

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 22

Equipping, Edifying, Protecting

By

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Let's turn to the [Ephesians 4:7-16](#).

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

8 Therefore He says:

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.”

9 (Now this, “He ascended” [speaking of Jesus]—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Let's pray.

We love Your word, Lord, and we are very happy to be in the truth and very glad that by Your Holy Spirit You are interested in taking every jot, every tittle, every line, and every precept of this word and building it into our hearts and into our minds. May it produce in us exactly what it was written for and we pray that it would produce this individually in our human lives. Then Lord, that it might be there in us and that You would be able to bring it to remembrance for Your purposes for the rest of the days of our pilgrimage. So, we ask for that work of Your Holy Spirit through Your word in this place today and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

In Ephesians chapters 4–6, we have a description by God of the Christian life that is a worthy response to all that God has done for us—all of the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus that Paul has been detailing all through the first three chapters.

The first mark of our proper response that Paul lays out, a response that is worthy of all that we are and all that we have in Christ, is that our lives would be influenced for unity in the body of Christ. The second response for all that God has done for us is that every one of us would do our share (as is written in [verse 16](#)) that every part of the body of Christ, every single Christian, would do his share according to his gifting and God's call upon his life. Every single one of us, as a Christian, has the privilege of being gifted in at least one spiritual gift from God. And then there is, with that privilege, the responsibility of taking our place in the body of Christ and allowing God to use that gift through our life for His purposes in the world, in the generation that He has allowed us to live.

In [Ephesians 4:8-10](#), the Giver of these gifts is described and it is none other than Jesus Himself. It speaks of Him leaving the glory of heaven, coming to this earth. He was not merely willing to come to this fallen earth, but He was willing to die here for our sins. He went into the heart of the earth, into Hades itself, and was resurrected three days later. And then following all of that, being resurrected, He then ascended into heaven where He rules over all things.

Now I look at something like this and I think: “If we are all gifted (and we are) and if each of us has a share to do in God's work (and we do), then how does that happen?” And that is what Paul talks about here in [Ephesians 4:11-15](#). It happens as the leadership in a church makes the things that are listed in those verses the goals of the church, the priorities and the emphases of the local church. Because in these verses, God describes what He wants the church to be. And I think that passages like this are becoming increasingly important because there is increasingly more confusion in the church. In my estimation it has hit warp speed (for you Trekkies), but I mean it is moving fast—especially in the last five years. There are many different ideas about what the church is supposed to be and what its function is in the world. There are different ideas regarding what the church's function is in the community and what it is supposed to be doing to accomplish all of this within human lives. And the idea regarding what the church is supposed to be is changing so dramatically.

What does the church exist for and why do people come here on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights? Why do they come every other day and night of the week and sit in the different studies and get involved beyond Sunday mornings and Sunday nights? Why do we even come together? What is God aiming at? If we do not know what He is aiming at, then we hardly know how to cooperate with Him. Does He bring you to church for me to amuse you? That may happen as a by-product, but does God bring you to church for me to entertain you? Does He bring people into the body to do anything and everything under the sun for the sake of growing larger as a church? Is that the most important thing in the world to God—that every church would be a big church at any expense?

Passages like this are valuable because they not only define to leaders what the local church is supposed to be and what the goals are, but it defines how God wants us to get there. And Scripture defines the ways that really honor God and it defines God-honoring ways that the church becomes what it is supposed to be. But I think that it is important not only for leaders in a church to understand this, but also every single Christian should

know what it is that we can expect biblically from a local church—no more, no less. What is that organism supposed to be to me? There is a lot of confusion about that today.

I really feel bad for pastors today. I do not necessarily feel bad for myself because I have a little bit of a heritage. One of the great blessings in my life, in the beginning of my Christian walk, was to come into contact with the teaching of Pastor Chuck Smith. God had already taken him through all kinds of things to get these issues squared away and he saved us the seventeen years of misery that he had to endure while all of that was happening.

