

## Every-Member Ministry

*A Practical Ecclesiology*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:11-16  
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of Ephesians. We're coming to this passage I think for the last time. Well, not the last time hopefully but the last time in this month anyway. We plan to go back to James, Lord willing, next week, our exposition of James, and we come to the end of a series of messages on practical ecclesiology that we started at the beginning of the year and we've been looking at ecclesiology is the doctrine of the church, and so practical ecclesiology is encouraging us, you know, what does our doctrine of the church, how does a correct doctrine of the church affect the way we live and so we've been looking at that for a number of weeks and wanting to really build the kind of church that God wants us to build in 2019, that is, the spiritual body, not buildings but building people and building a group of people who are becoming one. That's what we've seen as we've been looking at this. We talked about the significance of the spiritual community and this is how we give glory to God as we grow in grace, build one another, edify one another, help each other become more like Jesus individually. Corporately we also become a more clear and clear visible representation of Christ, people actually can see Jesus.

Look at what this passage is talking about, Ephesians 4:11-16. Christ becomes visible spiritually to people around us as they see us doing the things that this passage talks about and so we've been talking in the last several weeks about what we're supposed to do. You know, what we're to build, we're to build this glorious spiritual community where Jesus becomes visible, how do you do that? Well, this passage has a lot to say about that and we talked about three different things already in four weeks. We said that to become this kind of body where Jesus is becoming visible, we have to, first of all, be equipped through expository listening, learning how to listen to the word of God and then apply the word of God. That's what we talked about several weeks back, and then next we saw in this passage we see that we're to speak the truth in love; that if we're going to become the body that we need to be, we don't just need to learn how to listen to the word and apply it, we need to actually engage in relationships where we engage in life-changing conversations. That was the title of one of our messages, expository listening, life-changing conversations, and then the last two weeks we looked at the third element and that's redemptive relationships. We speak the truth in love in the context of a relationship where we're committed to one another and to our growing in grace. And then today we come to the fourth and final thing that I think we need to see in this passage, how do we

build the body, expository listening, life-changing conversations, redemptive relationships and today the title of the message is "Every-Member Ministry." Every-member ministry. It's something that Paul makes clear in the passage that the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ when he brought us to himself was that we would all become ministers for him, servants for him, workers for him in the building of the process, and we all have a vital role to play.

Everyone who's been born-again has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and we have an important distinct role to play and it's very important especially in this day where some of the recent decades of church history have sort of set us up for failure in many ways, kind of the seeker-sensitive movement of the 80s and 90s helped to foster what was already pretty strong which was an idea that the laity, the distinction between the clergy and the laity, clergy, the ministers that lead the church, laity, the rest of the membership of the church, and so what happened with the seeker movement was there was such a focus on accommodating the seeker that it became very entertainment focused and services became very entertainment focused, and so the Christians in the pews became more of spectators than teammates. Think about you go to a ballgame, you watch a ballgame, that's a lot of fun, but we're not called to go and watch the ballgame, we're called to get on the field and play in the ballgame and so that's a problem. Then you also have just American consumerism feeding into it so that as Christians we're tempted to be consumers, not participants, workers. We come with an attitude we're not watching this, the world fosters this mindset, "What do I get out of church," more than, "What do I give." The Christian model of love is we give, we give more than we get. We don't come to get, we come to give. We have all of our needs met in Christ and so we come out of the overflow of that and we serve one another.

So this passage rightly understood helps us to steer away from those things and I do want to say a word about this. I think this is actually an area where I feel like I'm preaching like Paul did when he wrote 1 Thessalonians. You know, each of the letters in the New Testament has a particular circumstance it's written out of and the Corinthian letters are to the Corinthians, the Corinthians were really struggling and you can tell Paul is very concerned about just their sinfulness and their foolishness. I mean, you just read it, Galatians the same way, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" He's writing out of great concern, "You guys are really messing up." Thessalonians is more like this, "You guys are doing a great job. Keep up the good work and just strive even more." And I think in some sense this passage, this particular aspect of this passage about this church is a little bit more like the Thessalonians. I think we have a pretty extraordinary sense of every-member ministry going on here. I'm very grateful for that, that you serve one another very well. Now what I think the message, then, for us is you're doing well but you can do even better by the grace of God for the glory of God, and we need to call ourselves to even greater faithfulness. But we really are, I mean, the Lord has blessed our church in so many ways. It's such a privilege to serve with you, so I want to say that up front even as I challenge us all on to even greater heights of obedience to the Lord.

