fellowship with God—as it is defined in the Scriptures—is not conditioned upon our actions. This passage from 1 Corinthians *confirms* this. Paul will address some grievous sins that these people are committing. Yet he begins by saying that they are called into fellowship with Christ and not once does he say that anyone is “out of fellowship.” Fellowship with God is a position and relationship that we have been called into by Him. Fellowship is a sharing in His life.

This is an important truth to always keep in mind. Our way of thinking is fundamentally shaped by our “in group”—*our* people. Your mind is shaped by the question, “How would my people act in this situation?” In fact, your brain is hard wired this way. Father God has called us into fellowship with His Son through His spirit so that we are now part of His people, His “in group”:

2 Corinthians 13:13

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and
the love of God and
the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Being united with the Triune God should give you incredible comfort and produce a deep sense of awe and joy about how much you are loved. But the indwelling of the presence of God in you also provides you with the enabling or power to live now in a “supernatural newness of life.” In these two things, you can see that you have been called into fellowship with Father God.

We have been called into fellowship with Christ. Since we share in Christ’s life, we also share in the life of the Trinity. As each of us share in God’s life, we are bound together by our fellowship with Him. Thus, we are to have fellowship with one another. This fellowship with one another is made real by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We will return to this powerful truth a little later.



Take a minute to **calm your mind and relax** by taking deep breaths through your nose and out through your mouth. **Give thanks** to Father for all that He has blessed you with based on what you have read today.

WORDwork | Day 3

1.3 **We Are Called With a Holy Calling.**

Today, we are going to change our routine a little bit and simply read through some passages together that focus on our **calling**. The main goal is for you to just let Father God speak to you through the Written Word.

It is important for you to realize that you have been called by God to be set apart for His holy purposes. Unfortunately, many have the false assumption that only those going into “full time ministry” are called. The Truth is, if you belong to Christ, you are called into ministry (*service to others*) and you have been gifted and equipped to play a unique and significant role in Father God’s *eternal plans*.

In the New Testament, almost all of the passages that relate to calling are addressing Father God calling us all to relationship and fellowship with Him through the saving work of Christ.

Read through the following passage and take note of the ways our calling is explained:

We are called by the grace of Christ

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who **called you by the grace of Christ** and are following a different gospel...

We are called to belong to Jesus.

Romans 1:6 You also are among them, **called to belong to Jesus Christ**.

We are called to our salvation through the Gospel

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. **14 He called you to this salvation through our gospel**, so that you may possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are called with a holy calling.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 He (Father God) is the one who saved us and called us with a **holy calling**, not based on our works but on his

own purpose and grace, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but now made visible through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. He has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!

We are called for God's purpose.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are **called according to His purpose**, 29 because those whom He foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, he also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.

We are partners in a Heavenly calling.

Hebrews 3:1-2 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, **partners in a heavenly calling**, take note of Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess, 2 who is faithful to the one who appointed him, as Moses was also in God's house.

We were called to follow the example of Jesus

1 Peter 2:20-23 For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. 21 **For to this you were called**, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving an example for you to follow in His steps**. 22 He committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly.



You may want to read through these passages again. Take note of the ideas and truths that really stand out to you.

What grabs your attention the most in these passages?
Why do you think this truth gets your attention?

WORDwork | Day 4

1.4 So, what is the Body of Christ, the Church?

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 For just as the body (a human physical body) is one and yet has many members (eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc.), and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, **so too is Christ**. 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.

12:14 For in fact the body is not a single member, but many. ... 12:20 So now there are many members, but one body. 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor in turn can the head say to the foot, “I do not need you.” ... 12:24 ... Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, 12:25 *so that there may be no division in the body*, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. 12:26 If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it.

**12:27 Now you are Christ’s body,
and each of you is a member of it.**

? 08 What analogy is being used here and what is being compared?

? 09 What has the Spirit done to us according to 12:13?

? 10 Explain 12:24-26 in your own words.

? 11 What does 12:27 mean?

1.4.1 Seeing the Big Picture: The Body of Christ

As we have already mentioned, it is important to understand the difference between The Body of Christ/The Church and the *churches* (assemblies, fellowships, groups) and *individual believers* that make up this Body. As you can see in the 1 Corinthians passage above, Paul uses the analogy of the *physical human body* in describing the way The Body of Christ works. We are all the members—arms, hands, legs, feet—that make up this body and Jesus Himself is the “Head.” As we will see, the goal is for all of us to grow up and into our *vital connection* with The Head: Christ. This happens as we each do what we are *created* and *shaped* to do in the Body of Christ. *We need one another in order to become the people that Father God desires for us to be.* We are all united together in this “One Body” by the work of the triune God—Father, Son and Spirit.

Let’s just consider a list of some of the main points that Paul makes in this passage:

1. **There is One Body** | Paul makes the point that there is *only one* Body of Christ. Jesus is the Head of His one Body; He does not have many Bodies, but One. In Ephesians 4:4 we hear, “There is One Body...” We will discuss this a little later this week. ***Every Christian, follower of Christ is a member of this One Body.***
2. **There is One Spirit** | The Body of Christ is “created” by the *baptizing work* of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit took up residence within us, we were “immersed” in the fellowship of Father-Son-Spirit. The Spirit also unites us together in One Body. In the Body of Christ there are no divisions based on ethnic or cultural distinctives; the Spirit binds us together as One.
3. **Every Member Has an indispensable Role** | As members of the Body, we all have a significant role to play. “Eyes” have a significant role just as “hands” and “feet” do. We will develop this important truth more in the next couple of weeks.
4. **Every Member Practices Mutual Ministry and Concern** | Because we are all bound together through The Spirit in The Body, we should have mutual concern for one another and mutual ministry/service to one another. Through this mutual concern and service, the World will see our “Oneness.” We will talk about the vital importance of this core truth next week.

1.4.2 Clarifying the Truth about the *churches*.

The word *church* (*ekklesia* - *ek-lay-SEE-uh*) in the New Testament refers to an assembly or collection of believers, followers of the Lord Jesus. There are three main ways or contexts in which this term is used.

A church in a specific house. In the first century there were no “church buildings” as such. These first followers of Jesus met in their homes: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ... Greet also *the church in their house*” (Romans 16:3–6; see also 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15).

A church in a specific city. When Paul addresses the church at Corinth, he is addressing the Christians *in a specific city*, the city of Corinth. The “church at Corinth was made up of all the “house churches” in that city. There were also other churches in other cities like Ephesus, Colosse, Phillipi.

A church in a specific region. “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up” (Acts 9:31). This “church” refers to all the smaller gatherings of believers in the cities in these areas.

The Church as the Body of Christ. Finally, the term church can be applied to the entire Body of Christ: “ [Jesus said] ... on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18); “the household of God ... it is the **church** of the living God, the support and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

With this in mind, It is very important for you to understand that **The Church is people** not a building. *A building can never be a church*; a church can *meet* in a building, but that building is not the true church. It is the people of God that make up the church. The church is always a reference to *people*. Think of this: we do not go to church; we, in Christ, are **called to be the Church!**

As we end for today, a few clarifying points. First, local assemblies/congregations of Christians are called *churches* and they are limited in *time* and *space*. The *Body of Christ*—the **Church**—includes all believers from the Day of Pentecost until Jesus’ appearing at the end of this age and so *transcends* time and space. (*This is a controversial subject, see the appendices for further discussion*). Some call this the Universal Church. We say that this Church/Body transcends time and space because it also includes those who are already in Heaven with Christ.

Second, the term “body” is never applied in the Scriptures to a local assembly of believers, a church; That term is reserved for the Universal Church. This reminds us that as we meet together locally, we are called up and into something much more grand and glorious.



Make sure you understand the difference between the Local churches and the Body of Christ.

Session 2

What Is Jesus' Desire and Prayer for His People?

- Core Truth:** How we relate to one another as Jesus' disciples, His followers, believers, is centrally important to His work in our World. *Through* our Oneness we give witness to the reality of Jesus' presence and power. *Through* our Oneness, the World comes to believe and know that Jesus was sent from the Father.
- To Remember:** "I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me." [John 17:23]
- Objective:** In this session, we listen to and explore one of our Lord Jesus' last prayers during His earthly work. In it, we hear both the Lord's heart and desire for His people. He prays this prayer to prepare His first disciples for the work that would be entrusted to them as they would lay the foundation for The Church, the Body of Christ. Since we have come to know Jesus through these men's work, it is important for us to understand what Jesus wanted for them because He desires those same things for us.

WORDwork | Day 1**2.1 Why Does Jesus Focus on Glory?**

This week, before we continue our discussion of the Church, we are going to focus on Jesus' prayer in John 17. This powerful passage records what Jesus prayed for His disciples just before he was betrayed by Judas and arrested. It is important to keep that context in mind as you work through this prayer. This prayer sets the context for understanding the significance of the *witness* and *work* of The Church. First read through this section of the prayer and then work through the questions.

John 17:1–5 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he looked upward to heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you— 17:2 just as you have given him authority over all humanity, so that He may give eternal life to everyone you have given Him. 17:3 Now this is eternal life —that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. 17:4 I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created.

17:6 “I have revealed your name to the men you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. 17:7 Now they understand that everything you have given me comes from you, 17:8 because I have given them the words you have given me. They accepted them and really understand that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 17:9 I am praying on behalf of them. I am not praying on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those you have given me, because they belong to you.

? 12 What is the first thing Jesus asks the Father to do?
What do you think that means?

? 13 What has The Father given to Jesus according to 17:2?
For what purpose did The Father give this to Jesus?

- ? 14 How does Jesus define Eternal Life in 17:3?
- ? 15 What does Jesus ask The Father to do in 17:5?
What do you think this means?
- ? 16 What did Jesus reveal to his men according to 17:6?
- ? 17 What did Jesus give to his men according to 17:8?
- ? 18 Who is Jesus praying for in this prayer (17:9)?

In this passage we have the longest prayer of Jesus recorded for us in the Gospels. Since Jesus prays these things in the hours before His Crucifixion, we get great insight into what were the most important things on His mind at this crucial stage in His earthly ministry.

First, Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him, so that He might glorify the Father. We have discussed that root term “glory” a couple of times at this point.

Key Definition: **To Glorify** someone is to proclaim or show why that person is worthy of praise, respect, honor. We glorify people that we delight in and have a deep relational attachment to.

There are many implications in this very basic definition. If we look to Jesus’ own example, we see that He affirmed that He did not seek His own glory, but the glory of the One who sent Him—The Father (see John 7:18). A very helpful exercise is to look up the variations of the word “glory” in John’s Gospel; that will give you more insight on Jesus’ use of the word in this prayer but it is a larger issue than what we are focusing on here.

To glorify someone also implies that we *defer* to that person or make that person first in our thoughts and actions. Jesus also touches on this:

John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.”

In His earthly life, Jesus glorified the Father. Now He prays that the Father would glorify Him. Notice that Jesus does not ask this just for His sake; He asks the Father to do this so that Jesus can in turn glorify the Father. In short, Jesus acts in way that focuses on the worthiness of the Father for praise and adoration. The Father in turn holds up Jesus in a way that magnifies His worthiness for praise and adoration. Each glorifying the other, forever.

Next Jesus states that the Father had given Him *authority* over all humanity, literally *all flesh* in the Greek text. This is a subject that we have covered before, but one that is worth being constantly reminded of: Jesus has been given all power/authority in Heaven and on Earth (see Matthew 28:18). This is why Jesus is LORD - the King, the Rule over all that exists.

Now take note of the next idea: the Father has given Jesus this authority so that He might give *eternal life* to those the Father has given Jesus - His people, you and me.

In the next statement, *eternal life* is defined for us. This may not be the definition that we would expect. Jesus does not define eternal life in terms of never ending existence, but in terms of *knowledge, personal knowledge* of the Father and the Son. As we explored in the last unit, this “deep” knowledge—an experiential, personal relationship with Father God in Christ—makes all things possible for us.

Jesus now asks the Father to “*glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created.*” You should now have a better idea of what this means. In this prayer, Jesus reveals two things about His “time” with the Father before the World was created: there was *glory* and there was *love*. We have been created out of that glory and love and now Jesus is calling us back to it.

Finally, Jesus says that He had given the “name” of the Father to His men which is most likely the 12 Apostles. A little later we will see that Jesus is also praying for all His people. First, He prays for the 12 men given to Him by the Father to be His witnesses and representatives after His ascension back to Heaven. These are the men that Jesus had entrusted with His words, His teaching that He Himself had received from the Father. These men would lay the foundation of the Church—the Body of Christ—that would be built on the work and teaching of Jesus.

It is interesting to note that Jesus says specifically that He is not praying for the “world” but only for the people given to Him by the Father. The “world” is a

shorthand way to refer to everyone and everything that is opposed to the One True God. It is not that Jesus is unconcerned with the World; as we know these are the people He came save. He even affirms that His people have been chosen “out of the world” (John 15:19).

Instead, if you consider the rest of the context and what Jesus is going to pray next, He knows that His (and the Father’s) purposes will now be worked out and carried on by His people. From this point on, *the only way* that the World will come to know Jesus is *through* His people. For this reason, in this prayer, Jesus focuses on His people’s security and Oneness. We will see this in the rest of this prayer.



What caught your attention in today’s reading?
Why did it do so?

WORDwork | Day 2**2.2 What Is Oneness?**

John 17:10 [Jesus praying] Everything I have belongs to you, and everything you have belongs to me, and I have been glorified by them. 17:11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them safe in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one.

17:12 When I was with them I kept them safe and watched over them in your name that you have given me. Not one of them was lost except the one destined for destruction, so that the Scripture could be fulfilled.

17:13 But now I am coming to you, and I am saying these things in the world, so they may experience my joy completed in themselves. 17:14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17:15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them safe from the evil one. 17:16 They do not belong to the world just as I do not belong to the world. 17:17 Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth. 17:18 Just as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. 17:19 And I set myself apart on their behalf, so that they too may be truly set apart.

- ? 19 What does Jesus pray for his disciples in 17:11?
- ? 20 What did Jesus do for his disciples according to 17:12?
- ? 21 Why is Jesus praying this prayer in front of his disciples according to 17:13?
- ? 22 What did Jesus give His disciples and what was the result according to 17:14?

? 23 What does Jesus ask for his disciples in 17:17?

? 24 What did Jesus do for His disciples according to 17:19?

As you should see clearly by now, Jesus and the Father and the Spirit relate as One. Although they have different *roles* in terms of their “responsibilities” they all work together to accomplish a singular vision. It has often been simply (maybe over-simply) as the Father plans, the Son Jesus implements the plan, the Spirit empowers and administrates. We see this in the fact that it is the Son who takes on Human flesh and comes into the world to give His life as a ransom for sin, not the Father or the Spirit. This was to accomplish the Father’s desire/will. As Jesus returns to Heaven, He sends the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His people. Even though they are working out different roles, they are completely One—unified—in their love and purpose. This will be a foundationally important truth as we move forward.

Jesus specifically asks the Father to keep his people *safe* as He returns to the Father. Just as the world hated Jesus, so too it will hate those who follow Him and especially those who are spreading His Good News. Notice that Jesus says “everything I have...”—the context makes it clear that the “everything” He has is His people. Jesus asks the Father to keep His people safe for a key purpose: so that they may be *one* as Jesus and the Father are *one*. We need to understand clearly what this means.

Earlier in John’s Gospel, the religious leaders had pointedly asked Jesus to tell them whether or not He was indeed the Messiah. Jesus responds,

John 10:25–30 “I told you and you do not believe. The deeds I do in my Father’s name testify about me. 26 But you refuse to believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them from my Father’s hand. 30 **The Father and I are one.**”

In this passage, we see clearly that the purposes and goals of Jesus and the Father are the same: *to protect their people, forever*. Jesus gives us more context for this truth in other statements:

John 12:44–46 And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me. **And whoever sees me sees Him who sent me.** I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

Here Jesus makes the point that to “see” Him is to “see” the One who sent Him: The Father. All that Jesus does is rooted in the thoughts and desires of the Father. They are unified, they are one in *purpose*.