There is so much pressure to make the church this thing or that thing—or people are going to bolt—they will not come to church. All of this kind of pressure is on the pastor; and thus, I think it is important for everyone to understand (leaders and non-leaders alike) that none of us are free to define the church. None of us, no matter who we are, I do not care how gifted or how talented or how large numerically any group of people might be in the body of Christ, world-wide or in a local church; we do not have the right to define what the priorities and the emphases of the local church are to be.

The church belongs to God and He has defined that. Ephesians 4 is one of those passages where He does that. And notice the first word of [verse 12](#). Paul lists all of these leaders in verse 11 and here is the purpose, it is found in that first word “for.” Jesus has appointed leaders in His church and then He gives them, and us, their job description. The church leaders are not free to define it; neither is anyone else. And notice in [verse 12](#) that it is “for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” And so, the church is to be a place where saints (that is Christians) are equipped for the work of the ministry. The church is to be an equipping center.

How would you like to run an ad in the paper, in the Modesto Bee, that says: “Calvary Chapel in Modesto, the Equipping Center” and then wait for the collective yawn? And how exciting does equipping sound to anyone? You are hardly going to be able to go on the road and do a church growth seminar on the basis of that. Equipping sounds like work! It sounds like kind of the gritty work that has to be done before something can be successful, and that is exactly what it is! But as tedious or as boring as the word “equipping” may sound, to the Christian who understands that he is gifted by God Almighty and God has a call upon his life—when one is eager to step out into that call and to be used by God—then the word “equipping” is a very, very exciting word.

The church is to be a place where people not only get saved, but then they are disciplined and equipped to now do whatever it is that God has called them to do in the world for His glory. The word “equipping” means *equipping*, but also it means “training” and “preparing.” As much as the physician, as much as the police officer, or the fireman or fire persons, as much as the electrician or the pharmacist or the educator has to be trained and prepared to be successful in those areas of life, the Christian has to be trained and prepared also.

It is interesting that in all of these other fields there is an expectation that equipping is required and that the equipping is not always going to be the most fun thing in the world. It is going to require diligence, it is going to require a sobriety, and it is going to require that those people bring their own motivation into that equipping process. For example, when they have an opening here to work in the fire department with the city of Modesto, they may have two openings and they get seven hundred applications. And if you do not bring the “want to” there, you have no chance at all of getting the job. Only two of the applicants have a chance, but they will not make it without the “want to” and without a sense that this is going to involve some work. Equipping is going to involve some diligence, it is going to involve some discipline in my life, it is going to involve some sacrifice and study, as a part of my preparation; and that is how it is in all of life.

Sometimes as Christians we can have the idea that when these things—diligence, sacrifice, study, hard work—are required of us for Christian maturity. We think that some great thing is being demanded of us. Nothing is being demanded of us; it just means that we do not understand how precious a gift this equipping from God is. This means anyone who would have that attitude, does not understand how valuable it is to have the privilege of being able to be used by God in any way on planet Earth. And it is an honor to have my name associated with His work.

Sometimes Christians very readily make sacrifices, tighten their belts, do this and that, arrange schedules and priorities and so forth, in order to further their career. But when it comes to hard work or sacrifice that relates to God’s calling or God’s giftedness, the attitude is: “that is just the church.” It is degraded to this thing that is a priority five steps down from what I do in the natural. That is wrong and that is a wrong attitude in the body of Christ toward these things.

And so equipping means a “complete furnishing.” God has called each of us to a particular place of service in this world, as His representative, and for every single one of us it is going to require equipping. We need to be furnished for that calling. Now this occurs primarily through the teaching of the word of God.

Jesus declared in [Matthew 28:18-20](#), in the great commission:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
Go therefore and make disciples [not just converts but disciples] of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

And the emphasis of the early church is seen in [Acts 2](#).