So let's read the passage together. I'm gonna start at verse 7 because I want us to see the broader context and read all the way through verse 16 and we're looking at the concept of every-member ministry. Ephesians 4:7,

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, as we open Your word, we are mindful that unless You, Lord, attend Your word by Your Spirit to our hearts and illuminate our minds, open the eyes of our understanding, we will not receive the full benefit of Your truth. So we ask You, O Lord, to help us. Grant us grace. Help us to examine ourselves in the light of Your precious word, help Your word drive us to Christ to love Him more and may that love be expressed in greater obedience and more ready service. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

So we're talking about every-member ministry. You see that come out in the passage. You know, we're equipped, the pastor/teachers and the ministry of the word is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, so I want to gather our thoughts around three points this morning and they're basically three questions related to what we're called to do, every-member ministry. First is what are you called to do, and then we're gonna ask how are you called to do it, and then thirdly, why are you called to do it.

So first, what are you called to do? What are we called to do and in a word, the word is work. We're called to work. You know, work is a good thing. It always has been. Adam and Eve worked, were created to work in the garden before there was sin. Sometimes in this world we feel like work's a bad thing, don't we? We want to get through with our work so we can rest, and rest is a good thing too, the Lord rested after he worked in the

creation of the universe though he didn't need to rest, he doesn't get tired. He was showing us that we're gonna need rest and before the fall they still needed rest. After the fall, we need rest but work's a good thing. And we're created to work. We're created as humans to work and we're created as newborn Christians to grow and to be able to work. So we're all called to work, that's what we're called to do.

We see it in verse 12 and we see it in kind of an inclusio or inclusion, which is kind of a bracket around the passage, the key word being work. You have it in verse 12, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service." The word "work" there, called to work, and you see that same word or a related term, actually a compound form of that same word, in verse 16 where you read, "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working." That is a word, a compound form of the same word from verse 12, *energeia*. Actually the word in verse 12 is *ergon*, which is the Greek word for work, and then *energeia*, proper working. You transliterate that word into "energy" in English, *energeia*, and it means in-working, energy that's working, and so he's saying according to the proper working of each individual part. So he started off saying, "Listen, the reason Jesus gave these gifts to the church, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher, in other words, the reason He gave the gifts that give the word of God to the church is to equip all the members for work." That's what God's ideal is, to have everyone working, and then at the end he basically is summing up this whole passage saying, "You see as this happens, there's this growth that's happening and you see the fullness of it happening as each individual part is doing its proper working, and it won't reach its full glory unless each individual part is doing its work."

Now it's interesting and we read the passage earlier, Ted read it earlier in Ephesians 2, you know, Christians, we believe, reformed Christians, evangelical Christians, Protestants believe that we are not saved by our works; we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, not according to our works. We're saved by faith not by works. We read that in Ephesians 2 and look back to that chapter, Ephesians 2:8, 9 and 10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works." You're not saved as a result of works. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not saved as a result of anything that you have done or will do. And he goes on to say, Paul says, "so that no one may boast." There is no ground of boasting. Those who are saved have nothing to boast about before God because there's nothing that you or I have done that makes us acceptable to God and that is clear. We're not saved by works, we're saved by grace, we're saved through faith, but we are saved unto works. You read on to the next verse, Ephesians 2:10, after he's made clear we're not saved by works, not as a result of works so that no one may boast, look what he says in verse 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works," literally unto good works, "which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." We're not saved by works, we're saved for works. You see, we're saved by grace so that we can go to work in building God's kingdom. Really an amazing privilege. Awesome. Unbelievable. What do we have to offer? I mean, think about it, what do you or I have to offer to God? Nothing and yet he gives us incredible grace to us to let us serve alongside

him in the building of his kingdom and he furnishes us with everything that we need. He equips us with everything that we need to work with him.

So we are saved unto good works. This is seen even clearer in one of Paul's pastoral epistles, Titus. If you turn over a few books toward the back of your Bible after 1 and 2 Timothy, you come to Titus and in Titus we see that one of the key words, key phrases in his letter, now Paul, a pastoral epistle, let me just explain that in case that's a term that might be new to you. Paul normally writes his epistles, his letters, to churches. You know, like we're reading the church of Ephesus. He wrote a letter to the church of Ephesus and it's called Ephesians. Philippi, he wrote a letter to the church in the city of Philippi that's called Philippians. The region of Galatia, it's Galatians. But he also has three letters, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, he wrote to individual men who were pastors of churches. So normally the letter is to the whole church, these letters were to the pastor to tell them what to do, how to build the church, how to lead the church, and so it's instructive to look at these and see how the priorities for leadership ought to be in the church, and one of the key phrases in the book of Titus is the word, is the phrase, "good work." In the NASB it's "good deeds," but literally in the Greek it is *ergon*, it's the word "work," it's "good works."