A little later, at the end of Jesus time with the 12, He tells them that He will be going away, going back to the Father in Heaven. Thomas gives Jesus the opportunity to make one of His more “famous” statements:

John 14:5–9 Thomas said, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 **If you have known me, you will know my Father too.** And from now on you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content.” 9 Jesus replied, “Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? **The person who has seen me has seen the Father!** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

The Oneness of the Father, Son and Spirit forms the foundation and example of what the Father and Jesus desire for us as their people: that we be One, completely united in *mind* and *purpose*. We will see this developed in more detail as we move along.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had kept the 12 safe and had watched over them as a Shepherd. The only one that was “lost” was Judas the betrayer, but even this was necessary in the plan of God. As Jesus is returning to the Father, He knows that He is leaving His people in the territory of the enemy. In this section of the prayer, He is focusing on the care and protection of His people.

Notice now, that Jesus is praying this prayer out loud, in the presence of the 12. That is what He means in verse 3 where He says He is saying these things in the world. Jesus is praying all these things so that His people may have His *joy completed in themselves*. We are going to talk about joy a little later in more detail. For now, simply understand that *joy* is the key to all our deep personal relationships and attachments. Jesus endured the Cross for the “joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). In the context of this prayer, Jesus had just taught the men what they would need to know so that “my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). We will return to these truths a little later.

During His earthly work, Jesus gave His Father's word to His people and now He would *entrusting* it to the 12. However, as we have seen and heard several times now, the World *rejects* and *hates* the truth. People hate and reject truth for the sake of whatever it is they love more than the Truth. Jesus knew this well. The "World" not only rejects and hates the Truth, but also Jesus and His followers who proclaim that Truth.

As you can see in verse 15, Jesus links the world with the Evil One—the Devil, Satan. The "World" is the domain of his influence. Even though Jesus addressed this issue several times, John would give the most powerful statement of this truth in his first letter:

1 John 5:19 We know that we are from God,
and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Jesus and his people do not "belong" to this world. Jesus is from "above" and His people have been born from "above" (remember Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3?) Just as the World was hostile to Jesus, so it will be for His people. And so Jesus prays for the safety and care of His people in this enemy territory.

In 17:17 Jesus goes on to ask that His people be "set apart" in the Truth, the Father's Word. The word that Jesus uses here is often translated as "*sanctify*." As we discussed earlier, to "sanctify" something or someone is to *set them apart* for Father God's purposes. When something is "sanctified" or "set apart" it is made *holy*.

In verse 19, Jesus affirms that He set Himself apart so that His people could be *set apart*. In the context, Jesus is most likely referring to the reality that all that He had done was not according to the *way* of the World, but the *way* of the Father. Jesus was not like any so called "savior" or "messiah" that had come before Him or after Him. He is different, He is set apart through His unique service and ultimately His self-sacrifice. He is set apart because He IS TRUTH.

Because of all that Jesus has done and is doing, His people are truly *set apart*. In this context, Jesus is focusing on the 12—the men that He choose to be *witnesses* to all that He taught and did and then send them to the World. Yet as we will see, as *the people of Jesus* we too are called to give witness to the Truth and Jesus is still sending His people out with His Gospel.



Can you explain what "Oneness" is and why it is central to Jesus relationship to the Father? If not, work through this reading again.

WORDwork | Day 3**2.3 Why Does Jesus Pray for Oneness?**

John 17:20 “I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, 17:21 that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. 17:22 The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one— 17:23 I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me.

- ? 25 Who is Jesus praying for according to 17:20?
- ? 26 What does Jesus pray for all his people according to 17:21?
- ? 27 According to 17:21, why is it important that Jesus’ people be “one”?
- ? 28 What has Jesus given to His people according to 17:22?
- ? 29 What is Jesus request in 17:23?
What is the purpose or desired result of this request?

Yesterday, we took note of the fact that in this prayer, Jesus is focusing on The 12, the men that He choose to be His *apostles*. We are going to talk about the apostles in more detail a little later. For now, know that the term *apostle* is built on the root term “to send out.” The 12 were set apart by Jesus to take His message, His Gospel, beyond the borders of Israel, even to the remotest parts of the Earth.

As they did this, the goal would be to “make *disciples* from all nations” (Matthew 28:16-20). We have been discussing this goal all throughout MilktoMeat and we will focus on it a little more closely in this last unit.

Take note of what Jesus says here: He is not **ONLY** praying for the 12, but also for all those who would believe in Jesus *through* their testimony. That means everyone who would trust Jesus; that means that Jesus is praying for you and me in this prayer! Jesus had the whole future of His work carried forward in the Church in mind as He prayed these words.

Jesus goes on to pray something very specific now: *that they will be one just and He and the Father are one*. This is one of the most important prayers ever prayed and also gives us great insight *what* Jesus *desires* for all of us as His people and *why* He desires these things.

First of all, let's focus on **why** Jesus is asking this; focus on this:

John 17: 21-23 ... so that the world will **believe** that you sent me.
... 17:23 ... so that the world will **know** that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me.

Why does Jesus want His people to be “one”? ***So that the World will believe and know that He was sent by the Father!*** Think about the significance of that statement. The way we relate to one another as followers of Jesus speaks to the World. The way we relate to one another as followers of Jesus gives the final witness and evidence of Jesus' work in the world. “Oneness” is critically important to the witness of Jesus people to the outside world.

So what is “oneness” and how do we achieve it?

Jesus gives us insight into what “oneness” is right in this passage:

John 17:21-23 ... just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, 17:22 The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one— 17:23 I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, ...

First of all, Jesus says that the Father is *in* Him and He is *in* the Father. Here is the “in” language again that we have touched on many times now. In John's Gospel, there are several passages that give us more insight into what this means:

John 14:10–11 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my

own authority, **but the Father who dwells in me does His works.**

11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Simply stated, Jesus and the Father are *inseparable*. Jesus' words are the Father's words. Jesus' works are the Father's works. Wherever Jesus is, the Father is there also. They are completely united in *thought* and *action* because they are always present "in" one another. This pushes into some of the mystery of the Trinity, but I think you can see the point that Jesus is making.

So, Jesus wants us to *visualize* the reality that He is *in* the Father, the Father is *in* Him, we are *in* Christ and the Father, and Christ is *in* us. *Try to draw that out using circles.* The main point is this: our life—all that we *are* and *do*—is inseparably linked, attached, connected to the Father and Jesus. *This changes the way we think about everything.*

So Jesus desires that we, his followers, be one. We need to see that we are inseparably attached to *one another* in Christ. Ultimately, Jesus' message and example calls us to self-sacrificial love. If we are following Jesus' example, sharing in His *mindset* and so thinking about and caring for others and one another as Jesus Himself does (see Philippians 2:1-11), then we will be validating the reality of Jesus words and work. Francis Schaeffer called this love and unity/oneness of Christians the "final apologetic." As Jesus prays here, it is through our *oneness* that the world will come to believe and know that He was sent from the Father.

In 17:22, Jesus prays something else that gives more insight: "The **glory** you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one..." Although exactly what Jesus' means by this is debated, we can first go back to our definitions of these terms. Glory is first and foremost the Lord God's profound *excellence, goodness* and *beauty revealed* to us. And as we have already heard, it is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Here, Jesus is emphasizing the **revelation** aspect of this larger idea. The Father has *revealed* Jesus the Son as worthy of adoration and praise. Now Jesus has *revealed* this to His disciples. As we all *focus* on this *revelation* in and about Jesus, our minds and hearts are all looking in the same direction. This is the foundation that our "oneness" is built on.



Think about all that we have discussed today. Do you understand why Oneness is so important for the Church? Do you see Oneness displayed in the church or group of Christians you associate with?

WORDwork | Day 4

2.4 What Does Jesus Desire for His People?

John 17:24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they can see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world . 17:25 Righteous Father, even if the world does not know you, I know you, and these men know that you sent me. 17:26 I made known your name to them, and I will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them, and I may be in them.”

18:1 When he had said these things, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley. There was an orchard there, and he and his disciples went into it.

? 30 What does Jesus ask for His people in 17:24?

? 31 What did Jesus make know to His disciples according to 17:25?

? 32 What does Jesus pray to be “in” His disciples according to 17:26?

As you have probably picked up by now, “glory” is a key word in this prayer. It is also a key word in the Gospel of John. You might set aside some time to read through this Gospel and mark every time the word forms of “glory” show up and see what you can learn.

Earlier, we defined what it means to “glorify” someone. Now we want to focus the idea of glory one more time. As we discussed earlier, “Glory” is a big idea in the Bible. If we start with the Lord God, *glory* is used to describe His very essence, His luminous and radiant excellence, perfection and beauty that is profoundly *remarkable*. The Rabbis called this aspect of God’s glory His *shechinah*—*His visible presence*). Glory also speaks about God’s holiness and splendor as the source of all that is true, good and beautiful.

Key Definition: Glory is **radiant**
(it gives “light” and is meant to be seen,
it is a form of the Lord God’s *revelation*)
beauty (captivating)
that is **profound** (heavy, deep),
inexhaustible (we never tire of thinking about it) and
remarkable (worth taking about, praise worthy)

Notice: Jesus wants His people to **see** the glory the Father had given Him before the creation of the world. He doesn’t say, “I want them to *hear about* my glory...”, He says **see** the glory. Ultimately, glory is something to be *seen*. Remember again, John began His Gospel with the statement, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we *have seen* His glory...”

During his earthly work, Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mountain and there Jesus was *transformed* before them and “His face shone like the sun” (see Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36). Moses and Elijah also appeared and spoke with Jesus. This is often referred to as the “transfiguration of Christ.”

Many years, later John was called by Jesus to receive and record the visions of the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter, John sees Jesus “glorified”:

Revelation 1:13–16 ... in the midst of the lampstands was one like a son of man. He was dressed in a robe extending down to his feet and he wore a wide golden belt around his chest. 14 His head and hair were as white as wool, even as white as snow, and his eyes were like a fiery flame. 15 His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp double-edged sword extended out of his mouth. **His face shone like the sun shining at full strength.**

I find it very fascinating that John, who was present at the Transfiguration and would be commissioned to write Revelation, is the gospel writer who focuses most on “Jesus glory.”

Now what is the point of all this? Jesus desires that we see Him as He is in all His excellent *splendor* and *magnificence*. Notice also that this *glory* was given to Jesus by Father *because* of His love for Jesus. Love and glory are inseparable. Those that we love become glorious to us. This is rooted in the nature of the Lord God Himself. What we have been given now “in Christ” is only a glimpse of the good things to come. Jesus is anticipating the time when we will be with Him, see Him as He truly is and all things are as they should be.

Jesus ends His prayer by linking together *knowing* the Father with *experiencing* the love of the Father in Jesus. The World does not know the Father because it has rejected Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus knows the Father and has made His “name” known to His disciples.

In the Scriptures and in the culture of Jesus’ times, names *meant* something. Jesus’ name—Yeshua, in Hebrew—means “the Lord saves.” Simon Peter was called “Cephas” by Jesus which means “rock.” When at the burning bush, Moses asks the LORD for His name and the Lord tells him it is “YHWH”—I AM that I AM. The significance of this name is that YHWH *is* and *will be* everything His people will need. Names say something about the *nature* and *character* of the person they belong to.

Jesus makes known the name of the Father to His disciples by revealing the *true nature* of the Father:

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The Only One, himself God, [Jesus] who is in closest fellowship with the Father, **has made God known.**

It is interesting that the root of the term translated “to make known” here is literally the one we get the term *exegete* or *exegesis* from. This means to make something fully known and understandable by trustworthy *explanation*. Jesus has made the Father fully known in His work because He and the Father are one. To see Jesus is to see the Father.

Jesus continues to work *in* and *through* His people to make the reality of the Father’s excellence known. Through this *experiential* knowledge, the love that the Father has for Jesus is present in us. Earlier in this prayer Jesus said,

John 17:23 I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and **you have loved them just as you have loved me.**

Let that catch your attention: **The Father loves us in the same way He love Jesus!** That is a transforming truth. Jesus highlights this truth as He closes this prayer with, “**so that the love you have loved me with may be in them, and I may be in them.**” The Lord Jesus is always present with us through the power of the Holy Spirit. He *is* and *will be* all that we need. This all comes to us through the love of the Father.



Take a few minutes and think about this reality: *Father God loves us just as He love His One Unique Son Jesus.* Give thanks throughout the day for this incredible truth.

Session 3

What is The VISION and MISSION of The Church?

- Core Truth:** Father God has given us a Vision of The Kingdom defining all reality in the future. He has also entrusted us—the Church, the Body of Christ—with the work of “making disciples from all nations.” In the Church, He is transforming us to be like His One Unique Son—our Lord Jesus—through the work of the Holy Spirit. Each of us who are In Christ has been shaped and gifted to play a key role in this work.
- To Remember:** “And God put all things under Christ’s feet, and gave Him to the church as head over all things. Now **The Church is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. [Ephesians 1:22–23]
- Objective:** In this session, we will look at the Big Picture that will overview and outline our journey for the rest of this study. We want to see and have some idea of who we are and where Father God is leading us as we follow Christ in the Mission He has given us as the Church, the Body of Christ.

WORDwork | Day 1

3.1 **What is the Vision that Defines The Church?**

This week, we are going to take a look at the “big picture” of our Vision and Mission as Christ’s people. In order to do that, we will be asking and answering some key questions. To get the larger view of this process, take a look at the following chart and study it for a few minutes.

V	I S I O N						N
	M	I	S	S	I	O	
1. Who are we?	2. Why are we here?	5. How will we get to where we are heading?			3. Where are we headed?		4. What will be the outcome?
Definition >	Purpose >	Intention >		Means >		Goal (s) >	Results
	Purpose is always related to the Goal(s) and they work together to define one another.						
TEST: Belief > Values > Behavior							

One of the *principles* that shapes the way we organize MilktoMeat is: “*Teach the Truth in the right order, at the right time.*” The chart above seeks to clarify that principle. Over the course of this week, we are going to explore each of these questions and the answers that we give will serve as the foundation for the following weeks of our study.

We have already addressed many of these questions on the *individual, personal level* throughout MilktoMeat. Now we will focus on who these questions are answered on the *interpersonal, communal level*—seeing things through our vision as Christ’s *people*.

The two over-arching ideas here are **Vision** and **Mission**. The Scriptures give us a Vision for reality by answering the 5 key questions in this chart. Vision is vitally important to anything we do. We need to see both *where we have come from* and *where we are heading*. Specifically for us, we need to have a clear view of

what things would look like if our prayer, “*Father... let your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*” was answered and so defined reality.

Once we have Vision shaped by the Truth, we can now focus on our **Mission**: *What has Father God given us to do in Christ through the Holy Spirit?* What is our purpose as The Church, the Body of Christ? Where are we headed as Christ’s people? Do we intend to follow Jesus as He leads us? What means do we have to accomplish these goals? These are the types of questions we will be dealing with.

Now take note of the **order** of the questions in the middle of the chart. Notice they are lined out 1, 2, **5**, 3, 4. We have numbered them this way because when we take a look at the “Big Picture” of anything, it is important understand the *logical order* of these things, not just the *sequential order*. Once we ask and answer the questions of *Who are we?* and *Why are we here?*, there is the temptation to immediately start *doing something*. So if we say that we are here to know and serve God and one another, we might want to immediately start doing something that would accomplish those goals.

Before we do anything, however, we must answer the *real* third question and that is *Where are we heading?* This is the question of **goals**. In our case, these are the goals that our Heavenly Father has set for us as His beloved children In Christ. These goals are the ones that are shaped by the Vision and Mission that Jesus has given to us.

Once we know what these goals are, we will then ask, “What **means** (tools) has our Father given to us to achieve these goals?” and “Do we really **intend** to do these things in the Way that our Father has instructed us to do them?” We want to be sure that we are doing the things that are pleasing to the Father in Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

In the final analysis, we can test to see if we are truly living in our Vision and Mission by asking the question, “*Are we practicing what we say we believe?*” Just as Jesus told us, “A tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:44), so we can see that our behavior—*what we do*—reveals what we truly **value** and **believe**.

With that “big picture” in mind, let’s start working through these questions.



Before you move ahead take a minute or two and think about how you might answer these questions based on what you know now. Think about how you would answer them in the context of The Church, The Body of Christ.

3.1.1 Who Are We? [DEFINITION]

As we begin, keep in mind that there are two main ways to think about and answer these questions: 1) the personal, individual identity level, or 2) the interpersonal, communal level. We have already addressed many of these questions on the personal, individual identity level. Even then, we saw how are relationships with others define and shape who we are and how we think about ourselves.