And they continued steadfastly [in entertainment—no] in the apostles' doctrine [teaching] prayer and fellowship with one another, and the Lord's Supper. (cf. [Acts 2:42](#))

And then down in [Acts 2:47](#), when the church became what God wanted the church to be and it had the emphases and the priorities that God wanted it to have—“then God added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Remember in [John 21](#), Jesus was talking with Peter and he denied the Lord three times. Then Jesus restores him back into ministry and does it publicly.

Jesus said:

“Peter do you love Me?”

Peter said, “Lord, you know I have a fond affection for You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.”

He asked him again, “Peter do you love Me?”

Peter said, “Lord, You know I love You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.”

A third time, “Peter do you love Me?”

Peter said, “Lord, You know everything. You know I love You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” (cf. [John 21:15-17](#))

Feeding the flock of God out of a shepherd’s heart is an expression of love.

Paul declared that:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished [or equipped] for every good work. ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#))

Paul wrote again to Timothy and he said:

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ([2 Timothy 2:2](#))

Paul testified to the elders at Ephesus when he thought that he would never see them again. This is the church he had spent years with, and Paul had close relationships with the leaders there. And he said to them:

Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ([Acts 20:26-27](#))

And all the way through the Old Testament and all the way through the New Testament a tremendous emphasis is put upon the teaching of the word of God to equip believers—His people—for what He has called them to do.

Frequently I am asked by Christians about God's calling, specifically in this body, and it is a good thing. Someone will say: "You know I believe God has a calling on my life. I just sense that." And of course that is true of all believers. This person may say, "I don't know what it is yet; and so, what can I do to prepare?" I typically say very much the same thing in a situation like that. The first thing I let people know, regarding God's gifting in their life and His calling in their life, is that He is going to reveal it to them. He wants us to be in His will more than we want to be there. And it is apparent that this person wanted to be in God's will or he would not have had the concerns that he had. I tell these individuals that God is going to get them there, and to relax.

But in the meantime, the one thing that all of us can do, no matter if the gift is—as an evangelist, a missionary, a pastor, a teacher, or having the gift of helps, the gift of mercy, or whatever it might be—the one thing we can always profitably spend our time on is learning the word of God. So I tell people that every time the church is open, they need to get in under the teaching of the word of God. They need to check out Bible study tapes and listen and use the library here at the church, in order that they might grow in the word. They need to do everything they can to learn the word of God.

When I first got saved back in 1980, I was working for the phone company and at that time I was a cable splicer. For months at a time I would be put on these jobs working on underground cable, which would involve 800 pairs to 2400 pairs of cable that I would splice together. It was good, hard, and wonderful work. I did not listen to tapes when I was dealing with live cables because a worker cannot have his mind divided on the work; but with dead cables, I just would throw in these Bible study tapes and I would sometimes listen to seven tapes a day while doing those cables. In the course of two or three years, I had listened to the Bible from Genesis to Revelation on tape by Chuck Smith over three times. I developed a systematic theology of the word of God before I knew what a systematic theology was.

Even today when we drive around, I am still a tape-a-holic. It is a wonderful addiction listening to study tapes while going here and there all through the course of the week. I am still listening to two, three, four or five tapes, depending on what is happening and what I am involved in each week. And so, it offers a chance to really be built up in the word of God.

Also in [Ephesians 4:12](#), I think it is important to recognize that the calling of God upon the lives of these leaders is not a call to do all of the work themselves; that is physically impossible. But they are to equip others to do what it is that God has called them to do. The sheer scope of so much of the ministry that happens in this church and through this church in a given week is gigantic, and it is way beyond the very severe physical limitations of this staff. Why does the ministry go on? Why is it able to go on? It is because so many have been equipped and so many have taken their place of serving.