It occurs six times in the passage but I want you to look at Titus 2:14. This is showing, again, that we're saved by Jesus' great work for us, Titus 2:14, "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession." That's the Gospel. We're saved not by what we've done but what Jesus has done; not by what we can do but his finished work, right? Well, what does he say next? "To purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Literally it could be translated "zealous for good works." He saves us so that we might have zeal to work and to do things for him.

Look at the next couple of verses down, chapter 3, verse 1, "Remind them," he's talking to Titus, the pastor, he's saying, "Listen, remind your flock, remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. Be ready for it." Chapter 3, verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good works. These things are good and profitable for men." But he can't end the letter without reminding them again. Chapter 3, verse 14, "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful."

So the Christian is called to work and one of the reasons sometimes we are prone to depression or anxiety or other emotional issues is we're not, you know, we're not working like we need to for the Lord. Now we're gonna talk about how that, what that looks like. It's not that we just say, "Hey, just get to work. Get to work. Just do it." Whatever. No, no, there's some careful things we need to understand. But one of the problems that we have is, I know for me, one of the things that I struggle with is the idol of comfort and, you know, just being able to get done with stuff so that you can rest. There's nothing wrong with that except when it's more important than pleasing God and so, you know, we can find ourselves where we're so, we get through with the hard work, hard day, and you

go home and you're ready to rest and then you find out at home that you're needed. There's some good works for you to do. The Lord Jesus is like, "Ty, I've got great news for you, when you get home, you've got some good works that I've prepared beforehand for you to walk in them." And you know, I'm not thinking that when I go home. "Lord, please have some good works for me when I get home." Not in my flesh. I should be praying that way, though. But the reality, and that's for all of us. I mean, many of you have that same understanding, don't you? You're like, "Oh," but there's great opportunities to serve the Lord, challenges that we have, things that we need to do together. That's what we all are called to do.

So we're called to work. Now it's not just that, there's a second little subpoint. We're all called to work, this is number 1, what are you called to do? We're all called to work but I want to add something else to it from the passage, we are each called to specific works. It's real important that we see this in the passage as well. There's a real emphasis on each individual person among us. Paul makes this clear in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, first of all in verse 16 when he says, "by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part." Literally in the Greek "each one part." When the proper working, when the working is happening as it's supposed to of each one part, then the body grows to look more like Jesus.

In fact, it's interesting, this, there's an echo of this, each one part, in the very beginning of the passage in verse 7 when he says, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." So the picture is Jesus has given grace to the church, he's given gifts, he's measured out gifts to us, to each one of us, because each one of us is called to do specific works for his glory. This is the way God has ordained it and there's a beauty about this. Each one of us has unique gifts and will have unique opportunities to use those gifts in a way that will glorify God, in a way that really no other person in the church can quite do it the same way. Now we find that a number of us have similar gifts and we all, you know, so we work together well in certain areas, but we all have unique experiences, unique giftedness, unique resources that we bring to the body.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 12, another passage on spiritual gifts that's really instructive and God's purpose and wisdom in it, showing how, why he's given the gifts and how important it is for us to use our gifts, and look at the emphasis again upon the individuality. I mean, we've been talking a lot about the corporate oneness, that for us as Americans, those of us who have been raised in the West, live, you know, now, we think individualistically and then Scripture calls us to have more of a corporate mindset than we're prone to do, but it does not mean there's not individual emphases in Scripture. You see this, we're all called to follow Christ but you individually must repent and believe the Gospel. You're not saved because of your parents' faith or your brother's faith or other Christians' faith, you must personally follow Jesus, and you and I must personally use our gifts.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation

of the Spirit for the common good." Each one has been given a particular gift but the gift is for the common good.

Now skip down to verse 18. Again, look at the emphasis on each one. Verse 18, 1 Corinthians 12, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." Each one just as he desired. You are here because he wants you here. It wasn't so much our doing as his doing. The reason you found out about the church, the reason you, maybe you knew somebody else, whatever, it was because God wanted you to. He was working through all of that and now we come to the body and we're supposed to see, "God has placed me here. I have unique gifts and I'm to use them for the common good."