So now, let's build on all that we have discussed before and think about these questions and answers in the way they shape our view of ourselves together "In Christ." Take a look at the following passages:

Matthew 16:18 [Jesus said] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. {ESV}

Acts 20:28 [Paul speaking to the Elders at Ephesus] "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all **the flock**, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for **the church of God**, which he obtained with His own blood. {ESV}

1 Timothy 3:14–15 [Paul writing to Timothy, his disciple] I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in **the household of God**, which is **the church of the living God, pillar and buttress of the truth**.

Ephesians 1:22–23 And God put all things under Christ's feet, and gave Him to the church as head over all things. 23 Now **the church is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Romans 12:4–5 4 For just as in **one body** we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, 5 so **we who are many are one body in Christ**, and individually we are members who belong to one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13, 27 For just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, so too is Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into

one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit...

Now **you are Christ's body**, and each of you is a member of it.

These passages form the foundation for the rest of our discussions. We are not going to dig too deeply into the details now, instead just take some notes on the “big ideas.”

The first mention of the “church” comes from Jesus himself. In the Matthew 16 passage, the Lord says that He would build *His church*. The word that He chooses here “church” is the term *ekklesia* (ek-lay-SEE-ah). This term was understood in that time as an assembly or congregation of people with a clearly defined “membership.” In Jesus’ day, it was most often used to refer to citizens of a particular city-state. In the New Testament, the *ekklesia*—the church—is the community of Christ, the people that belong to Him and unite in His Name. Building this Church is the work that Christ is doing *in* and *through* us now.

In Acts 20, Paul refers to the Church as a “flock” which probably comes out of Jesus’ teaching that He is the Good Shepherd and His people are His sheep, His flock (see John 10:1-30). In couple of passages in Paul’s letters, the Church is identified as the “church of God” or “household of God”. In Paul’s writings, when he simply refers to “God” he most often has Father God in mind. The Church belongs to the One True God. As such, it is the pillar and buttress (*support*) of the Truth. That is a centrally important truth that we will return to.

In those remaining passages, we get a clear description of the Church as Christ’s *body*. In Ephesians 1:23, Paul states this clearly: “**the Church is His [Christ’s] body**.” Jesus is intimately, vitally connected to His people. This passage also gives us insight into the purpose of the Church: “*the fullness of Him who fills all in all*.” The Church is here to express the full reality of who Jesus is! We are individually designed, called and gifted to live and work together to show who Jesus is to the world!

Finally, you can see the “we who are many are one” idea in the remaining passages. In order for the world to see the many *facets* of Jesus’ glory, every member of His body is necessary and united through the work of the Holy Spirit. These are all truths that we will continue to discuss and build upon.



Thinking about all we have discussed today, is there anything new that cause you to think about these things in a new or different way?

WORDwork | Day 2**3.1.2 Why are we here? [PURPOSE]**

Matthew 28:18–20 Then Jesus came up and said to them (The Eleven Apostles), “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 28:20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

? 33 What does Jesus say has been given to Him in verse 18?
What is the significance of this truth?

? 34 What does Jesus tell Apostles to do in verse 19?

? 35 How are they to accomplish their mission according to verses 19-20?

After His resurrection and just before His return to Heaven, Jesus gave the 11 Apostles (*Judas had already hung himself*) these final instructions. This passage is traditionally called *The Great Commission*. Here, at the end of His earthly work, Jesus is commissioning His men to carry His message out to the world. This **mission** is the very thing that Jesus had been preparing them for all the time He was with them. It is also this mission that is in view as Jesus prays for His people in His prayer that we studied last week.

First, notice that Jesus has been given *all authority* in Heaven and on Earth. This reality lays the foundation for **The Kingdom** message that these men would now proclaim: Christ has Died. Christ has Risen. Christ will come Again! Jesus is now the Head of all things and history is moving toward the arrival and establishment of His Kingdom. Everyone needs to know this.

Secondly, notice that Jesus instructs these men to make *disciples* from all nations. Jesus was sent to Israel first to proclaim that the promises given to their forefathers had been fulfilled in Him. As He did this, He trained *disciples*—stu-

dents, apprentices—in His Way of Life. Jesus now sends His people out into the whole world to make disciples of all nations. The scope of this mission is enormous.

Jesus goes on to tell these first disciples that they would make disciples by 1) baptizing them (identifying them with the Father, Son and Spirit) and 2) teaching them to obey, or keep everything that Jesus had taught them, and 3) **remembering** that Jesus would always be present with them. The fact that Jesus promises to be with His disciples “even to the end of the age” shows that this mission is not something that would be accomplished in a few years. It is a mission that would take an *age*. As we read these words of Jesus over 2000 years later, we have a much better perspective on the grand nature of this mission.

Everything in the New Testament after the Gospels is built on this foundational *commission* by Jesus. In the Book of Acts, Luke (a traveling companion of Paul and the author of the Gospel *Luke*) traces the history of the early Church as it is built on the foundation of the Jesus’ work and the Apostles’ witness. There we see how the Great Commission is worked out through the guidance of the Holy Spirit as Jesus’ Apostles go out.

At the beginning Acts, the Apostles ask Jesus a question and get an interesting answer:

Acts 1:6–8 So when they (The Apostles) had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”

7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and **you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Because the Apostles knew that the Lord had promised to restore Israel’s kingdom in power in the “last days,” they now ask Jesus if this is what would come next. If you read through the Gospels, you will see that there is an expectation that Jesus as the Promised Messiah, the Son of David, would reveal Himself in power and glory and raise Israel up among all other nations. What Jesus says here in Acts 1, in a roundabout way, is “*No, it is not time for that; we have work to do first.*”

Before the “end of the age”, the Apostles would be witnesses of/for Jesus to *the ends of the earth*. So now the mission of Jesus’ people is not just for an age but also to the very *ends* (the remotest parts) of the earth. This is a mission that no one person can accomplish. It is a mission that only a *multi-generational, multi-*

national group of people would be able to accomplish. This is the *seed idea* from which the Church, the Body of Christ, the Household of God would grow.

In the letters of the New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul, we see the Great Commission developed and worked out as new revelation is given and as the Holy Spirit leads the Apostles in the early missionary work. By the time Paul writes the Letter to the Ephesians (the highest writing on the Church in the New Testament), it is clear that the reality of the Church would be defined by the distinctly gifted, diverse people that are necessary to represent the fullness of Christ's ministry:

Ephesians 4:7–13 But **to each one of us grace was given** according to the measure of Christ's gift... 11 And **he Himself gave some as** apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 **to equip** the saints for the work of ministry, that is, **to build 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—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature.

We are going to spend the majority of this unit unpacking this passage in Ephesians. For now, understand that The Great Commission and its development in the rest of the New Testament defines the Purpose and Goals of the Church.



Was there anything new for you in the reading today or did you think about something in a different way? If so, what and why is it significant?

WORDwork | Day 3

3.1.3 Where are we headed? [Goals]

John 3:16–17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.** {ESV}

1 Timothy 2:1–4 First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, 2 even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior, 4 **since He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow concerning His promise [to return], as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because **He does not wish (desire) for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

? 36 What do the passages above tell us about Father God’s desires for humanity?

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying:
“The kingdom of the world
has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and He will reign for ever and ever.”

? 37 What does this passage tell us about the future?

It is important to root all that we are discussing about goals and outcomes in the *desires* and *will* of the Lord God for us. In the passages above, it is clear that the

LORD desires for all people to come to a knowledge of the truth, to repent (*turn from their old ways*) and so be saved. *Jesus was sent for this very purpose, not to condemn us, but to save us!!!*

Now we know that even though this is what Father God desires, in the end, some will be lost. This gets into some very heavy and deep discussions about *desires* and *will* that is outside the scope of what we are developing here. Suffice it to say that in order to accomplish His larger, excellent goals some things that God desires are not fulfilled in order for other more significant things to be done. To illustrate: as a father, I desire that my teenage daughters stay at home and never drive away in the car by themselves. Yet, I allow this to happen because it is essential to their growth. Even though that is not a perfect comparison, I think you understand the point.

Nevertheless, Father God desires for all humanity—His creation that bears His image and likeness—to be saved. As we place this in the context of our Vision and Mission as the Church, we can see that we are now the “instrument,” *the means* that Father God is using to proclaim the saving work of Christ to the world through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Body of Christ is shaped by a vision of all the kingdoms of this world becoming the Kingdom of Christ (see Revelation 11:15). We are motivated now by a mission to take the Gospel to the *whole world*, especially those who have never heard. This “Apostolic Impulse” (as we will soon discuss) is the catalyst for all other activities and works. We have seen the glory of Christ. We have tasted of His goodness. We want to follow Him as He leads us out, to all those who do not know Him and proclaim His glory so that they can taste His goodness and come to accept Him as The Truth. That is part of the “big picture” answer to this question about goals.

This is why Paul makes this statement:

Colossians 1:27–28 God wanted to make known among the Gentiles [Nations] the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim Him [Christ], **warning** and **teaching** everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. {HCSB}

We have discussed this passage before and won’t repeat what we have already said here. Notice that Paul says he proclaims Christ **warning** and **teaching** everyone. Because the Kingdom of Christ is coming and only those who have trusted in Christ will be welcomed there, people need to be warned about this reality. There is no Savior other than Jesus. Paul (and the other Apostles) were

compelled by their love for Christ to proclaim Him and bear witness about Him to all people, especially those who had never heard about Him:

2 Corinthians 5:11–21 Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people, ... 14 For **the love of Christ controls us**, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. ... 20 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!" 21 God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.

On the personal, individual level within the Body of Christ, Father God has set us apart to be *conformed* to the likeness of His Son. He desires for us to be like Jesus in our thoughts, desires, emotions and actions! Remember this:

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, 29 because those whom He foreknew **He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

We have already discussed many aspects of this reality and will say a few more things in the lessons to come.

3.1.4 What are the Outcomes? [Results]

In the big picture of things, one day the Kingdom of Christ will arrive. And as we have seen, not everyone will desire to be part of that Kingdom and so will not be welcomed there. Jesus warned about this reality (see Matthew 5:29-30, 25:31-46), Paul warned about this reality (see 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12), and the Book of Revelation clearly presents this fact (see Revelation 20:11-15).

It is part of our Mission to warn people about the eternal consequences of their beliefs and actions in the here and now. We are simply *called to faithful* to the work that Father God has entrusted to us (see 1 Corinthians 4:1-5). Ultimately, we simply trust Him to work in everyone and everything to bring it all together in His good and glorious conclusions in Christ. We will say more about this in the final lessons.



Was there anything new for you in the reading today or did you think about something in a different way? If so, what and why is it significant?

WORDwork | Day 4**3.1.5 How will we get there? [Intention and Means]**

Hebrews 10:23–25 And let us hold unwaveringly to the hope that we confess, for the one who made the promise is trustworthy. **24 And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works,** **25** not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near.

? 38 What does this author of Hebrews encourage his audience to do in this passage?

Philippians 2:12–16 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out yall’s salvation with “fear and trembling” **13 for God is empowering in you both the desire and the empowerment for His good pleasure.**

4 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, **15** so that you may be blameless and pure—children of God without blemish—though you live in a crooked and mislead generation, in which you shine as lights in the world **16** by holding on to the word of life so that on the day of Christ I will have a reason to boast that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. {Our “Southern” Translation}

? 39 What does Paul say the Philippians have “always” done?

? 40 What does he encourage them to continue to do?

? 41 What is God doing in them?

? 42 What will be the outcome if the Philippians listen to Paul?

There is a difference between simply hearing and *listening*. There is a huge difference between hearing and *doing*. James instructs us to “... be **doers of the Word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Now we get into one of the more sticky areas of faith: are we truly following our Master as He leads us.

All through history, from the very beginning, we have been tempted to simply *hear* the Word of the Lord and not act on it. In the context of our present discussion, once we have seen the VISION and understand our MISSION we reach the critical point and question: “*Will we intend to do what Father God calls to?*”

In the passages from Hebrews and Philippians, there is the assumption that the people who are being addressed will *intend*—*want*—to do the things that they are encouraged to do. Intention to act is critical. But if we never intend to do what is asked of us, there is no use talking about *means*—how will we do what we have been called to do.

But if we intend to follow Christ as He leads us, then there are things we can do to cooperate with Him in His work. In the Hebrews passage, the author says, “**let us** hold unwaveringly to the hope we confess... **let us** take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works...” Again, here is the assumption that his audience *will want* to do these things.

The Philippians passage is very instructive. First, Paul commends the church at Philippi for their *obedience*: hearing and doing the Word. So, this group has already shown that they are willing and intend to do what the Lord instructs. Then Paul develops some very important ideas that touches on *intention* and *means*. Let’s break the first part of it down into four main observations and points to remember:

1. **We work together** | We obey, we submit to God. The “you” in this passage is plural, so we have translated it as “yall” to make the point. We are never alone in our growth. We work with other brothers and sisters and together with Father God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.
2. **We work “out” not “for”** | We are not working “for” salvation—we already have this *secure in Christ*. We are working “out”—*realizing* (making real) all the benefits and responsibilities of the salvation *that we already have*.

3. **God is giving us both desire and power** | Father God is giving—“empowering” or “working”—in us the two main things that we need: **desire/will** and the **power** to do what is pleasing to Him. If you look at other translations of verse 13, they will read something like, “for it is God who **works** in you, both to will and to **work** for His good pleasure...” The term that is translated “work” here means “to cause something to be.” In our translation, we have used the term “empowering” which may be over translating this term, but it gets the point across: Father God is working in us and that is what enables/empowers us to do what is pleasing to Him. Father God is also causing/enabling/empowering our *desire*. This is a massive idea that we have touched on in the past as we have talked about His grace. The main point here is that Father God’s work in us gives us all that we need to be pleasing to Him!
4. **God is pleased to do this all for us** | Finally God is pleased to empower us and give us the desire to be pleasing to him.

In the second part of that passage, Paul goes on to exhort them and us to do things without grumbling and complaining so that we will be blameless and pure, *children of God without blemish*. This ties back into our discussions about our identity IN Christ. As we are growing spiritually mature, we are learning to live out more and more of who we are in Christ. We are also learning to follow our Master Jesus as He leads us in humility and selflessness.

So what are the **means** that Father God has given us to accomplish our Mission as the Church? We will spend the rest of this study answering that questions. We have, in fact, been given a great number of means and motivations to do the work that the Lord has entrusted to us. As we will see, most of these means revolve around the Holy Spirit, His gifts to Christ’s people, and the people that have been called and equipped to accomplish Christ’s mission.

3.2 **What is the Mission of the Church?**

So now that we have briefly discussed the Purpose, Goals, Intention and Means that are revealed about the Church, we can clarify the *definition* and *mission* of the Church. In terms of our *purpose*, two observations are important:

1. **Make Disciples** | It is clear that we have been entrusted with the task of “making disciples from all nations.” As this mandate is developed in the New Testament, a second goal is developed and expanded:

2. **Grow Disciples to Spiritual Maturity** | As we have seen in so many of the passages throughout MilktoMeat, neither Jesus nor the Apostles were satisfied with men and women simply hearing the truth of the Gospel. *That is important.* But for those who have trusted Jesus through the Gospel, we are called to grow in Christ to become like Him, our Master Teacher. This is growing in spiritual maturity.

With those two points in mind, you can see that the Mission of the Church is to take the Message of Christ to all the people groups of the world, call people to faith in Christ, and then grow them to maturity in Christ. As the Church, the Body of Christ, you and I have been called into this mission. As we will see, we each have a unique and significant role to play based on who we are and how we have been gifted.



How has this weeks session helped you understand the Vision and Mission of the Church?



At this point, pray, asking, “Father, how do I fit into your plans and purposes and the mission you have entrusted to the Church?” Set your mind to be aware of answers you will hear as you continue through this study and talk with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Session 4

How Do We Pursue Our Mission As The Church?

- Core Truth:** We exist now to display the Wisdom of Father God in all of His purposes and plans for us. His wisdom is displayed in the Grace that He has granted to us, equipping us and empowering us to work together, with our many different gifts, to display the Oneness that characterizes His love and holiness.
- To Remember:** “The purpose of this enlightenment (the proclaiming of the Gospel) is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms.” [Ephesians 3:10]
- Objective:** In this session, we want to begin to bring together all that we have been learning together to focus on our mission here on Earth. Simply stated, we have been called up into The Story that is much larger than us. We are here to reveal both the “multifaceted wisdom” (Ephesians 3:10) and the “multifaceted grace” (1 Peter 4:10) of Father God in the ways that we work together in the Church, the Body of Christ.