I hear about things all of the time where something has happened and I did not even know that a particular person was in the hospital. Or I never knew that someone else had

been laid off from his job and this thing and another thing. And then I find out that somebody else with the gift of helps came in and then through the home fellowships, they supplied meals for a time or they made sure that the need was covered. So much happens that nobody else knows about and it is the Spirit of God directing His people all through the week in their gifting. It is a beautiful thing and the result is seen in [verse 12](#), which is that the body of Christ is edified. It is built up it is made strong and it is made healthy.

Another thing found in [verse 13](#) is that the church is to be a place where we all “come to the unity of the faith.” Notice it is not “until” we all come to the unity of faith; it is “till” we all come to the unity of the faith. It is not talking about faith for salvation. It is not talking about a personal faith. It is talking about the faith in terms of doctrine, in terms of what the Bible teaches and what we know to be true from the Bible.

As we grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures, the net affect upon our lives and upon the body of Christ as a whole is *unity*. Because when the Bible becomes the standard for doctrine—that is what we believe and practice, that is how we live—when the Bible becomes the standard for those two things in my life or in the lives of a group of Christians, then the effect is going to be unity because we know what the Bible has to say about these things. So, we are not defining them for ourselves; and thus, we unify with one another as a result of being clear on what the Bible has to say about things.

Imagine putting a hundred people in a room who have no respect for God’s word. They do not believe that the Bible is inspired by God, and they do not make it the standard for what they believe or how they live. And now you begin to ask them some questions. You ask these hundred people in a room what they think God is like. How many answers are you going to get? You will get a hundred different answers. You ask how people get to heaven, if they believe in heaven, and you are going to get a lot of different answers. How can a person be saved? What is heaven like? What happens after death? You ask them what the right thing is to believe about divorce; about fornication, heterosexual sin outside of the confines of marriage; ask those hundred people about homosexuality, and what are you going to end up with for answers? You will probably get a hundred different answers from a hundred different people. And it will all be prefaced this way: “Well, you know I think...” And you are going to have utter division within that room.

But when we know the word of God well, when we know what God has to say about something, then it settles the issue for the child of God. That settles it. That is the position that is right. That is what is perfect and loving, that is what is wise. And then what happens? We can unify with all of these issues. This is one of the reasons why churches that are founded on teaching the Word of God tend to be more stable. They experience far less division than other kinds of churches which are built on things like entertainment, amusement, or on whatever it takes to get people into the building for that kind of thing.

For a church to grow under the teaching of the word of God, it is a slower growth. It is a much slower growth, but it is a much more solid growth. It is a stable church. And because it is stable, it does not get shaken by every idea of man that comes down the pike and every wind of doctrine that goes through the body of Christ. I was thinking since we

moved here in 1985 about all the different kinds of odd doctrines that ran through the body of Christ. Back in 1985 the deliverance ministry was huge! The demon possession of Christians and casting demons out of Christians was just unbiblical, but it was huge and running through the whole body as a way to produce holiness and victory in the lives of Christians.

Then the positive confession doctrine came into the church and it is still around today. Then there was the school of the prophets; we were told that these guys are the ones we need to listen to, and the office of the prophet was elevated way beyond its biblical position. And then the health and wealth doctrine; and then there was the laughing in the spirit. Then there was the drunk in the spirit, and the barking in the spirit, and the roaring in the spirit, and all of these kinds of things that were going through the church. And then the church growth program which required this skit thing that we were told to do. And after you do that one, then the church growth thing was tied to the home fellowships. None of these things can ever take the place of the Word of God.

I know of a man that I watched first-hand take a very healthy church and wipe the whole thing out. Every Sunday he would come into the pulpit and what he preached about on Sunday or for the next six Sundays was based on the latest Christian book that he had read. So he would say, “We have to do this now.” And six weeks later it was, “No we have to do this now.” And soon after people listen to that, they get fried. They are wiped out under the weight of it. Soon they are starving for the word of God and the church just begins to disintegrate because God gives us a hunger by His Spirit for the Word in our lives.