Let's read on. Verse 19, "If they were all one member, where would the body be?" If everybody was the same member, what would we be like? He's using the metaphor of the physical body. "But now there are many members, but one body." Verse 21, "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker," seem to be less important, "are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked." He's saying that our more presentable members don't need honor but God has composed it so that we bestow honor on all the members of the body because we need all the members of the body. Verse 25, "so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." God has made it so that we need each other in an interdependent way, an interdependent way that makes us love one another and treasure one another. It's intended to do that.

So back to Ephesians 4, what happens is that when we're doing our parts, when we're serving as we're supposed to, the body is being fit together as we see there in verse 16, fitted and held together because every joint is supplying what it's supposed to supply, and this is a beautiful, harmonious, glorious thing with each part playing its role, and when one part is not playing its part, it's not doing its work, the whole body suffers. You say, "Well, my part seems so insignificant. It's a small thing. Nobody's missing me." Well, they may not know that they're missing you consciously but they are missing you according to God's word. If you are not doing your part, you are not benefiting the body, the body is suffering because you're not doing your part.

So that makes it so important to know what we're to do. So what we're called to do, we're to work, we're to do our particular part, our particular work. Now secondly, the second main point, not just what are you called to do, second point, how are you called to do it? How are you called to do it? How do you go about finding your part? How do you go about finding your gift? It's interesting in the text that in the whole New Testament we're not given any instruction about how to find out our spiritual gift. It doesn't say anywhere, "Hey, guys, discern your gift and then use it." It doesn't. You may have been exposed to spiritual gifts tests. I've taken those before. I'm not saying they're, you know, bad, I just

don't think that's really biblical so much, it's just maybe helpful. But God didn't tell us to set aside tests for that. Again, like I said, I'm not making this big deal out of it. I think there is a way that we're supposed to go and find out our spiritual gift but it's apparently not by focusing so much on the gift, "What's my gift? What's my gift?" I'm looking at me. I'm looking at me. Do you see what I'm saying? "What's my gift? What's my gift? What's my gift?" I think that what God is saying is, it's not what's my gift, it's what's the need? What's the need? What's the need? What can I do? That's the way you find out your gift.

How you're called to do it, it's not supposed to be trying to identify your gift and think about that and so much it's self-focus, rather you turn outward, and I want to say that I think there's four practical steps or parts, not so much steps but parts to this. How are you called to do it? How are we to engage in the works of ministry? How are we to get involved in serving? How do you do it? Four subpoints under number 2.

First is in the word "supply." Supplies in verse 16 gives us a hint, "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies." Every joint is supplying something. The word "supply" means "to aid or assist." It comes from aid or assistance. It's actually a noun. It means "aid or assistance," but it means to give aid and assistance so that there's a fullness, a full supply. I think we can step back from that and look at it and he's saying, "Listen, you're using your gifts to supply needs. You're using your gifts to meet needs. You're using your gifts under the power of the Holy Spirit to fill gaps."

So the first point, subpoint here, how do you go about doing it? Look for needs. Look for lack. If what's needed is supplied, look for lack. What is lacking? What is needed? "Lord, help me have eyes to see what's needed around me. Help me have eyes to see and be able to see people that have needs around me, help me move in that." So you look for the needs and sometimes they're just practical needs, practical things that need to be done and you see it and you say, "Yes, Lord, I'll do that." That's one of the things we're trying to do a better job at is organizing how to let people know what the needs are so that you can get involved in practical ways and just serving others for the glory of God.

So look for needs. Secondly, move toward needs. Intentionally move toward needs. The key word here is the word translated "joint, by what every joint supplies." It's a word that's difficult to translate. Well, most all the translations go with the word "joint" but it doesn't really, because the joint supplies something and the metaphor of the body, your joints don't really supply anything. Do you know what I'm saying? It's not like you get anything out of your ankle, you just want your ankle to work well. You get movement but it's not like supply is happening. Supply is more blood, nervous system, you know. So it's not, it's an imperfect metaphor but let me help you with the word itself, what it means. The word comes from a verb, this noun "joint," comes from a verb which means "to touch," and so the idea is a juncture, a bond, a connection.

So he's saying that what has to happen is there have to be connections among the members of the body and when those connections happen, supply happens. When we connect to one another, when you move toward need and you touch the need and you're



walking with the Lord best you can and you're just trying to serve someone, supply happens. Jesus infuses your what feels like sometimes paltry efforts, confused, stumbling attempts. He infuses it with life-changing power. He infuses it with life itself. So the thing is move toward needs and touch, connect. Not from a distance but to try to actually minister to this person. Connect.