WORDwork | Day 1

4.1 How Should We Live In Our Calling?

Ephesians 4:1–7 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 4:3 eager to maintain the unity/oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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

4:7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ...

- ? 43 In verse 1, what are exhorted to do?
What is our "calling with which we have been called"?
- ? 44 How does 4:2 describe the way we should "walk"?
- ? 45 What should be the outcome of this "walk" according to 4:3?
- ? 46 Do you see any pattern in 4:4 - 4:5?
How is God represented in this verse?

4.1.1 We Should Live in a Way Worthy of our Calling.

It is important for you to realize that you have been called by Father God to be set apart for His purposes. Many people think that only those going to be preachers or missionaries are *called* by God. As we have already heard, most all of the

passages that relate to calling in the New Testament are addressing Father God calling us all to relationship and fellowship with Him through the saving work of Christ. We are **called by the grace of Christ** (Galatians 1:6), we are **called to salvation** (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), we are called with a **holy calling** based in God's purposes for us (2 Timothy 1:9-10), we have been **called to belong** to Jesus (Romans 1:6), we are **called for Father God's purposes** (Romans 8:28-30), we are **partners in a heavenly calling** (Hebrews 3:1-2), and we were **called to follow the example** of Jesus (1 Peter 2:20-23). We are called by Father God into His plans and purposes for us.

In Ephesians 4:1, Paul exhorts us to “walk”—live—in a way that is worthy of this calling. Paul often uses the term “walk” to refer to “the way we live our lives.” This comes out of his Jewish background. The Rabbis (teachers) would refer to two aspects of their instruction: the *haggadah*—what is taught or spoken, and the *halakah*—what is “walked.” We often say things like, “Your walk needs to be in line with your talk.” This basic principle goes back for thousands of years. In this passage, Paul is saying, “Since we are the beloved children of God, our lives need to reflect this reality in all that we say and do.”

He then goes on to describe what this “walk” would look like: it is characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love. You should have a pretty good idea what each of those qualities are and what they look like when they are “walked out.” Let's focus on that last phrase just a minute: “bearing with one another in love.”

Although we have discussed love many times in this study (*do you remember the three types of love from the first workbook???*) we have waited to focus on this central virtue until this now. Take a look at this definition:

Key Definition: **Love** is a core quality of God Himself and is displayed in care and concern for another person to the point of sacrificing yourself for welfare of the one loved. Love involves the whole person - thoughts, desires, emotions, body.

Love is the *supreme virtue* of our faith. Take a look at these passages:

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us,
in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another,
for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

1 Corinthians 13:1–3, 13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing...
 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.

1 Timothy 1:5 But **the aim of our instruction is love** that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

2 Peter 1:5–7 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, knowledge; 6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, **unselfish love**.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**. (ESV)

1 John 4:7–8 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. 8 The person who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

As you can see, love is foundational to all we believe and do. It is rooted in the very nature of God as John tells us, “God is love” - it defines a central aspect of His nature. Because He is love, He sent Jesus for us. In the list of virtues in the 2 Peter passage, “unselfish love” is the crowning quality. And as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians, love is the greatest of the virtues; without it we are *nothing*.

Now take note: the goal of living in all these virtues, especially love, is to “*maintain the Oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.” At this point, you should know why oneness is so crucial to our life together as followers of Christ. The Spirit of the Living God is now working within us, in Christ, to produce peace and Oneness with one another. This basic idea is central and foundational to our living together as brothers and sisters in Christ, in His Body—the Church—and our witness to the world.

4.1.2 **We Need to Keep the “Ones” in Mind.**

Paul lists seven “ones” in 4:4-6. If you notice he lists them around the Trinity: Body > **Spirit** > Hope > **Lord** > Faith > Baptism > **Father**. The Body here is the Church. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit who connects us spiritually with the Lord God and with one another. The Hope is the confident expectation of the Lord Jesus saving us completely. The Lord is one of Paul’s shorthand ways of referring to Jesus. Faith is our trust in Christ that unites us all together in a common set of beliefs. Baptism is most likely referring to our baptism *by* and *in* the Spirit which is symbolized and re-enacted in water baptism. Finally, the Father is Father God. Each of these are unique in the worldview of Scripture based, Christ focused Christianity. This passage functions like a creed, reminding us of the foundational truths that we all believe and affirm together.

Notice what Paul says about the Father: He is *over* all, *through* all, and *in* all. The reality of the Lord God is the context in which all things get their meaning. Especially for the Church, our relationship to Him defines and gives purpose to all we do.

4.1.3 **We have all received grace (a gift or gifts) with which to serve.**

In order to enable us to accomplish all of this, Christ given us His grace. Do you remember our definition of Grace?

Key Definition: **Grace** is Father God’s unearned love, favor and faithfulness given to us in Christ which gives us access to the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit.

After talking about all the “Ones” - the things that bind us together, Paul gives us the *contrast*, “**BUT** to each one of you...” As we will see, each and every one of us is *unique*. You have a life-story that is like no one else. And you have been gifted to the Church, the Body of Christ, to play a significant part in Father God’s eternal work. Each one of us has been given a measure of Christ’s grace—His gift to us—so that we can serve one another in the purposes He has set for us.

In this one brief passage we see both the **Unity**—the Ones—and the **Diversity**—to each, grace is given—that creates the dynamic life of the Church. We will pick up right here tomorrow.



What caught your attention today? Can you see why love is the foundational virtue of Christianity? If you had to define love for someone, how would you do it?

WORDwork | Day 2

4.2 What is Jesus' Plan for His Church?

Ephesians 4:11–16 And He himself [Jesus Christ] gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature.

4:14 So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. 4:16 From Him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the Body grows in love.

? 47 What types of people has Jesus given to us according to verse 11?

? 48 What is the purpose of giving these people according to 4:12?

? 49 What is the goal or the results expected in giving this people to us according to 4:13?
Based on what you know by now, what does it mean to "attain to the measure of Christ's full stature"?

? 50 What are we no longer to be according to 4:14? What does this mean?

? 51 Who are we growing up into according to 4:15? What do we do that allows us to do this?

? 52 Summarize 4:16 in your own words.

This short passage from Ephesians is one of the clearest, most succinct statements of the Vision and Mission of the Church in the New Testament. It answers many of the questions that we discussed last week. We could analyze it this way: Christ has given us the MEANS (4:11, 4:15a-16) for the PURPOSE (4:12a) of accomplishing the GOALS (4:12b-4:13) and achieving the RESULTS (4:14, 4:15b) He has in mind for us. Let's take a closer look at all this.

4.2.1 **We are all being built up toward two GOALS.**

First, let's take a look at the passage by talking about the GOALS then the MEANS and finally the RESULTS. There are two main Goals in this passage.

Until we ALL attain to Oneness of the Faith. Notice that this Oneness is "of the faith." The first way to understand what this means is to realize that all of us who call on the name of the Lord Jesus are *united* in One Faith in One Person. Our shared trust, belief in Jesus is what binds us together in His Body. Our Oneness flows out of the reality that we are all on the same "team;" we are all a part of the same Kingdom in Christ; we are all part of the One Body. Remember, it is this Oneness that we exhibit as believers that *gives evidence* of the reality of who Jesus is. This Oneness of faith is closely tied together with the next aspect of the goal: *knowledge of the Son of God*.

Until we ALL attain to the Mature Person/Christlikeness. We have already heard that Father God is now *transforming* us, *conforming* us to the likeness, the image of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:29). In Ephesians 4, the "knowledge of the Son of God" implies a *practical, personal, experiential knowledge* of Jesus that promotes our spiritual growth and maturity. This is not just knowing facts and information *about* Jesus; this is **knowing Jesus** as a living person.

As we "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus" (2 Peter 3:18) we will become more and more like Him. We become like the people we spend time with. As we spend time with the Lord, we will become like Him. The Lord does not want us to remain "children," spiritually speaking. We desire that we all grow up in the truth, transformed to reflect His glory, full of grace and truth.

4.2.2 Gifted People are the MEANS Christ has given to us.

In order to attain these goals, Jesus has given Five types of gifted *people* to us: 1) Apostles, 2) Prophets, 3) Evangelists, 4) Shepherds, and 5) Teachers. Take note: *these gifts are people*. These are not just gifts of ability and service as we will discuss later, these are types of people Christ has given to His body. We will deal with each of these types of people next week and describe who they are and how they all contribute to our growth and equipping.

For now, simply take note that Jesus has given us a “team” to train and equip us for the purposes that He has called us to. This should not surprise us; God Himself has always been part of a “team”—Father, Son and Spirit, when Jesus came to us He trained a team of 12 Apostles to carry His message forward. As we will see next week, each of these types of people have been given to us both to serve the greater purposes of Jesus in the world and to invest a part of their ministry in us so that we have a complete or full vision of what Jesus is doing.

Take note of this statement about the reason or PURPOSE these people have been given to us: “**to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, that is, **to build up** the body of Christ.” These types of people have been given to us all to train and equip us for *ministry, service*. (In the New Testament, the word for “ministry” is really the word for **service**, that is what ministry is) Remember: we have all been called to be saints.

The passages highlights the truth that we all have a role, a part to play in this process: “***As each one does its part, the Body grows in love.***” Love is the context, the “soil,” in which the Body grows. Love becomes the motivation for all we do and Paul sums this up in 4:15: “***speaking the truth in love.***” The Body of Christ is “held together” by each of us and the ministry/service that Christ has gifted us to share with the rest of the Body.

4.2.3 The RESULTS:

Finally we see the RESULTS of this process: 1) we will no longer be “spiritual children” tossed around by false teaching and 2) we, The Body, will grow up into the Head, Christ. As you can see the GOALS and RESULTS are linked together. These are all ideas and truths that we have touched on in previous study units. *The main, BIG PICTURE to keep in mind is simply that Christ is working in us and with us to make us like Himself and we ALL have a significant role to play in that work.*



Did anything grab your attention in today’s reading? If so, why?

*Take a few minutes to re-read the Ephesians 4:11-16 passage and make sure you can follow the flow of thought. Ask the Lord to give you insight into the passage as you read.

WORDwork | Day 3**4.3 What is the Nature of God's New Temple and Priesthood?**

Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, 20 because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

21 In Him [Christ] the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

4.3.1 Father God is Building a New Temple

As we have said, Ephesians contains the highest and most insightful truths about the nature of the Church, the Body of Christ in the New Testament. In this passage for today, we are jumping into the middle of Paul's thoughts, really the conclusion, to an explanation of Father God's work in The Church, *a new work* which unites both Jews and Gentiles into One Body (see Ephesians 2:11-22).

If you think back to previous discussions, we explained that in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, the LORD God revealed how He had worked through the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants—national Israel, the Jews—to ultimately bless all the families of the Earth *through* and *in* Christ. In the New Testament, we get the story of how this blessing is extended to all the nations (*the Gentiles*) through Father God's work in the Body of Christ.

The relationship between Israel and the Church is an important (and *controversial*) aspect of Biblical theology. It is beyond the purpose of this study to get too deep into that issue, but if you would like to explore this more, there is a section in the appendices that deals with it.

What Paul argues in Ephesians 2 is that now, both Jews and Gentiles have been united together in a “new man” in Christ, in “one body” (see Ephesians 2:15-16). Because of this, the Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens in Father God's work; we too are now part of the “New Temple and Priesthood” that He is building in Christ.

In the New Testament, the Body of Christ is The New Temple and the New Priesthood of God. Yet unlike Israel and its Priesthood in the Old Testament, the Body is not a particular “race” of people nor is it a “nation.” It is a multigenerational, multicultural, multinational group. Consider the following passage:

Colossians 3:9-11 ... you have put off the old man with its practices 10 and have been clothed with the new person that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it. 11 Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but **Christ is all and in all**.

In Christ, cultural and ethnic issues that used to bring hostility and alienation, have now been *reconciled* so that in His Body, Christ is all and is *in* all; **it is all about the centrality of Jesus**. It is our relationship to Him that binds us all together.

Notice in the Ephesians passage, we are “God’s household,” that is being built to be a “holy temple” and “dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” All of this language is borrowing from temple imagery in the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul’s main point is this: *we are a new Temple that God is building out of people*.

4.3.2 **You Are Qualified to Equipped to Serve God as a Priest.**

1 Peter 2:4-10 So as you come to Him [Jesus Christ], a living stone rejected by men but chosen and priceless in God’s sight, 5 you yourselves, as living stones, are **built up as a spiritual house** to be a **holy priesthood** and to **offer spiritual sacrifices** that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, a priest would go through a process that qualified him to serve the LORD. A priest was 1) **chosen** by God, 2) **called** by God, 3) **set apart** (sanctified) for God, 4) **clothed** with holy garments, and 5) **anointed** with oil symbolizing his qualification for service. These same things have happened to us *spiritually* in Christ. Take a look at the following passages:

You Are CHOSEN by God to be Holy

Ephesians 1:4 For He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world **that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight**...

You are CALLED by God

1 Peter 1:14-16 Like obedient children, do not comply with the evil urges you used to follow in your ignorance, 15 but, **like the Holy One who called you**, become holy yourselves in all of your conduct, 16 for it is written, “You shall be holy, because I am holy.”

You Are SET APART for God (Sanctified)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know **that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

You Are CLOTHED with Christ

Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ.**

You Are ANOINTED with the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 But it is God who establishes us together with you in Christ and **who anointed us**, 22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

As we close this week's discussion, here is a key reality for you to think about: *We all struggle with our own immaturity.* You may not feel special or appear special to others. You may not feel like a Holy Priest in God's New Temple. God, however, sees the newest, rawest, and least gifted child "in Christ" as someone set apart or sanctified for His purposes and pleasure.

There may be areas of your life that you feel are totally out of control. When you are tempted, when you are led to act and think in ways that you know are immature or sinful, remind yourself of your position in Christ: ***"I have been washed, I have been sanctified, made holy, set apart for God and He will be faithful to perfect me."*** Remember this is a **process**; Father God does not expect you to be perfect before you start serving Him. In fact, it is your serving Him with your *imperfect* hope, faith and love that He will use to perfect you!!!

We have emphasized our *identity* IN Christ all throughout MilktoMeat. As we constantly remind ourselves and one another *who we are in Christ*, we will be encouraged and empowered to grow In Him. *You are now part of this New Priesthood and New Temple that the Lord God is building to show His glory to all creation!*



You may want to read through those last few passages about being qualified to be a Priest again. Take note of the ideas and truths that really stand out to you.

What grabs your attention the most in these passages?

Why do you think this truth gets your attention?

WORDwork | Day 4

4.4 How Shall We BE The Church?

1 Timothy 3:14–15 ... I am writing these instructions to you ... to let you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, because it is the church of the living God, *the pillar and support of the truth*.

This week we have been considering the way the Scriptures define both The Church and The Body of Christ. As we move forward with all these truths and ideas, we might need to reorient our thinking in a significant way. In our times, most people think in terms of “going” to church. We often think of it as a place or destination or building. From what we have seen and heard so far, it is clear that the Scriptures define the Church (and so the *churches*) in terms of **people** and our **identity**. Because of this, we—as Christ’s people—should think more in terms of **BEING** the Church.

4.4.1 We Should Always Keep in Mind WHO we are.

In the 1 Timothy passage above, Paul is telling Timothy the *reason* he is writing to him. Take note of what Paul says: “**to let you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God...**” What we DO as the people of the Lord God reflects WHO WE ARE as the His people. The term “household” here reflects the culture of the time in which a *family* related by blood or marriage, along with all the servants, lived together. As the Church, we are the Lord God’s Family.

Paul goes on to say that this household/family is the Church of the Living God. As we have already seen, there is only One Body, One Church. This Church represents the **Living God—the One True God** who has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Because this is *who we are*, our “In Group” is the “pillar and support of the Truth.” What does that mean? It means that we are the people who hold up and support The Truth that can be found nowhere else out side the reality of the On True God. *This is why what we do as the Lord God’s people is so important. We are constantly representing the reality of who He is to a world who does not know Him.*

4.4.2 **We Should Always Keep in Mind We Have Been Called Into Something Much Larger, Something Heavenly and Eternal.**

Right now, in Father God's sovereign and providential plans for all history, the Church is THE one and only "place" where The Truth about Jesus is "held up" (the pillar) and "confirmed" (the support). As part of The Church, The Body of Christ, we need to understand what a significant role we are playing in Father God's eternal plans. Consider this:

Ephesians 3:8–11 To me [Paul], though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles [the Nations] the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and **to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God**, who created all things, 10 so that **through the church** the manifold [multifaceted] wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord...