And so, all of these odd practices have gone through the body of Christ and it is so gracious of God, because of His word, that these false doctrines have hardly ever even created a ripple in this body. They just made their way through and all of us here have just continued moving on. Why? Because the word of God is being taught and that is the expectation that you bring into the study, and that is the expectation that you bring into the other Bible studies throughout the week. And when that is the expectation, not for all of these other things but for the Word of God, then it is going to out-live all these fads. It is going to out-live the heavens and the earth, and so it produces a unity within the body of Christ. The unity of faith.

Now in [verse 13](#), it says that the church is to be a place where we all “come to the knowledge of the Son of God.” The word “knowledge” there is an interesting one. There are several words used for “knowledge” in the original language. This one is *epignosco*. The word *gnosco* in the Greek language is not talking about a head-knowledge. It is a knowledge that comes by experience. And *epi* means a more intense form of *gnosco*. So it is not just talking about a mental or a doctrinal knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God—though that is very important—but this is talking about an experiential knowledge of the Son of God.

The church is to be a place where we come, not only to grow in our knowledge of the word of God, but in growing in the word of God we are to grow in our knowledge of the

Lord Jesus. We are to grow in our personal relationship with Him. The church is a place that encourages not just learning about what the Bible has to say, but it translates into a personal daily walk with Him. And that is to be the emphasis of the local church—the emphasis of that personal relationship.

Sometimes there is confusion concerning the worship portion of our service here at Calvary Chapel. Some people want more hymns and some people want more choruses; and we listen to those things and we pray about those things. One of the strengths of the hymns is that they are weighty in content—just the sheer doctrine that is in many of the hymns. And that is the strength of the hymns. One of the weaknesses of the hymns is that they are typically *about* God. We don't sing them *to* Him. Now one of the strengths of the choruses that have been so popular in the last twenty-five years is that they are more personal. Most of them are sung personally *to* God. Sometimes their weakness can be that they lack a little weight. And so we mix the two together to really get something that is fabulous.

But the worship portion of the service, as the team is leading us in worship, is not just singing songs; it is a time for us to close our eyes and just sing those songs in worship to the Lord. What is happening? This is nurturing my personal relationship with the Lord. I am communicating with Him. He is communicating back to me by His Holy Spirit. And that is what this part of the service is all about.

If you are new to church, you have been coming for a few months and you get the song sheet and you stare at the worship team all the way through the service and I know they are very attractive people, but the idea is that they would disappear and that you would focus on the Lord and then just begin to sing those songs to Him. Why? Because the Lord desires for us to come to a knowledge of Jesus, an experiential knowledge of Him. So that is what worship is about.

One thing about the worship at this church (and there are different ideas that people have about what happens through music within a church) is that it is set up completely for worship; it is not performance oriented. It is not designed to entertain us, and it is not designed to do something emotionally to us. It is designed to point us to God and then to lead us. As the team prays during the week, they ask what songs the Lord wants to hear from His people on Sunday because those are the ones we want to sing to Him. They ask God what songs His people have a need to sing to Him, so that their perspective about life and God and crisis and trials in the light of God can all be shifted around in their lives. And then that is what they lead us in; but all of it is designed so that we come into a deeper knowledge of the Lord—deeper in our personal relationship with the Lord.

And then there in [Ephesians 4:13](#), the church is to be a place where we all come to a “perfect man.” So I would just like all of the perfect people of this church to stand right now. When we look at that and read “the perfect man,” the word “perfect” means: “to be fully aged, or to be mature.” It is a place where we can come to maturity. And the goal is not to “produce,” as I was reading about producing in a mission’s magazine regarding Christianity and the continent of Africa. And it said, “Christianity in Africa is two inches

deep and a hundred miles wide.” And it is increasingly getting like that in the United States of America. So what is the idea here? Is the idea to just fill rooms like this and then say that we are able to fill rooms this size on the basis of “luring people in” and “Give a-buck Sunday” and “Invite-a-friend Sunday” or whatever the deal is? No the idea of gathering together is to produce mature Christians.