You know, and so much happens through connection. This is why we've been realizing as elders that we have to facilitate best we can as part of we equip with the word, we teach the word, but people gotta use the word. They've gotta have opportunities to build relationships and so this is why we have things like, and we mention each week, Wednesday night dinner, Sunday after church fellowship, which by the way, you know, you can get your, you can take a lunch out there, whatever, but you don't have to take lunch, you can just go out there and drink coffee and hang out for a while if you're not hungry. You know, drink a lot of coffee, maybe we'll have cookies soon. I think that's a good idea, but anyway cookies are always a good idea, aren't they? But anyway, so I'm not making any promises now. We're gonna talk about budget later so I get ahead of us and I get reined in by the other brothers. But anyway so, but the reason we have it, no matter what it is, the reason we have these things isn't because we just like to eat or we like, you know, we like coffee. No, the reason we have those things is so that we can connect.

You can start connecting with people. You can start touching their life and one of the really effective ways to touch the lives of people is to even get involved in the mundane, the apparently less even impressive, attractive things like a work day or serving in some other ministry, the nursery, or just anything where you're working with other people and because working along, isn't it amazing how much can happen? You work alongside somebody, you get to know them, you're just working together, you're accomplishing a task and suddenly you're talking, things are coming out, you're connecting. You're finding need and now there's connection happening and life is flowing. Now if you just come to church and as soon as church is over you always leave as quickly as possible, you're not allowing that to happen and it's not just so much what you're missing out on, the question the Lord Jesus would ask you is, "What are you withholding from your brothers and sisters?" Be like Christ who left the glory of heaven, immersed himself in our world so that he could come down and touch us at the point of our need.

So move toward needs. Look for needs, second subpoint, B here, 2B, move toward needs. C, the third subpoint, meet those needs. Seek to meet those needs. There's the lack. I see it. I'm moving toward it and now what can I do? "Lord, help me." A couple of words that I think are implied in the passage here or actually stated, the first word is "serve." You meet the need by serving. In verse 12, the equipping of the saints is for the work, the work of service. The work is to serve. The word of "service" translates the Greek word diakonia, which means, it can mean common, ordinary, just service like waiting a table, fulfilling any kind of manual responsibility, but it basically the bigger idea is it means that you're doing your work, you're doing some work at the instruction of another. A diakonos is under orders from someone else. He's a servant to do someone else's higher trust.

So we're to serve one another because we belong to Christ and Christ has said for me to do this. It's so powerful when we remember that, that we are to serve as his ambassadors to one another. This is why when we witness to someone, we're to speak to them not on the basis of who we are, what our experience is. I mean, we certainly can share that, that's a powerful part of witnessing is to share your testimony, but the reason that we speak is because our Ambassador has sent us to represent him, and so the same thing, we serve because Jesus is calling me to and he's calling me to be like him who the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give himself, give his life a ransom for many.

So when you move toward the needs, you're willing to take the lowly position of serving, meeting the need. Another word I think that comes out of the passage too is the idea of giving or generosity because I mentioned the word "supply, every joint supplies," that word I mentioned earlier is aid or assistance but it means a full supply. It means abundance so that when he says in verse 16, "by what every joint supplies," is implied an abundance of resources; that this connection has connected a lack, a need, a hole, as it were, a hollowed out empty spot has been filled with an abundance because of the touching that has happened. So that implies our hearts are generous and giving as we serve, so we're asking the Lord to help us, "Lord, help me be a servant and help me give because I have to give my resources to meet this. I have to take time." You invest emotional energy.

We only have so much time. That's our most precious commodity, isn't it? And when you take and spend your time for another brother or sister, you are demonstrating Christ's love. Time, energy, your money, this is the reason we do these things because we're trying to meet the need that Christ has made known to us and we're doing it out of, like we talked about last time, remember we're to be motivated out of his love for us but his love for us pushes us to love him back by loving one another, by serving one another, by giving to one another. Because Jesus has given so much to me, I want to give back to him and I can't give back to him directly but I can give back to him indirectly by giving to you.

So we've said how are you called to do it? We're called to look for needs, to move toward needs, to meet the needs, but there's one other thing that we need to see in the passage, we need to stay connected to the head. That's D, 2D. Look for needs. Move toward needs. Meet the needs. Stay connected to the head. Key word here or key words, verse 16, "from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies." From whom. Who is "whom"? Verse 15, "who is the head, even Christ." It's our connection to the head. It's each member's organic living connection to the head, from him from whom the life flows, and if each of us is not connected to the head, then we are operating in the flesh and there's not life flowing. We have to stay connected to him.