Father God has been working out an "eternal plan." It was hidden and not fully revealed until Christ appeared. But now, this plan has been *illuminated, brought to light in the Gospel*. So now, Father God is displaying His work in us—The Church—to reveal and explain His Wisdom to the Heavenly Rulers and Authorities! *That should blow your mind*. What is now happening with us is being watched by those in the Heavenly Realm.

Peter tells us that the salvation that has come to us through Jesus' *suffering and glory* that was foretold by the Prophets and then carefully pondered by them, are truths that "angels deeply desire to get a better glimpse of..." (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Angelic realm looks into what Father God has done for us and to us in Christ and they long, deeply desire to better understand what is going on! These statements remind us to always keep in mind how *wonder-full* and truly amazing our salvation is!

Remember, we are "*His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10) with the result that "*in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:7). The work that Father God is doing IN Christ through the Holy Spirit in us is a work that will have eternal significance in *the coming ages*. (*Yes, there is a lot more to come that we at the present time have no idea about!*)

Remember that Jesus prayed that His people would be "One" just as He and the Father are "One." When we live as One, we confirm the reality and truth that

Jesus was sent by The Father to lead us all back to the One Father. **As the Church of the Living God, we are all part of the One Body of Christ and it is our mission to let the World see Jesus in our midst through our Oneness.**

Each and everyone of us has a unique and specific role to play in this. We all have different and diverse gifts and talents that are to work together to display the “unity in diversity” of the Body. Over the next couple of weeks we are going to dig into this a little more deeply. As we do so, think about and pray through these questions:

4.4.3 **We Think in Term of WE Instead of Me.**

As we discussed in our unit on our Identity in Christ, *our identity is shaped mostly by the people we are in relationship with*. Our *identity* is being shaped by the pattern of Christ’s own perfection. Because no single one of us can display or exhibit every single facet of Christ’s glory and goodness, we each have something to offer and so we need one another as we “grow up, into Christ the Head.”

In Ephesians 3:10 above, you see the word “manifold” or “multifaceted” describing Father God’s wisdom. The idea is that this Wisdom is “many sided” or “diverse.” The Wisdom of God has many angles to it and you need a diverse presentation to see it clearly. This same type of word is used when Peter speaks of the gifts that have been given to us as an expression of Father God’s “varied” or “diversified” grace (1 Peter 4:10ff).

The point is this: Father God has included many different types of people with diverse and varied gifts in The Church in order to display His Wisdom and Grace to the world. And as we have already discussed *we need one another* with are differing gifts in order to *be the people* Father calls us to be and *do the work* He has entrusted to us. This will become more clear as we move along.

Today, let’s close our reading with a time of prayer and reflection. Read the following lines, then spend some time praying and listening.



Father, is there anything that I am doing that hinders the Oneness that we should have in The Body? Show me where I am proud or self-serving. Fill me with the Servant Spirit of our Lord Jesus so that He is glorified in me and through me.



Father, what role do you want me to play in Christ’s Body in my time and culture? How have you gifted me? I want be who you have called me to be to do what you have called me to do so that I can serve and encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Session 5

Who are The Apostles and The Prophets?

- Core Truth:** Jesus has given 5 types of gifted people to us to equip us for the work and ministry that He calls us to: The Apostles, The Prophets, The Evangelists, The Shepherds and The Teachers. The foundational gifted people given to us are the Apostles and Prophets.
- To Remember:** “It was he (Jesus Christ) who gave some as Apostles, some as Prophets, some as Evangelists, and some as Shepherds and Teachers, in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ.” [Ephesians 4:11-12]
- Objective:** In this session we are going to continue to look at Ephesians 4, particularly what it teaches us about the gifted people that Christ has given to equip us. Ephesians 4 is a significant passage that connects Jesus’ discipleship mandate in the Great Commission of Matthew 28 with the mission of the Church. This mission is founded on the ministries of the Apostles and Prophets. All that we do as followers of Christ is catalyzed by **Apostolic Vision and Mission** and **Prophetic Passion and Direction**.

WORDwork | Day 1

5.1 Who are The Apostles?

Ephesians 4:11–13 It was Christ who gave some as **Apostles**, ... 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ...

When our Lord Jesus began His earthly ministry, He picked 12 men to whom He would entrust His work after He ascended back to the Father in Heaven. Mark gives us some detail about the purposes for which Jesus selected these men:

Mark 3:13–16 Now Jesus went up the mountain and called for those he wanted, and they came to him. 3:14 He appointed twelve (whom he named Apostles), so that they would **be with Him** and he could **send them** to preach 3:15 and **to have authority** to cast out demons.

The title *Apostle* implies someone who is a *representative* or an *emissary* or a *messenger* for someone else. These men would be Jesus' chosen *representatives*. They would be witnesses to His life and His death and His resurrection. Their testimony would be the foundation of the early church.

When Jesus picks these men, He has three things in mind for them. First, that they would simply **be with Him**. Their new “career” would be to follow Jesus 24/7. Secondly Jesus would **send them to proclaim** the Good News of Kingdom as He had been doing. And finally, Jesus would **give them authority** over the Demonic realm which had not yet been decisively dealt with by Jesus' death on the Cross.

We are going to use the phrase **Apostolic Vision and Mission** to describe the way this group of people equips us for the work of ministry. This Apostolic ministry is the life impulse for the Body of Christ—it is the catalyst and motivation for everything else that we do. It is vitally important that we understand this important part of our foundation.

5.1.1 PRESENCE: Seeing the Glory of Christ.

The 12 Apostles simply began by spending time with Jesus, watching Him, learning from Him. This was the way that Rabbis (Teachers) in Judaism would train their students. They would not just spend a few hours a day with their students, the students would devote their lives to walking with and following a Rabbi. Before Jesus would turn these men loose with their Mission, they had to be *cap-*

tivated by a Vision—The Vision of the beauty, glory, splendor of our Lord Jesus. John, who was one of the 12 said this:

John 1:14 Now The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his **glory**—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.

Here John talks about the *glory* of Jesus that he and the others saw while Christ was on earth, walking among them. We have already discussed the concept of glory. Here is a short definition that focuses on Christ:

Key Definition: **Glory** is the incomprehensibly profound, radiant beauty of Christ that is absolutely remarkable.

In all that He is, The One True God is too “big” to get our minds around; He is—in His very essence—*incomprehensible*. Yet He reveals Himself in the person of our Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in a *profound* (intensely deep and personal) way. When we “see” Jesus, He displays the *splendor*, the *beauty* of God for us. If we allow ourselves to be captivated by this beauty we will want *to talk about Him*—He is absolutely remarkable. This is what the first Apostles experienced as they kept company with Christ; this is what they pass along to us. This part of the Apostolic Vision that captivated these men and formed the foundation of their Gospel proclamation:

2 Corinthians 4:4–6 ... the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see **the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God. 5 For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus. 6 For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ**. {HCSB}

5.1.2 **Proclamation: The Kingdom Is At Hand and IS Coming.**

Captivated by the Vision of Jesus, the Apostles were entrusted with His message, “the Gospel of the Glory of Christ” as Paul calls it in the passage above. Jesus sent them out to preach or to proclaim the reality that Jesus is the long awaited King (Christ) and His Kingdom is “at hand” just as Jesus had been doing (see Mark 1:14-15). These men were sent out to first tell the people of Israel that the fulfillment of the promises was at hand. Later, these men would be sent to all nations proclaiming the death, resurrection, ascension and return of Jesus as The Eternal

King. They also taught new believers Jesus' Way of True Life. Toward the end of His life, we hear that Paul (a special Apostle, hand picked by Jesus) who had spread the Gospel all the way from Antioch to Rome was,

Acts 28:28–31 ...welcoming all who came to him, 28:31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

5.1.3 **Authority: Jesus is Exalted above All.**

The first Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 4:33, 1 Corinthians 15). Jesus our Lord was “appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). After His resurrection, Jesus Himself said, “all authority (power) in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). It is by this **authority** that Jesus sent The Apostles out to make disciples and the same authority by which all of Jesus' students follow in the work of service through the gifts He has given us.

In His “High Priestly Prayer” on the night of His betrayal, Jesus prayed for the first Apostles:

John 17:16–19 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.
17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 17:18 *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.* 17:19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

We serve Jesus the Messiah (King) who was *sent* by the Father to redeem us. It is Jesus who *sent* the Apostles into the World. We serve a King who is both the *sent* and the *sending* Savior. It is this **Apostolic Vision and Mission** that catalyzes and motivates all else that we do.



What caught your attention in today's reading? Did you learn anything new?

WORDwork | Day 25.2 **Who are The Prophets?**

Ephesians 4:11–13 It was Christ who gave ... some as **Prophets**, ... 12
to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the
body of Christ...

Simply stated, a prophet is someone who speaks for the One True God giving His Truth, Wisdom, Direction, Counsel, Encouragement, Exhortation, etc. When we think of Prophets, we first think of the Prophets of the Old Testament—those powerful (and many times, strange) men who spoke, “Thus says the LORD...”. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel are some of the best known Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. These men were God’s “mouthpieces” speaking to the people *giving them direction directly from the Lord God*. The LORD gave instructions for determining who was a true prophet and who was a false prophet (see Deuteronomy 13 and 18; Ezekiel 12:21-14:11 for examples).

In the New Testament we think of John the Baptist, The Apostle John and, of course Jesus, as the key prophets. But there were also “ordinary people” who were recognized as prophets: Agabus (Acts 11:27-28), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:19).

Jesus, of course, was THE Prophet that Father God had promised to raise up among His people (Deuteronomy 18:18; John 1:21; Acts 3:22-25). Jesus recognized Himself as a prophet even though He was not honored by His own people (Matthew 13:57). But many did recognize Jesus to be a prophet (Matthew 21:11). We could even say that Jesus is not just a Prophet; He is the *source* of all prophecy.

In the book of Revelation, John is having a discussion with an angel and something strange and wonderful is revealed:

Revelation 19:10 And I (John) fell at his (the angel’s) feet to worship him. And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. **For the testimony of/about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**”

There are two ways that we could take that last statement: 1) The testimony (the Word) *that Jesus gives us* is the spirit of prophecy or 2) the testimony (the Word) *that we speak about Jesus* is the spirit of prophecy. This statement may

be ambiguous on purpose so that both meanings can be implied. Whatever the case, in our times, *Prophecy is tied together with the instruction of Jesus and the Gospel about Jesus.*

5.2.1 **The Prophets Gave Guidance and Exhortation to Israel.**

It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with the topic of the Prophets and prophecy in depth. Here we are going to give some general observations about the Prophets.

The Prophet is not just someone who foretells the future. Most of the books and writings of the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures are concerned with calling Israel away from idolatry, sin and rebellion back to devotion to the One True God. In this context, the future realities of both judgment and salvation are revealed. Based on what we see in the Hebrew Scriptures we can observe the following five general roles of the prophet:

1. The prophet ***directs people to the Truth*** of the One True God,
2. The prophet leads the people to ***true worship***,
3. The prophet ***gives guidance*** to the people of God, calling for ***repentance***,
4. The prophet ***warns*** of judgment,
5. The prophet ***reveals*** the “secrets” of God (this is related to revealing the future, specifically the full redemption and salvation that is *yet to come*, or the “secrets” of the human heart.

When we look at the full role of the prophet in the Old Testament, we can say generally that the prophet was a *covenant mediator and enforcer*—calling and directing the people of the Lord to faithfulness, justice and hope.

One simple way to think about the role of the prophets and their messages is to recognize a pattern of things that the Lord called them to challenge. First and foremost, the Prophets challenged **idolatry**: worshipping or give “first place” to things other than the One True God. This idolatry always leads to **ignorance**:

Psalm 135:15–18

The nations’ idols are made of silver and gold; they are man-made. 16
They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see,
17 and ears, but cannot hear. Indeed, they cannot breathe.
18 **Those who make them will end up like them, as will everyone who trusts in them.**

In turn, this ignorance of the Lord's ways will lead to **injustice**—not being able to live out the goodness and excellence of the Lord God in practical life. The Prophetic Word warns us about this great danger.

5.2.2 **The Prophets Gave Direction to the Early Church.**

It is clear that prophets were also functioning in the early church. Consider this:

Acts 13:1–3 Now there were these **prophets** and **teachers** in the church at Antioch ... 13:2 While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 13:3 Then, after they had fasted and prayed and placed their hands on them, they sent them off.

This passage marks the beginning of the Missionary Journeys of Paul. Paul was originally name Saul and was a violent persecutor of the early church. Yet he was “hand-picked” by Jesus to be His Apostle sent to the Gentiles/nations (see Acts 9 and 26). Here in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are “set apart” for the work that the Lord had for them. Notice that in the church there were prophets and teachers. As they were worshipping the Lord, the Holy Spirit speaks to the community: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul...” Saul and Barnabas were being set apart for Apostolic work.

We are not told *how* the Holy Spirit spoke to the whole community. The fact that the prophets are mentioned in this context may mean that the Spirit spoke through them. This is a key verse for understanding how the prophets worked in the early church.

Take a look at what Paul says to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14 I put this charge before you, Timothy my child, in keeping with the prophecies once spoken about you, in order that with such encouragement you may fight the good fight. 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift you have, given to you and **confirmed by prophetic words** when the elders laid hands on you.

Apparently, Timothy's own ministry had been initiated by prophetic words and the elders' laying on of hands (a way of officially recognizing and sharing responsibility). Timothy had received direction through the prophets. His spiritual gifting was confirmed by prophetic words.

This has just been a very brief overview of the role of the Prophets in both the life of Israel and the Early Church. We want to turn now to the question, “***How do the Prophets and Apostles fit in the ministry of the church in our times?***”

WORDwork | Day 3

5.3 **How Do the Apostles and Prophets Equip Us For Service?**

Ephesians 2:19–22 ...you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, 2:20 because you have been built on the foundation of the **Apostles** and **Prophets**, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

In Ephesians, Paul presents The Church, the household of God, as a building that is being built up with “living stones” of people (see 1 Peter 2:4-5 for a similar image). As he says in the passage above, this building is built on the “*foundation*” of the Apostles and Prophets with Christ Jesus as the *cornerstone*.” Without a doubt, the Apostles and Prophets lay the “foundation” of the whole ministry of the Church.

Of the five gifted people mentioned in Ephesians 4, the Apostles and the Prophets are the most *controversial*. The main question that is often asked is, “Are Apostles and Prophets still functioning in the Church today?” This issue is complex and sometimes misguided. Some people deny the presence of these people in the Church today based on the way these *titles* have been misused and abused historically. However, we cannot let those abuses guide the way we interpret this passage or any other passage of Scripture. After we have discussed how these people equip us, we will return to this issue.

5.3.1 **We are equipped by Apostolic Vision and Mission.**

The term “apostle” is used to describe someone who is sent by someone else. An apostle is an emissary or representative for someone. The Apostles of Jesus are emissaries, representatives of Jesus. The first Apostles were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection sent by Jesus to take The Gospel to the Nations by the power of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.”

We are using the phrase “*Apostolic Vision and Mission*” to describe this foundational ministry of the Church. The Apostolic Vision is one that is focused on Jesus Christ as Creator, Savior and Soon Returning King. The message of the Gospel is one that proclaims the reality of Jesus' Kingship and the coming of His

Kingdom. Apostolic Mission is concerned with taking the Good News to the Nations, particularly those who have never heard. Paul speaks of this in Romans:

Romans 15:20–21 ... **I desire to preach where Christ has not been named**, so as not to build on another person's foundation, 15:21 but as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will **see**, and those who have not **heard** will understand."

It is out of this Apostolic Vision and Mission that all the other works and ministries and services of the Church are born and catalyzed. We are following and serving the One True God who has *sent* His Son to us and who is now *send-ing* us in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is one of the foundational elements of the reality of The Church.

5.3.2 **We are equipped by Prophetic Passion and Direction.**

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then ...

In Ephesians 4 and in 1 Corinthians above, the Apostles and Prophets are listed first in the lists of gifts that Christ has given to His Body, the Church. Notice in this passage that Paul seems to be giving some priority of significance to these gifts: First Apostles, Second Prophets... In the Old Testament era, the Prophets were the "mouthpieces" of God; they communicated God's message directly to the people of Israel. After the life and work of Jesus on Earth, the Apostles apparently become the key "mouthpieces" for God as witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection—the defining realities of the New Era of Grace.

However, the Prophets still held a significant role in the early church. The Prophets, along with the Apostles received revelation that defined and clarified the New Era of Grace in the "Church Age":

Ephesians 3:5 Now this mystery/secret (*the full reality of Christ's saving work*) was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his **holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit...**

We are using the phrase "Prophetic Passion and Direction" to sum up this other foundational ministry of the Church. Prophetic Passion speaks to deep desire to see Father God's holiness and justice established in reality on planet Earth. In the OT, the Prophets spent a great majority of their time calling people back to a sincere, holy worship of the One True God and to pursue the things that are just and right. Prophetic Direction speaks to the reality that we want to

be led by Father God in the things that are pleasing to Him—we don’t make up our own plans; we wait on the Lord to guide us and direct us in grace and truth.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:20 Paul says, “...do not despise prophetic utterances.” As we have already seen, in the early church, the prophetic ministry was present to guide the people of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul says “...one who prophesies speaks to men for *edification* and *exhortation* and *consolation*. When we hear the “Word of God” for us, we are built up, encouraged, equipped to do what the Lord has called us to do.

5.3.3 A Few Thoughts on the Apostles and Prophets

As we said, the Apostles and Prophets are a controversial topic. Now that we have defined how their ministry should equip us, we return to the question, “Are these people present in the Church today?”

First, we highlight the fact that Paul says these people were given to us ***to equip the saints for service with the goal of Christlike maturity***. This would seem to indicate that the ***equipping service*** of these people is necessary for the larger Vision and Mission of the Church. Secondly, Paul is writing Ephesians in the later part of his ministry after he had spent time thinking about the nature and future of the Church for many years. It seems that Paul sees this work as a key part of the Church. Finally, why would the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to write this passage if it was not meant to speak to all the Church for all time?

With those things in mind, to me it clarifies the issues if we ask some very common sense questions. At the very basic level, the Apostles are those sent to the world, particularly those who have never heard the Gospel, to proclaim Christ. *So, does Jesus still need this ministry and this type of person in His Body?* It think it is clear the answer is YES. We now call these people *missionaries* but they are engaged in *apostolic work*.

The next question is, “Do we still need people to proclaim the Truth of the One True God?” I think it is clear that the answer is YES. I would make the case that Preachers, Pastors and Teachers are called to engage in this *prophetic work*. Think of this: If you went to a church and the pastor got up to preach and said, “I am now going to share *my own thoughts and ideas about...*” would you treat his message as *authoritative*? Probably not. We expect those who teach us to do so rooted in the Lord’s Word to us and for us; we expect them to be *prophetic*.



If you want to read more about the controversial nature of the Apostles and Prophets, you can find a section in the Appendices.
What caught your attention in today’s reading?
Do you have a basic picture of how the Apostles and Prophets equip us?

WORDwork | Day 4**5.4 What Mission and Vision Questions Do the Apostles and Prophets Raise?**

As we said a little earlier, the Five “gifts” listed in Ephesians 4 that Christ has given to His Body are *people*. They are not just *abilities* or *ministries*, they are key people. Paul does not say that Christ has given us Apostleship; he says Christ has given us the apostles. We have not just been given the gift of prophecy, we have been given the prophets.

Also, yesterday we briefly discussed the controversial nature of this passage and the debate over whether or not the Apostles and Prophets still function in the Church today. Whatever conclusion we come to on that, it is our opinion that the *ministry* of the Apostles and Prophets must exist in some way because their service to us is part of the foundational equipping we need to grow in Christlikeness.

5.4.1 We Who Are Many, are One

Jesus chose The 12 as the first Apostles, not one or two. At one point, He also choose 72 others to send out to preach and teach and when He sent them out, he sent them out in pairs of twos (see Luke 10:1-20). In 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul gives these instructions to the church, “Two or three prophets should speak and the others should evaluate what is said.” A single person could not just get up and say something and say it was from God and then everyone had to respond; the others with the prophetic gift were to evaluate what was said and confirm.

The main point in all of this is to see that we are all part of one “team”—The Body of Christ. We have all have an important and vital role to play in this Body and we cannot do it alone; we need one another. The Lord has *chosen each of us and gifted us all* to serve one another as we move forward in the Vision and Mission that He has given us with passion for His holiness, directed by His truth.

So, we are thinking about these gifts and ministries on both **a personal, individual level** and a “my people” level. As an individual, you will meet people who the Lord is opening an opportunity for you to share His goodness and grace. But you are also called into **fellowship with other believers** (your local church/assembly - “your people” that you share life with) who encourage and support one another.

So as we close out this week, let's just talk very generally about impact the Apostolic and Prophetic ministries should have on us all. By shaping the purpose of these ministries into questions, I think we can see their impact a little more clearly.

5.4.2 Lord, To Whom Are You Sending Us?

In our times, the **Apostolic Vision and Mission** is kept alive by our Missionaries and Missions efforts. These are the men and women who devote their lives to taking The Gospel to those who have not yet heard. They have a heart for the nations. They have a heart to see the name of Christ uplifted by all. *You may not be called to be a missionary on this level, but the Lord is sending you and your church/assembly/fellowship to someone.* As you think about this, consider how this Apostolic Vision can be cultivated in your own life:



To whom is the Lord sending you to give a taste of the goodness of His Kingdom, especially someone who has not experienced it before?



With whom is the Lord sending you (who is your team, “your people”)?

5.4.3 Lord, What Do We Do Now?

In Acts 2, Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, explaining what is going on with the giving of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:17–18 ‘And in the last days it will be,’ God says, ‘that *I will pour out my Spirit on all people, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy,* ... 2:18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and *they will prophesy.*

Moses, in his time had yearned for this day to come (see Numbers 11:29). Now, *In Christ, we have been given the Spirit of the Living God to dwell within us.* The Spirit has been given to us to guide us *to* and instruct us *in* The Truth. We know the Testimony of/from Christ which is the very spirit of prophecy. Paul says that now, through the work of the Spirit, we have the “mind of Christ” (see 1 Corinthians 2:16). When we speak and act, it should be *prophetic—shaped by the Grace and Truth of the One True God.* Consider what Peter says:

1 Peter 4:10–11 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 4:11 whoever speaks, *as one who speaks oracles of God...*

We will return to this passage when we deal with the issues of our individual spiritual gifts. For now, take note that Peter says if our gift has to do with *speaking*, we should speak “as one who speaks the oracles of God.” The “oracles of God” mean that we should speak the words, the message that Father God has given to us for others (See Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12). We don’t just make up what we want to say. We speak the truth; we speak what Father God has given to us. This Word/Message is rooted and the Written Word, consistent with The Scriptures that have been given to us. This is the very essence of the prophetic ministry of the Church.

The children of God are motivated by their zeal for His holiness: His love, His mercy, His compassion, His justice, His glory. We seek to follow the Holy Spirit as He works in and through us, leading us to Oneness and Christlikeness so that the glory/beauty of Father God is displayed in Christ. This means that we must *gracefully challenge* all that stands opposed to the reality of the One True God. Remember this: **Idolatry > Ignorance > Injustice**. These stand opposed to the Kingdom of Christ and have always been the focus of prophetic challenge.

In our times, the prophetic service is kept alive primarily in **faithful preachers** and **teachers**. Anyone who speaks or teaches in the Church should be concerned with speaking the Truth—the will and counsel of the One True God. You may not be called to fill one of these roles. The Lord does desire for you to have *a prophetic facet* of your life. Consider these questions:



In what ways are your passion for justice/goodness roused: where do you see a need to challenge the “status quo” (idolatry > ignorance > injustice) with the Truth?



How can you get involved with your church/assembly/fellowship to challenge the status quo with the glory/beauty/splendor of Christ, in Grace and Truth?

Session 6

Who are The Evangelists, The Shepherds and Teachers?

Core Truth: The work and ministry that Father God \neq us all to in Christ by the Spirit is a “team effort”; we are not called to work alone. We are now part of the Body of Christ and we need all the diverse gifts and gifted people working together to accomplish the goals that Christ has set for us.

To Remember: “It was he (Jesus Christ) who gave some as Apostles, some as Prophets, some as Evangelists, and some as Shepherds and Teachers, in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ.” [Ephesians 4:11-12]

Objective: In this session we will consider the last three types of people given to us by Christ to equip us all for the work of ministry: the Evangelists, the Shepherds and the Teachers. These people build on the work of the Apostles and Prophets, cultivating their work in our daily lives.

WORDwork | Day 1

6.1 **Who are The Evangelists and How Do They Equip Us?**

Ephesians 4:11–13 It was Christ who gave ... some as **Evangelists**, ... 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ...

The word that is translated “evangelists” here only shows up three time in the New Testament: 1) here in Ephesians 4, 2) in Acts 21:8 in reference to Philip the Evangelist, and 3) in 2 Timothy 4:5 where Paul encourages Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” The name or title “evangelist” simply refers to someone who “preaches the Good News (Gospel).”

One of the first questions that many people ask when it comes to this group of people is, “So how are they different from the Apostles?” In order to answer that question, lets take a brief look at Philip and Timothy, the two men in the Scriptures to whom this title is attached.

6.1.1 **Philip the Evangelist.**

There are two important Philips in the New Testament 1) the Apostle who was one of Jesus’ 12 and 2) the Evangelist who was set apart as one of the Seven Servants (Deacons) of the early church (Acts 6:5, 8:4-8, 8:26-40, 21:8-9). We are only concerned with the second of these Philips. This Philip is called “the evangelist” in Acts 21:8. In Acts this is the Philip that preached and worked in Samaria in the power of the Lord.

A little later in this chapter the Lord sends Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch on the road between Gaza and Jerusalem. This court official of Queen Candace of Ethiopia had been reading and thinking about Isaiah 53:7-8 and needed someone to help him understand what the text meant. Philip saw the great opportunity “and beginning with this Scripture told him the Good News about Jesus” (Acts 8:25). This man came to faith in Christ and took the Gospel home with him to Ethiopia (one of the oldest branches of Christianity is still alive in Ethiopia!).

Finally we see Philip *settled* in Caesarea where he had four daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:9). It is at this point that Luke identifies him as “the Evangelist.” What is clear is that Philip had been a servant of the early church who the Lord had used to spread the Gospel throughout several different areas.

6.1.2 Timothy, the Evangelist?

Timothy was a native of Lystra, his mother a Jew and his father a Greek (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). Paul asked Timothy to join his team on the Second Missionary Journey and Timothy would remain a close companion to Paul for the rest of his life. There are two personal letters written to Timothy by Paul, 1 and 2 Timothy. Both of these letters were written near the end of Paul's life and they were meant to remind Timothy of his mission and his calling.

At the beginning of 1 Timothy Paul says, "As I urged you when I was leaving for Macedonia, *stay on in Ephesus to instruct certain people not to spread false teachings...*" (1 Timothy 1:3). Later in the book, Paul reveals the key reason why he had written to Timothy:

1 Timothy 3:14–15 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you 3:15 in case I am delayed, *to let you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God*, because it is the church of the living God, the support and bulwark of the truth.

In 1 Timothy Paul talks about the danger of false teaching, the great grace of Jesus our Savior, the priority and importance of prayer, qualifications for elders/overseers of the church, qualifications for deacons, and various admonitions for women, men, wives, husbands, widows, masters, slaves, etc. In short, *Paul describes what it looks like when the truth of the Gospel become deeply rooted in a community.*

In 2 Timothy, the last letter that Paul would write, he *reminds* Timothy of the things that are most important to pass on and to keep working toward, because in the last days, many will turn away from the truth. In this context, Paul exhorts Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:1–5 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 4:2 **Preach the message**, be ready whether it is convenient or not, reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and instruction. 4:3 For there will be a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. ... 4:5 You, however, be self-controlled in all things, endure hardship, do an evangelist's work, fulfill your ministry.

Now, 1 and 2 Timothy are commonly referred to as "Pastoral Epistles/Letters." From this, many assume that Timothy was simply a pastor. However, in the verse above we are convinced that Paul is revealing Timothy's real ministry and gifting that was confirmed by the prophetic word and laying on of the

Elders hands—an Evangelist (see 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14). When Paul says, “Do an Evangelist’s work, fulfill your ministry” he is not talking about something that Timothy would add on to his list of “pastoral duties.” Timothy was set apart as an Evangelist and Paul reminds him of this.

6.1.3 So what does and Evangelist do?

As we have already heard, the Apostles were the first ones entrusted with the Gospel. They were commissioned to take that Good News to the whole world—to those who have never heard. Based on our above observations about Philip and Timothy, we think that an Evangelist is someone who *settles in a particular area or place to make sure that the Gospel is deeply rooted in that community*. Even as Timothy was traveling with Paul, he would *stay* at certain places (Acts 17:14) or be sent back to certain places (Acts 19:22, 1 Corinthians 4:17) to make sure the Gospel was taking root.

The phrase that we are going to use to describe the way in which the Evangelists equip us is **Evangelical Cultivation**. The Evangelists ensure that the Gospel is continually proclaimed as the powerful Message through which we are being saved (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-3) and that it is saturating our lives, our cities, our countries. Once the “Seed” of the Word (1 Peter 1:22-25) has been planted by Apostolic work, we seek to cultivate its growth in every area of life so that the Message of Truth takes deep root.



Was there anything new that you learned today?
Can you see the difference between the Apostles and Evangelists?

WORDwork | Day 2**6.2 Who are The Shepherds and How Do They Equip Us?**

Ephesians 4:11–13 It was Christ who gave ... some as **Shepherds** ...

4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ ...

In this text, Shepherds and Teachers are linked together. Some even think that this is describing only one group: “The Shepherds, who are Teachers.” We will keep them separate, although these two form an important team.

The term that is translated “Shepherds” here is often translated as “Pastors.” The word literally points to a shepherd—someone who oversees a flock. This term is used about eighteen times in the Greek Scriptures and it is always in reference to a shepherd.

Now, traditionally, when we think of a “pastor,” we think of the modern shaping of this role: the pastor is often seen as the key person in the church, the jack-of-all-trades who teaches, preaches, visits the sick, performs the ordinances, etc. *This is an office that the modern church has defined and developed but it is not necessarily a biblical model.* We are not trying to take anything away from modern pastors who work hard in their roles. However, given the model here in Ephesians 4, we can see that one person cannot do all that is required for a church. The Church is meant to be overseen and cared for by a group of faithful people, not just one (*other than the Lord Jesus!*).

This is the only place in the New Testament where a “pastoral” role is defined as such. In almost all the other texts, the Elders are the group that is charged with the final responsibility of overseeing the local assembly of believers. In this text, the Shepherds are that group of people who have been given to us to care for, feed, encourage, and protect us.

In the New Testament, Jesus is clearly presented as the “Good and Great Shepherd.”

John 10:11 “**I am the good shepherd;**
the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Hebrews 13:20–21 Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead **the Great Shepherd**

of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, 13:21 equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

The LORD God is often presented as our Shepherd (think of Psalm 23); He is the Shepherd and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25). These Shepherds who are human “gifts” to us all are those who follow the example of Christ protecting, feeding and caring for His flock.

We are using the phrase **Pastoral Care and Protection** to describe what this group does and how they equip us to share in this ministry. The flock of God must be cared for in compassion, protecting it from its many threats. In Acts 20, Paul gives the following admonition to the leaders/elders/overseers/shepherds of the flock at Ephesus:

Acts 20:28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Our Shepherds take care of us in grace and truth *and teach us how to do the same*. Today this ministry is seen largely in some pastors as well as those who have ministries of mercy and care and concern. These Shepherds have an eye to the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the flock. They work hand in hand with the final group of “gifted people”—the teachers.

6.3 **Who are The Teachers and How Do They Equip Us?**

Ephesians 4:11–13 It was Christ who gave some as ... **Teachers** ...

In our times, our Teachers have played a more significant role in our churches than some of the other gifted people that we have been discussing. A Teacher is simply someone who instructs others in the Truths of the Faith. The most common title given to Jesus was “Rabbi” (Teacher). When we think of Him, we think of Him as our Master-Teacher. All true Teachers in the church follow the example and model of Jesus:

Matthew 10:24–25 “A disciple [student] is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. 10:25 **It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master.**”

In all our teaching, we remember that Jesus is “The Way, The Truth, The Life” (John 14:6). We are to be taught “in Jesus” because the Truth is in Him

(Ephesians 4:21). Again we see the imitation of Jesus: becoming like Him in all areas of life.