This idea, this organic unity happening. In fact, it's interesting, this same word is found, or this same picture is found in Colossians 2:19. It's amazing the resonance between what we just read and Colossians 2:19. Colossians, a couple of books toward the back of your Bible, right after Philippians, and look what Paul says in Colossians, verse 19, "and not

holding fast to the head," he's saying, "Look, the danger is that you will not be holding fast to the head from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God." The same image, isn't it? As you hold fast to the head, the whole body is supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments and grows with a growth which is from God. So he's saying, "Hold fast to the head as you look for needs, move toward needs, meet needs. Hold fast to Christ."

Now it's interesting in the context of Colossians, of what Paul is saying there that helps us understand what this means in Ephesians, we read verse 19 but look at verse 19 in context. Verses 16 to 18 talks about false teaching. He says, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day." There was a false teaching that was going on where people were teaching kind of a Christian asceticism, Christian law-keeping, that you need to observe this day, you need to do this this way, you need to abstain from certain foods, you need to abstain from certain drinks, you need to order your calendar around the new moon just like the Jews did in the old days, the Sabbath, you need to practice the Sabbath exactly the way the Jews did if you want to be a real Christian, and Paul says in verse 18, "Listen, let no one keep defrauding you. They're gonna take away your prize if you start delighting in what they are doing which is self-abasement and the worship of the angels. They're calling you by their false teaching to delight in self-denial for the sake of self-denial and that, if you do that, you're not holding fast to Christ. The way to not do what they're saying is hold fast to Christ."

And when you read it in the larger context, verses 11 to 15 which led him to then the "therefore" in verse 16, is a glorious picture of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Look what he says in verse 11. Let's start at verse 9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." Essentially what you're gonna see is that to hold fast to Christ is to keep our focus, our faith anchored in what he has done and not what we can do. It's not what, this is this amazing tension. We're being called to do some things in this passage in Ephesians 4, right? But the focus, the foundation must always be not what you and I are supposed to do but what Christ has done. The finished work of Christ.

That's what we see here, "For in Him all the fullness," Colossians 2:9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him," you see, it's what God has done in Christ and you are in him. "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." You have been cleansed, he's saying, in what Jesus Christ did. It's done forever. You don't have to abstain from certain things or whatever to be clean, you are clean because of what Christ has done.

He goes on to say, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to

us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Therefore no one is to act as your judge." You are one in Christ. You are holy in Christ. Nobody is to act as your judge as Lord of your conscience over silly things like the days of the week, the days of the month, whether you eat something or drink something. You hold fast to the head of Christ by faith, trusting in him, his finished work.

So back into Ephesians 4, what that means for us there is as we look for needs, as we move toward needs, as we meet the needs, we keep our eyes and our hearts anchored in the finished work of Christ on the cross in the resurrection. I do this because of what Christ has done for me. I'm not trying to earn anything. I'm not trying to win any points with God. I'm not trying to win any points with you. I am satisfied with what Christ has done. That's all I need and I'm giving out of the overflow of that to you for him. Actually I'm giving to him by giving to you. But we must not forget to hold fast to the head. It's so easy to forget to hold fast to the head.

So that's how you're called to do it. Look for needs. Move toward needs. Meet those needs all the while holding fast to Christ. Third point. We've considered what you're called to do and how you're called to do it, thirdly, why are you called to do it? Why are we called to do our part? It's clear in the text that if we don't do our part, then this doesn't happen the way that it could and we say, "Well, my part's not that big a deal. Nobody's gonna miss me." No, it always impacts the whole body of Christ. It's amazing how much one man's sin can impact so many people.

You know, you think about when immorality or some, you know, horrible sin happens and how much the ripple effect of that is so great. Well, sins of omission have a ripple as well. When we, now sins of commission, that's what we do, right? We do something wrong, but omission is what we don't do that we're supposed to do. If we don't do what we're supposed to do, it is having a ripple effect. We may not be able to quantify it or see it but God can and so we must understand that what we don't, why we're called to do it is if you don't do your part, if I don't do my part, something vital is missing and it can be a small thing and you think it's not that big a deal.