The goal of all Christian teaching is the cultivation of *Christlike virtue*.

Colossians 1:28 We proclaim Him (Christ Jesus) by warning and *teaching* all people with all wisdom *so that we may present every person mature in Christ*.

As we have heard, the goal that the Father has set for us is that we become like Christ, conformed to His image, displaying His likeness in beauty, grace and truth. All of this teaching is therefore founded on the Written Word of God which points us to the Living Word (2 Timothy 3:14-16). This Christ-focused, Bible based teaching is the very essence of “sound doctrine” or “sound teaching” that we are called to (1 Timothy 1:10, 4:6; Titus 2:1). When we meet together, the reading of Scripture, teaching, encouragement and exhortation, are all vital parts of our ministry *to* and *with* one another (see 1 Timothy 4:11-16).

There is the assumption that once someone has been a follower of Jesus for some amount of time, he or she should be able to teach others the “basics” of God’s Truth—The ABC’s of the Faith:

Hebrews 5:12–14 For though **you should in fact be teachers by this time**, you need someone to teach you **the beginning elements of God’s oracles**. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food.

We are encouraged to do many things *to* and *for* “one another” and teaching is one of them:

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, **teaching and exhorting one another** with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God.

We use the phrase **Faithful and True Instruction** to describe what Teachers do and what they equip us to do in the service of ministry. The Written Word of God points us to the Living Word, our Lord Jesus. We want to know Christ deeply in order to share Him with one another and others richly. You may not be gifted or called to be a Teacher specifically. But, the Teaching ministry trains you to be able to teach the basics of the Faith to those who need to know.



Do you see why the Shepherds and Teachers are necessary to build up the body of Christ? In what ways have these ministries affected you?

WORDwork | Day 3

6.4 **What is the Big Picture of Gifted Ministry?**

On the following page, there is a chart that we have put together to show the relationships between the 5 gifted people who have been “gifted” to the Church by the Lord Jesus and how their ministries build up the different aspects of the Body of Christ.

On the bottom part of the chart, we are using the analogy of the human body to give some context as to how all of these varying ministries fit together to work together. Just as a *body* is made up of *cells* which organize to become *tissues* and those tissues are placed together to form *organs* which in turn are grouped by *systems*, so also there is an *organic structure* in the Body of Christ. In this row, we suggest the “form” that these organic realities often take in the Body.

Another analogy that we have found helpful is to think of these 5 Gifts working together in the way a farmer would plant and harvest a crop. In this analogy, the Seed is the Gospel (The Truth), the plants are those in whom the Gospel has taken root and has begun to grow. The field is a region in which the Gospel is spreading and growing.

The Apostles plant the “Seed.” Those who have been entrusted with the Apostolic Vision and Mission are like those who bring the seed to a field along with all the other tools that will be necessary to plant and maintain that field. In fact, it seems that all the other ministries are in some way contained in this Apostolic gift. Those who work in this Apostolic Impulse want to take the Gospel (The Truth, The Seed) to those who have never heard. They simply entrust the seed and the tools to a small group of people who can then run with the development of the “field.”

The Prophets keep everything “in line.” Those who have been entrusted with Prophetic Passion and Direction oversee the work in the field. They oversee the field to make sure all of the work that goes into planting and maintaining the field is in line with the Lord’s desires.

The Evangelists plant the seed all throughout the field. Once the Apostles have left the field, the Evangelist cultivate the field and plant the “seed” of the Gospel so that it permeates the whole field.

The Shepherds water, weed and protect the field. Those who have gifted with Pastoral Care and Protection move in to watch over the field.

Working with the teachers, they make sure the seed planted in the field has all the water and nutrients it needs. They also protect the plants from the threat of parasites and other dangers that could stunt the growth of the harvest.

The Teachers equip the plants to become fruitful. Those who are gifted and called to Faithful and True instruction are those who “harvest the crop” so to speak—helping those who have grown up in the field to produce fruit (gracious, holy lives) and to protect the precious “Seed” that has been entrusted to them so that a new generation can be “seeded” with the Gospel.



Study the chart on the next page and see if you can get a grasp of the Vision and Mission of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Does this make sense to you?

Why or Why Not?

The Apostolic "Seed" of the Gospel gives birth to all else...				
<div><div>Apostolic Vision & Mission</div><div>The whole Body of Christ is birthed out of the Captivating Vision and the Remarkable Mission of Christ - The Way, The Truth, The Life.</div><div>The Apostolic mandate always reminds us that Christ's mission is worldwide. We support the mission that takes the Gospel to those who have never heard.</div></div>				
<div><div>Prophetic Passion & Direction</div><div>The Prophetic word calls us to focus on the Father's Holiness, the Son's Grace and the Spirit's power. We are encouraged to keep our eyes focused on Christ.</div></div>				
<div><div>Evangelical Preparation & Cultivation</div><div>Once the Gospel seed has been planted in a community, we want to make sure that it is cultivated so that it permeates the whole "field" of ministry. We not only proclaim the Gospel, we also live the Gospel.</div></div>				
<div><div>Pastoral Compassion & Protection</div><div>We are entrusted TO the Gospel to transform us...</div></div>				
<div><div>Faith-Full Teaching and Instruction</div><div>The service of the Pastors and Teachers are vitally linked together in the process of making disciples as Jesus taught and as we see in the rest of the Scriptures. The Life cultivated in the "cells" and "tissues" is vital for the healthy functioning of all the rest.</div></div>				
Body	Systems	Organs	Tissues Cells	
[Kingdom Oriented] Global Universal	Parish Assemblies Community Assemblies City-Gatherings Regional Gatherings National Gatherings	Missional Groups "Parachurch" Outreach	Life Groups Simple Churches House Churches	
<i>Uncountable</i>	100s-1000s	30-100	12-15	1 and 2-3

WORDwork | Day 4**6.5 How Do We Think and Act Evangelistically, Pastorally, and Educationally?**

One of the truths that we have been trying emphasize in this study is that we are called to a Body, a group or people, that we live and work together with in our Vision and Mission as Christ's people. As we develop the last questions here, always keep in mind that you will not be doing these things alone, as an individual, but with your fellowship, your local church/assembly—the people you connect with as your spiritual family.

6.5.1 Lord, Where in my Area does the Gospel need to take root?

As we think about the way the Evangelists equip us work and serve the Gospel, we realize that the Truth of Gospel should saturate our lives, our cities, our countries. Once the “Seed” has been planted by Apostolic work, we seek to cultivate its growth in every area of life. Think about these questions:



Where is a person or group in which the Gospel needs to be more deeply rooted and cultivated?



How can you and your fellowship proclaim and live the Gospel in a way that draws others to Christ?

6.5.2 Lord, Who are my brothers or sisters who need care?

In the Body of Christ, we are called to care for one another in compassion, protecting it from its many threats. We want to learn how to care for one another in grace and truth. With this in mind think about how “Pastoral Care and Protection” is being cultivated in your life:



Who do you know who needs to be cared for and nurtured gracefully? the physically sick, the “spiritually sick”, shut-ins, the down and outs, those who just need someone to care.



How could you serve, help, protect, build up this person/group?

6.5.3 Lord, Who do I know who needs to know what I know?

The Body of Christ, the Church, is built on Faithful and True Instruction. The Written Word of God points us to the Living Word, our Lord Jesus. We want to

know Christ deeply in order to share Him with one another and others richly. *At this point, you should be able to share and teach the basics of faith to someone else.* With this in mind, think about the ways in which the work of teaching is being cultivated in your life:



Who do you know who needs to know more about Christ and His central significance to all things?



How can you share the truth in grace, pointing toward Christ?

As you think about these questions, begin thinking about your closest relationships and then move out from there: family > friends > co-workers > groups with shared interests > “providential meetings”, etc. Be mindful and aware of people that the Lord brings into your life on a daily basis. Always remember that you are inviting people into something larger and eternal. And you are not meant to do this work alone. We will pick up here next week.

Session 7

What Role Do You Play?

- Core Truth:** **You** are the gift that Father God has given to His people to display a unique facet of His glory and to build up and enrich the Body of Christ.
- To Remember:** For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
[Psalm 139:13-14]
- Objective:** In this final session of MilktoMeat, we want to focus on how you fit into the larger Kingdom purposes of Father God. In some Christian circles there is a lot emphasis given to the Spiritual Gifts—finding your gift and using it. The Gifts are important, but it is more important to understand that **YOU** are more significant than the gift(s) Father God has given you to serve in His Body the Church. **YOU** are the gift that Father God has given to us all. It is **YOU**, the whole person, who will display the glory of Father God's grace in the ages to come.

WORDwork | Day 1

7.1 What Are Spiritual Gifts and How Do They Work?

Romans 12:3–8 For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think with sober discernment, as *God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith*. 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, 12:5 so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another. 12:6 And we have *different gifts* according to the grace given to us. If the gift is prophecy, that individual must use it in proportion to his faith. 12:7 If it is service, he must serve; if it is teaching, he must teach; 12:8 if it is exhortation, he must exhort; if it is contributing, he must do so with sincerity; if it is leadership, he must do so with diligence; if it is showing mercy, he must do so with cheerfulness....

1 Corinthians 12:1–7 With regard to spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 12:2 You know that when you were pagans you were often led astray by speechless idols, however you were led. 12:3 So I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

12:4 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 12:5 And there are different ministries, but the same Lord. 12:6 And there are different results, but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. 12:7 *To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all.*

? 53 What has Father God distributed to each of us according to Romans 12:3? How should this affect the way we think about ourselves?

? 54 What are the main points of Romans 12:4-6? Summarize the point of these verses in your own words.

? 55 Why does Paul bring up the topic of Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1?

? 56 Explain 1 Corinthians 12:7 in your own words.

There are four key passages that reveal the Spiritual Gifts in the Bible: Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. We have already discussed Ephesians 4 and will use it as the foundation on which to build the rest of the teaching of the Gifts.

Unfortunately, teaching on the Spiritual Gifts is often neglected in non-charismatic or non-Pentecostal churches. The Gifts, however, are essential to the proper working of Christ's Body—The Church. If we neglect the gifts and their proper function the assemblies in which we serve and fellowship will be impoverished. You can think of the Gifts as the “*vitamins*” that the Lord has given to us to build up His Body.

7.1.1 **Each of Us Has Received a Gift.**

Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10 all confirm that we each have received a *gift* to be used in serving in the work of ministry. The word “gift” that is used in these passages is the Greek word *charismata* from which we get the English term “charismatic.” The word simply refers to a *gift that is given*, in this case, a gift from Father God. In fact this term is related directly to the term “grace” in the New Testament. The gifts are literally “graces” of the Spirit.

Key Definition: a **Spiritual Gift** is an empowerment that comes through the Holy Spirit that enables us to do the work the Lord has called us to in way that brings glory to Father.

7.1.2 **The Gifts are Given and Overseen By Spirit, Son and Father.**

In the Letters, the Gifts of the Spirit refer to abilities granted by the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which are meant to *build up* the Body of Christ and *empower* it for its mission. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul reveals how the Lord God, who is Three-in-One, cooperates in the Gifts: 1) The Spirit oversees the **outworking** of the many different gifts, 2) The Lord (Jesus), oversees the practi-

cal **coordination** and **administration** of the different “ministries” of these Gifts, and 3) The Father, oversees and guides the **results** of these ministries.

7.1.3 **The Gifts Are Given for Us to Serve One Another.**

In each of these passages, it is clear that these gifts are given so that we can serve one another. Our gifts are not given to us to “puff us up,” but to enable us to serve in humility and love. This is why Paul exhorts us to think about ourselves with “sober discernment.” All of these gifts, all of these “manifestations of the Spirit” have been given to each person **for the common good** (1 Corinthians 12:7). As we will see, this is all to bring glory to God.

7.1.4 **The Gifts Reveal the “Varied/Multifaceted” Grace of God.”**

1 Peter 4:10–11 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s multi-faceted grace. 4:11 *Whoever speaks*, let it be with God’s words. *Whoever serves*, do so with the strength that God supplies ...

As we have already heard, The Body of Christ is One, yet with many “members.” It should not surprise us that there are also many different types of gifts given to display Father God’s “multi-faceted” grace as Peter says above.

Peter also outlines two broad categories of gifts: 1) There are *speaking* gifts and there are 2) *serving* gifts. God is the Word who comes to live among us to serve us and lead us. The gifts fall in this same basic framework.

7.1.5 **The gifts are given ultimately to glorify God through Jesus Christ.**

Finally we want to use our gifts “*so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen*” (1 Peter 4:11). The Body of Christ is united as One even though we are many different people with many different gifts.



What got your attention in today’s reading? Why?

WORDwork | Day 2**7.2 Where in the New Testament Do We Find the Lists of the Spiritual Gifts?**

Today, we are simply going to scan over the passages in the New Testament which list all of the Spiritual Gifts and see how they fit into the larger picture. The key passages are listed below. Beside each gift listed, there is a number. This number corresponds to the gift in the following list with its description. Read through these passages, then work through the list.

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as (1) apostles, and (2) some as prophets, and (3) some as evangelists, and (4) some as pastors and (5) teachers,

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the (6) word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the (7) word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another (8) faith by the same Spirit, and to another (9) gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the (10) effecting of miracles, and to another (2) prophecy, and to another (11) the distinguishing of spirits, to another (12) various kinds of tongues, and to another (13) the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, (1) first apostles, (3) second prophets, (5) third teachers, (10) then miracles, (9) then gifts of healings, (14) helps, (15) administrations, (12) various kinds of tongues.

Romans 12:6-8 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if (2) prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if (16) service, in his serving; or (5) he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who (17) exhorts, in his exhortation; he who (18) gives, with liberality; he who (19) manages, with diligence; he who (20) shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1-5 - We have already discussed the 5 Gifted People of Ephesians 4 in our previous discussions and will not repeat those here. However, you can take note that there is a gift of *prophecy* mentioned in the other lists.

6. **Word of Wisdom** | The Spiritually endowed ability to communicate how to live in truth, goodness and glory before God.
7. **Word of Knowledge** | The Spiritually endowed ability to know and communicate truth perhaps without having “learned” it.
8. **Faith** | The Spiritually endowed ability to trust God in unusual ways or in unusual circumstances.
9. **Healings** | The Spiritually endowed ability to bring God’s power for physical healing upon illness, with or without the concurring faith of the person being healed.
10. **Working of Miracles or Signs** | The Spiritually endowed ability to work “supernatural signs” - These often accompanied the Apostles as they took the Gospel into new areas and the “signs” confirmed the power of their message.
11. **Discerning Spirits** | The Spiritually endowed ability to identify the “spirit” that is influencing a person, particularly teachers within the community.
12. **Languages (tongues)** | The Spiritually endowed ability to speak in a human language that has never been learned in order to proclaim the Gospel to unbelievers.
13. **Interpretation of Languages** | The Spiritually endowed ability to interpret human languages (perhaps more specifically the interpretation of the gift of languages) that have never been learned.
14. **Assistance or helps** | The Spiritually endowed ability to give some benefit or help especially those who are weak, sick or helpless.
15. **Governing or Administration** | The Spiritually endowed ability to guide the local assembly in the goals that Christ has established for His Body.
16. **Service** | The Spiritually endowed ability to serve all people “above and beyond the call of duty.” **Jesus places great emphasis on this idea, not as gift, but as the greatest of the qualities of anyone who desires to be His disciple. All believers are called to this ministry. This is the term from which we get the word “deacon” in English.*
17. **Exhortation** | The Spiritually endowed ability to comfort and encourage others as they pursue maturity in Christ.
18. **Sharing or giving** | The Spiritually endowed ability to share with others who are in need.

19. **Managing or Caring** | The Spiritually endowed ability to oversee the spiritual welfare of the assembly. This term is often used in reference to “managing a household.”
20. **Mercy** | The Spiritually endowed ability to compassionately comfort those who are sick and suffering in the community.

It is beyond the scope of our purposes here to discuss these gifts in detail.

There are other resources that do that well. The main thing we want you to see is the big picture of the kinds of things that are necessary for the Body of Christ to function as the Lord intends. Since each of the lists are different in these passages, that suggests that there is no set list of gifts. These are the types of things the Lord empowers us to do through the Spirit. There are some patterns we can discern, however,

As we have already heard when we were discussing Ephesians 4, there is a hierarchy of gifts; there are some gifts which are more “significant,” or maybe we could say “foundational” in the Lord’s work in the world. The Apostles are always mentioned *first* on the lists. In fact, Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 12:38 where he says, “First Apostles, second Prophets, third Teachers, then...” Because **Apostolic Vision and Mission** gives birth to all the other ministries and **Prophetic Passion and Direction** gives us our guidance, these are foundational ministries. Remember:

Ephesians 2:19–22 ... you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, 20 because you have been built **on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.**

Nevertheless, all the gifts have an *important* role in building up the Body of Christ. This gifts are not given to cause divisions of “authority” or “prominence” or “recognition” within the Body. We are instructed to live in our gifts in *humility* realizing that the Lord has different plans and purposes for us all. For now we are called to humbly accept where the Lord has placed us in His Body and *wait for Him to exalt us in the proper time* (see 1 Peter 5:6-7).

We will discuss this more tomorrow.



What got your attention in the reading today? Why?

Do you have a basic understanding of the types of gifts mentioned in the Scriptures? If not, read through the list again.

WORDwork | Day 3

7.3 How Do We Discover and Use our Gift(s)?

This is the main question that many have. Before we even deal with this question I think it is important to understand that you do not simply have a spiritual gift or gifts, but that **YOU are the gift that Christ has given to His Body the Church.** We like to focus on our gifts because it is easy to quantify what we *do*. We have all been influenced by the subtle lie (especially here in the US) that *what we do* is *more* important than *who we are*. **In the Body of Christ who you are (the whole person) is of first importance.** What you do simply flows out of your true identity in Christ.

It also important to understand what a spiritual gift is *not*. Your spiritual gift is *not* the place of your service. Your spiritual gift is *not* an office that you hold. Your spiritual gift is *not* necessarily a natural talent. Your spiritual gift is *not* a ministry to a specific age group. So with those few things in mind, let's deal with issue of how we come to know our gift(s).

Interestingly, we are never admonished in the New Testament to discover our gifts! Let me repeat that:

Key Realization: We are never told to "discover" or figure out our spiritual gift!

So what does this mean? Let's make several observations that will help us deal with this issue:

1. **Most of the Gifts are things that we should all be doing.** | If you look at the list of the gifts on the previous pages, you will notice that all of the non-miraculous gifts are to be pursued as normal practices of every believer. We are all to be merciful. We are all to be servants. There are some that are more gifted and effective in each of these areas.
2. **We need humility and perspective.** | We may not be able to discern our gifts because we are often unaware (or immaturely *self-deceived*!) about the reality of our ministry to others. Be open to hearing from others about how the Lord is working in and through you most effectively. As you serve together with others, it will become evident to others how the Lord has gifted you. Those with prophetic gifts may also give direction in this area (remember Timothy?)

3. **Greatest Weakness—Greatest Glory.** | Often our gift(s) do not show up in the area of our greatest “natural” strengths but in the areas of our greatest *weakness*. The Lord delights in showing the power of His grace in weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 where the Lord teaches Paul, “My power is perfected in your weakness!”). The Lord almost always leads us to places where we *must trust and depend on Him!*
4. **Our Passion can direct us.** | Think about the areas of life that make you come alive; it is here that you may find your gift(s) surfacing.
5. **Serve others and your gift(s) will become evident.** | As we engage in ministry to others, our gifts simply come to the surface.
6. **Some may be given multiple gifts.** | This is surely the case with Apostles—Teachers since they train the whole body for the work of service.
7. **Your Gift or Gifts may change in time or for the needs at hand.** | There is no indication that gifts are permanent. Paul practiced the gift of healing early in his ministry (see Acts 28:8) but in a similar case later in his life, he did not heal (see 2 Timothy 4:20). This *may* indicate that gifts are given in line with the needs of a certain situation. *Remember: these gifts belong to the Spirit and He gives them as He sees fit under the administration of Jesus and the Father.*

Let me give a couple of stories that illustrate some of these points. I grew up with a terrible speech problem; I could not get one word out of my mouth without stuttering or stammering. Sometimes I could not even begin talking at all. What has the Lord gifted me and called me to do? Teach. I spend most of my time talking. I have never been through speech therapy. Do I still struggle with my speech problems? Yes. Do I love to teach? Yes. In fact, I feel *compelled to teach*. I have a real sense that this is what the Lord has me here to do.

Now I would have never come to some of these conclusions on my own. In fact, if you had told me years ago that I would be *talking* for a living I would have thought you were crazy. Yet others in the Body of Christ who were my mentors and teachers saw in me the gifts that I could not see myself. It was others who set me on the path of teaching. And I am forever grateful.

Let me simply suggest to you that *as you spend time with other believers, purposefully pursuing the ministry of service that the Lord has entrusted to us, your gifts will become apparent.*

7.4

How Do the Gifts Fit in the Body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 12:12–26 For just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, so too is Christ... 15 If the foot says, “Since I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,” it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. 16 And if the ear says, “Since I am not an eye, I am not part of the body,” it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. 17 If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would exercise the sense of smell? 18 **But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as he decided.** 19 If they were all the same member, where would the body be? 20 **So now there are many members, but one body.**

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor in turn can the head say to the foot, “I do not need you.” 22 On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, 23 and those members we consider less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our unpresentable members are clothed with dignity, 24 but our presentable members do not need this. Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. 26 If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it.

As we hear in this passage, we should think about The Body of Christ like the physical human body. Our bodies are made up of many very different types of “members” but they are all united in the working and functioning of the One Body. So also are we in Christ. God has organized The Body of Christ according to His wisdom and purpose.

In His wisdom, the Lord has made the “weaker” or “lesser” members of the Body of Christ more essential in its working. This teaches us that **each member of Christ’s Body has a significant and indispensable role in the Body.** In this context, we use our gifts to serve one another, to build one another up, to shore up one another’s weaknesses, to work together, having mutual concern for one another.

Our gifts are not given to us so that we may “glorify” ourselves—“look at me, check out how great I am!” Our gifts are given to us so that in humility we serve one another and so bring glory to Father God who has gifted us in Christ through the work of His Spirit.

Key Growth Stage: Becoming **FRUITFUL**. Throughout MilktoMeat we have been developing our key growth stages. So far we have discussed AWARE>ALIVE>AWAKE>FREE>FAITHFUL. As you can see, these build on one another. Our last stage is FRUITFUL. Jesus used the images of fruit and fruitfulness to talk about producing life and things worthy of the Kingdom. In John 15, He gives the parable of the Vine in which He is the vine and we are the branches. He makes it clear that we can only bear good fruit by “remaining” or “abiding” in Him. 2 Peter 1:4-7 lists the qualities that we should both have and be growing in so that we will not become “useless and unfruitful.” Being fruitful in Christ means producing the life of goodness that He intends for you. It means becoming Christlike. It also means helping others discover and grow in the Way of Jesus. As you can see in the context of this our study so far, you have been gifted to the Church to do this very thing.



Take a look at the suggestions about discovering your gift on the previous page. Work through each of these.

What do you discover about yourself?

Use this page to write out a few thoughts about what comes to mind.

WORDwork | Day 4

7.5 **You Are God's Gift to The Body of Christ!**

Read and think about the following Psalm:

Psalm 139:1–24

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
 139:2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from afar.
 139:3 You search out my path and my lying down
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
 139:4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
 behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
 139:5 You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is high; I cannot attain it...
 139:13 For you formed my inward parts;
 you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
 139:14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
 139:15 My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
 in your book were written, every one of them,
 the days that were formed for me,
 when as yet there was none of them.
 139:17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
 139:18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
 I awake, and I am still with you...
 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!
 Try me and know my thoughts!
 139:24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
 and lead me in the way everlasting!

I have known people who have been worried that they did not have a spiritual gift or that would never discover their spiritual gift(s). As we close this whole study, I believe that it is critically important that you understand that **YOU are the gift that Father God has granted to us all to build up the Body of Christ.**

In the Psalm above, King David reflects on His own life and His own relationship with the LORD. Father God knows us deeply and personally; He knows us better than we know ourselves! David also meditates on the fact that the LORD had made him, formed him in his mother's womb. This leads to his joyous exclamation: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" We have each been fearfully and wonderfully made!

You are truly a unique individual. *There will never be another you.* There is no one else who has lived your life exactly as you have. There is no one else who has your Life-Story. **You have been created to reveal an aspect of the LORD God's limitless and multifaceted wisdom and grace and love in a way that no one else can!** Think on that for a minute. Be amazed. Wonder at the reality of your life.

If you have worked through all the previous MilktoMeat studies (and we hope you have), we have come a long way together. We covered a lot of truths and ideas. The reality is, however, *we have only scratched the surface.* We do believe that have given you all the necessary tools and topics that you will continue to use and develop as you continue your life with Christ. We hope we have been able to help you lay a firm foundation of **HOPE** that is rooted in the Truth of The Scriptures, **FAITH/TRUST** that is focused on Jesus Christ, and **LOVE** that flows out of your relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.

In light of this, let us offer some suggestions that will give some direction as to where you can go from here:



Be rooted in **The Larger Story of Life** that has been revealed to us in The Word. As a member of God's New Priesthood you can help those who are still "lost" deal with the core questions of life: 1) Where did we come from? 2) Why are we here? 3) How will it all turn out?



Always be prepared to share the **The Story of the Gospel.** Remember it is the Gospel that draws the smaller stories of our lives up and into the larger work that Father God is doing.



Always stay grounded in **Your Own Life-Story.** As you grow spiritually, others will be impacted and affected as you share what Father God has done in Christ through the presence and power of the Spirit *in*

your own life. All you have to be is the person that Father God has created you to be.



In Hope and Trust, **Follow The Lord Jesus** wherever He leads you to be an instrument of His love. The Lord will lead you to live together with His people, building one another up. The Lord will also lead you to walk with others as a community reaching out to the World who does not yet know Him. All He asks you to do is Trust Him wherever He leads.



As the Lord leads you, He will lead you to **fellowship in a local assembly** (church) of believers. There you will unite together with a “team” for support and encouragement in all that the Lord calls you to do. These local fellowships/churches take many different forms. You may already be a part of a believing and following community. The important thing is to follow the Lord as He leads you to a group of people who will support and encourage you as you all work together in the great Vision and Mission that has been entrusted to us.

We are so glad that you have taken this journey with us. Some of you, we have met face to face in classes. Others may have used this material on your own and we may have never met. If we don’t meet you in this world, we look forward to meeting you in The Kingdom.

Until then, we pray these praises and prayers for you:

Ephesians 3:20–21 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 3:21 to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Jude 1:24–25 Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling, and to cause you to stand, rejoicing, without blemish before his glorious presence, 25 to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time, and now, and for all eternity. Amen.

Appendices

01 Controversy: Israel and The Church

People disagree. This is true for almost any subject or topic. We have talked about the Lord's goal of Oneness for His people throughout this study. As we pursue this goal, it would seem that agreeing on theological matters would be a necessity. But that is not the case. Mature, intelligent believers often disagree over how things should be interpreted. This should not, however, turn into divisive issues that hinder our fellowship and attachments with one another.

There are some **foundational, core issues** and **truths** that we (theologically conservative Christians) all agree on. There are other topics which are not as central which spark debates and differing opinions. One of the most significant issues is related to the relationship of Israel and the Church.

Earlier we stated that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost and the giving of the Spirit (Acts 2). We have also made statements throughout *Milk-toMeat* which indicate that we believe the Nation of Israel is distinct from the Church, or to put it another way, The Church is not the completion or replacement of Israel.

However, there are other theological “schools of thought” that interpret these issues differently. There is a system of theology called Covenant Reformed Theology which believes that The Church existed all throughout Scripture—from Abraham on—and that the Lord's purposes for National Israel has been completed or replaced in/by The Church.

Historically, this Covenant Reformed view has been challenged by Dispensational schools of thought. There are other theological systems which also disagree with Covenant Reformed conclusions, but the debate between Covenant Reformed and Dispensational theologians is where the most pointed disagreement has taken place. We have been influenced and shaped by the Dispensational side of things although we have also been shaped by other schools of thought as well.

This discussion/debate is long and complicated. Here, we simply want to make you aware of this debate. If you would like to explore it more, I would recommend my book *Pursuing God: Movements and Traditions That Have Shaped*

Christianity in The Western World. There are sections on both schools of thought there, as well as a discussion of other topics and denominational differences that has shaped the institutional church in the modern world.

02 Controversy: The Apostles and Prophets

A lot of history has passed since Paul wrote Ephesians 4. In our times, a fairly significant debate has developed over this question, “Are Apostles and Prophets still functioning in the Church?” First, a little historical context to make sense of where we are now.

In the early 1900s, the Spiritual Gifts were “rediscovered” by a small group of Bible students which then exploded in the Pentecostal and then Charismatic movements in the West. Most of the Scripture’s teaching on the Holy Spirit, the Gifts, the Priesthood of ALL believers and other “spiritual truths” had been neglected or lost in the Roman Church that dominated the West from AD 600 until the time of the Reformation. With the rediscovery of the gifts, a whole new era of church history began.

Again, it is beyond the scope of what we can do to trace all the movements and developments that got us to where we are. The main point that is important to understand is this: within these movements, *people have claimed the titles “apostle” and “prophet” in order claim authority for themselves and manipulate Christ’s people in very unbiblical and spiritually unhealthy ways.* Because of these types of abuses, many simply claim that the Apostles and Prophets do not exist in the Church any longer.

Although we are sympathetic to this viewpoint and we agree that these titles have been used wrongly and sinfully, that is not a sufficient reason to reject what the Scriptures actually teach on these issues.

We have already made a case for how we think the Prophetic Ministry should carry forward in the Church today. The more hotly debated issue relates to the Apostles and we want to address a specific way that Apostles are often defined that does not square with the Scriptural evidence.

So What is an Apostle?

For many years I taught that Apostles could not be present in the Church because of the episode in Acts 1:15-26. There Peter leads the others in replacing Judas in order to fulfill Scripture that someone should take his place among the 12 origi-

nal apostles. If you remember, Judas had killed himself after Jesus' crucifixion. Peter gives the following *qualifications* for Judas' replacement:

Acts 1:21–22 Thus one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus associated with us, beginning from his baptism by John until the day he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness of his resurrection together with us.”

The main point is that to be numbered among The Twelve, the man had to be with Jesus during his whole ministry—from the baptism of John until His Ascension. Two men are presented who meet these *qualifications*: Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. Since both men are equally qualified, the other Apostles cast lots to let the Lord decide and Matthias is chosen.

Peter's qualifications here in Acts 2 have traditionally been used to say that Apostles can't be present in the Church because no one is alive who meets these qualifications. There is, however, a major flaw in this line of thinking: *there are other people in the Scriptures who are called Apostles that would not meet these qualifications, Paul being the most obvious example.*

Here is the main point: the qualifications that Peter gives in Acts 2 define *The Twelve* and not all apostles in general. Paul seems to indicate this in 1 Corinthians 15 in talking about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus:

1 Corinthians 15:5–9 ... He [Jesus] appeared to Cephas, **then to The Twelve**. 6 Then he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, **then to all the apostles**. 8 Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle,...

There is some debate about what Paul means exactly in this passage and if he is distinguishing The Twelve from “all the apostles” that he mentions a little later. It seems that he sees them as two different groups. Whatever the case, there are other people outside The Twelve who are clearly called Apostles:

Acts 14:14 But when **the apostles Barnabas and Paul** heard about it...

2 Corinthians 8:23 If there is any question about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; if there is any question about our

brothers, they are **messengers** [although most translations have “messengers” here, it is the greek term “apostle”] of the churches, a glory to Christ.

Philippians 2:25 But for now I have considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus to you. For he is my brother, coworker and fellow soldier, and your **messenger** [again, this is the term “apostle”] and minister to me in my need.

As we have defined the gifted people given to the Church in Ephesians 4, we have focused on their *function* more than a title. It seems clear that true apostles and those doing apostolic work are those who have been equipped and called by the Lord to take the Gospel out, especially to those who have never hear. This is still a foundational ministry in the Church.

Those who have used these *titles* to claim false authority, glorify themselves, or manipulate others for personal gain with give an account to The Lord on The Day. These people should also be identified and called to correction for their sake and the sake of the Body of Christ. These abuses, however, should not cause us to reject the true gift that Christ has given to His Body to equip and build it up.