I read an article by John MacArthur talking about this. He referenced and the interesting point from baseball history. Dizzy Dean, some of you will know that name. You won't know it probably because you watched him play. I don't think any of us are quite that old but he played in the 1930s and he played for the St. Louis Cardinals. He was actually and some would argue one of the greatest pitchers of all time though, and he wasn't inducted into the Hall of Fame, but he only really had five great seasons. His first five seasons. Those of you that follow baseball, forgive me those of you who don't. But he won 120 games in five years as a pitcher, 24 games a year on average. He's the last man in the National League to win 30 games in a season which he did in 1934. He was 30-7. He pitched his team to the World Series, pitched the first game, the fifth game, and the seventh game. Two days rest, he pitched and one days rest. He pitched game 5 and he pitched game 7 and it was a shut-out, complete game shut-out in game 7.

Okay, thank you for indulging me if you don't like baseball. That's really impressive. He had a great fastball. He had an injury that ended up, that shortened his career. The injury that shortened this great Major League baseball pitcher's career wasn't a shoulder injury, it wasn't an elbow injury, it wasn't even a knee injury or an ankle injury. In the All-Star game of 1937, Dizzy Dean was pitching, he threw a fastball, the batter hit a line drive off of his left foot fracturing his big toe. They were in the midst of a pennant race so Dean did not stay off that big toe long enough, his big toe didn't heal, and he because he couldn't plant, it was his left foot, a pitcher plants on that left foot as they throw, it affected the planting of his foot and so his arm motion changed and he tore up his arm. He was never able to pitch again. The rest of, the next five years he won 30 games total until he retired. A great pitcher, career ended at 27 years old basically by an injury to his big toe. Every part is important and when some part that, when we're not playing our part, we don't know how we're affecting the body but we can know we are affecting the body.

Why are you called to do it? If you don't do your part, something Bible is missing, but if you do your part, as you try to do your part more and more and all of us do it imperfectly, all of us are messing up, and God's grace is greater than our sin, but when we do our part, when we move toward needs and we meet those needs, then that wonderful word again supplies happens. Every joint supplies, then the head is supplying, is abundantly meeting the needs and it is a glorious thing to behold when this happens.

You know, many of you are on the prayer chain. You know about what happened to the Clarks this week. Denver and Heather, Heather was driving home on Thursday night with her son Wilson in the front seat, one of his friends in the back seat, driving down Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road around 10 o'clock and a pedestrian ran out in front of her car, suddenly in front of her and she hit the pedestrian. The person was not breathing when the paramedics arrived, no pulse. Thankfully they were able to revive the person. We don't know what the condition is now. We know that the last word was this person was revived and they're in critical condition at Gwinnett Medical Center. What is clear and thankfully Heather was not at fault in any way, she wasn't distracted driving, there were witnesses who corroborated that, a car behind her, another car. She wasn't at fault. She's not at fault at all and yet you can imagine how hard that has been for her.

You know, and I want to talk about the ministry of the body and this already. I got a text from Jess. Denver called or Denver texted Jess and told him what had happened. Jess calls me. We both try to figure out, it's like 10:30 at this time, okay, where did it happen? We text back to Denver and he says, he tells us the address on Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and we say, "We're on our way." So I got there, then Jess got there and then we were able to talk to him and pray with him, but I remember thinking as I'm driving, "Wow, this is one of those situations," I don't know, at this point I don't know that she wasn't at fault or anything. You know, I don't know anything but I know somebody's been hit and that we think they're dead because the last thing Denver texted was, "They can find no pulse."

So we go, we get there and I'm honestly, I'm praying and I'm thinking, "Lord, I don't know how to minister in this situation. I know there's a need but I don't know what to supply." And so I got there, I got there first because my house is closer to where it was than Jess is. I pray with them. He gets there a little bit later. We're ministering to them, talking, and just kind of, she's just emotionally distraught. Denver's emotionally distraught. We were there for an hour and a half. We pray again. We find out that the person is alive and the family is at the hospital but I'm thinking, "Lord," and I'm telling them the Lord has a purpose. This is not accidental. God is gonna do something wonderful through this and I'm saying it and I know it's true but I'm wondering, "Lord, what are You gonna do?" But I'm confident. I'm growing as I'm talking to them. The Lord's helping me and the Lord's helping Jess and he had some things to say that, you know, and then we talked to them the next day and we're staying in touch with them and stuff, but the next morning at men's Bible study, I share the story. I'm wondering what God's gonna do.

There are like 15 guys in our Bible study, two of the guys in that 15 had been through experiences like that or one's wife and one of the guys had been through experiences like that. I'm like, what are the odds? That's 1/7 of 15 men have been through some similar experience. So one of the guys mentioned, I said, "Well, the Lord obviously wants you to minister to them and be able at some point be able to connect and commiserate with them," because 2 Corinthians 1 says that he comforts us in affliction and the comfort that we receive, we're to comfort others with. There's something powerful about having gone through the same kind of experience and finding comfort in Christ and then giving that comfort to someone else.

Well, the other man whose wife had been through an experience like this, I found out later from Denver when I talked to him that afternoon, she had gone right over after she found out to the house and spent time with her and Denver told me that afternoon it had meant so much. Heather did not sleep all night Thursday night. Could not go to sleep. All she could see was replaying the accident in her mind.

But the Lord, he wasn't surprised by this. He already had his people in place ready to minister. In fact, I was talking also to Denver about this yesterday, Saturday, and he was saying that he had been encouraged by one of his family members, unbeliever, to say, "Listen, this is gonna be so traumatic. You're gonna have to have professional help." And honestly this is a traumatic event that will have repercussions for a while and we can't pretty it up. That's just the fact. Now God's grace is sufficient for that but it's a long-term process. It's not just, you know, a few Bible verses and pray and it's over. No, it's gonna take a long time to work through this because just it's traumatic the impact on the soul.

He was saying that one of his family members was saying that and the elders, we had had a kind of a mini-elder meeting after Bible study, the ones that were at the Bible study, and we were talking about a guy who came to our church last year, you may remember Curtis Solomon, Biblical Counseling Coalition, came to a seminar on post-traumatic stress. This guy is an expert on post-traumatic stress and he is finishing his PhD on it and he's done work on it with an organization that has a success rate that is phenomenal. Now

they're working with soldiers which is where you mostly hear about post-traumatic stress. On the front lines they experience things that just wrack the soul, they come home and the suicide rate is alarmingly astonishingly high. This organization that's been working with more than 2,000 soldiers over an extended period, I think it's 8 or 10 years, now they did not have a single suicide until just last year, the first time. That is like mind-blowing for all of the ministries that work with people in post-traumatic stress. It's like it can't happen like that, that you have less than, you know, like 1/10 of a percent.

Well, you know, Curtis is good friends with Jess. I happened to run into Curtis when I was in Louisville. We talked for a while. He told me that particular part of the story and I'm thinking, "Wow, the Lord..." So Jess has already been in contact with him. We're getting help from him on how to do it, and then I learned yesterday that one of our other members had taken some courses over at Woodstock at the church recently, they had a post-traumatic stress issue, and she had gone over either Friday or yesterday and spent time with Heather with her four pages of notes just talking through things with her and loving on her, and Denver reported to me, "I can't believe how much the love of Christ has been flowing to us."

Now that's not to mention others of you who have taken care of their children, who have taken meals. I know we have two weeks of meals lined up already for them and so what's happening? There's need and the body is moving and as you move and you touch, the Lord Jesus Christ is supplying and he has, I mean, I had never heard of post-traumatic stress other than just on the news or whatever until a year ago and the Lord has put these resources around us at the right time. This is the way God is. This is how he works in his body. He never fails to do what is needed and he will supply as we move toward needs and seek to meet needs connected to the head, he will supply, and like the Apostle Paul prayed for, he will supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory. There's no deficiency in God. He has everything that we need and so we know we don't have anything. We move as empty vessels staying connected to Christ, but if you are connected to Christ and you move toward someone, you are a conduit of the riches of his glory flowing through you. That's why we can move toward people. We don't know what to say, we don't know what to do, but we know someone who does know what is needed and who is more than able. That's what we're called to do and as we do that in situations like this, big situations like this, but other situations. There are needs all over the body where people may be hurting right now that need to be touched and connected and the Lord is waiting for us to open our eyes, to see the needs and to move toward those needs, and as we do, he will show his glory and we walk through these things together and it shows the glory of our Savior. What a wonderful place to be, the church of Jesus Christ. God is so good.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we give You praise and honor. We think of the grace that You offer in the 55<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah when You say, "Come. Come you who are thirsty, come and buy wine and buy milk without cost." You're so generous. You invite us to come to You and when we come to You, You satisfy our souls, our hearts. You make us clean and holy and*

*righteous in Your sight. You take away our sins and You're able to do that for people who don't deserve it because as You say later in that passage, You show mercy to the one who comes to You because my thoughts are not Your thoughts, neither are Your ways my ways, declares the Lord, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. O God, we praise You that Your ways are so much higher than ours. You use even difficult, burdensome, tragic circumstances, You're able to turn those around to help us see Your glory. Father, help us be obedient, help us be more sensitive to the needs around us, and help us by the power of Your love to be more bold in moving toward each other and then help us be humble to serve and to give for the glory of our great Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.*