What is a mature Christian? I am kind of embarrassed by this statement, but maturity on a purely physical level is when one is able to reproduce. And the same thing is true on a spiritual level. It is the ability to lead someone else to Christ and then to disciple them into maturing in their walk with the Lord—just like someone did for you and me. And that is Christian maturity.

The church is there in order to keep us moving, to push, to prod (not in a carnal way), but by the Spirit of God so none of us falls asleep at the wheel, but we keep on moving toward maturity. Nobody takes sabbaticals from growing in the Lord and then says, “Yeah, boy, I took those six months off or six years off.” That is all very valuable time, too valuable to lose. And so, the church is that place where people are exhorted and encouraged toward maturity.

And then there is a fifth point in [Ephesians 4:13](#). The church is to be a place where we all: “come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” It is a place to grow in Christ-likeness. That is what we are aiming at, all of us in the body of Christ. What is the aim for an individual human life? Maturity. But here it is defined. It is Christ-likeness. We are Christians and we measure our life off of His, not off of the person who is sitting to the left of us or to the right of us. We are not to watch certain movies or engage in various activities because we have seen other Christians do that. Other Christians are not the standard.

But we are to produce mature Christians who measure their lives off of His life and desire “His stature.” The verse says, “His spiritual stature” which is where we are to look. We should be able to say, “That’s what I want to be like. I want to be like Him. I want to be as much like Him this side of glory as possible. I know that one day I am going to see Him face to face and I am going to be as He is. But before that happens, I want to be as much like Him in how I act and how I think and what I do and what I don’t do, on a daily basis, as I possibly can.” And then we become Christians who are filled to the full with Him—full of His power, full of His love, full of His wisdom, and full of His strength. And if that is the standard (and it is) then there is always going to be room for growth in our lives.

If you are a Christian and you have stopped growing, wake up! I can jump up here, and I can pull out a handkerchief, and yell at you, or whatever it takes to get your attention. If you are wasting your life and you have wrong definitions on what it means to be a Christian and what God is aiming for, and what you are supposed to be aiming for, then get going with all of your strength toward spiritual maturity.

And then a sixth point in [verse 14](#), the church is to be a place where we learn what is necessary to protect us from the spiritual dangers that surround us. The word of God protects us from immaturity. Notice that: “we should no longer be children”—that is we should no longer be immature spiritually. I remember a while back, I was driving through Modesto and there was this little kid, a very young toddler-aged kid, walking down the street with nobody in sight. And when you see a kid like that, you think: “that kid is vulnerable to anyone and anything that comes along.” Kids that age have no capacity to protect themselves. So I went up a little ways, pulled over, and watched the situation until an adult showed up on the scene. And eventually one did, good thing!

But we face the same danger, spiritually. That is how God looks at His people when there is no maturity in the word of God. He sees them just like that little kid walking down the street. Without a firm foundation in the word of God, we are vulnerable to every kind of wrong doing that could come our way. That is how God sees things. And the word of God keeps us from being children, so that we will no longer be vulnerable children.

The word of God protects us from false doctrine. Without a firm foundation in the word of God, how in the world am I going to know what is right or wrong, what to accept and what to reject? There are a million voices in the world that are speaking for God. Everybody is an authority on God. “This is what He says.” “No, this is what He says.” And the Mormons say one thing and the Jehovah Witnesses say another thing, and the Christian is saying another thing, and all the way through everybody has a voice and everybody is an expert on God.

So how in the world am I supposed to understand what the truth is, and how can I be protected from false doctrine? The word of God and a firm foundation in the word of God is the only way. Otherwise, I am going to be as it says, “like a boat that is tossed back and forth by the waves” (cf. [Ephesians 4:14](#)). In other words a boat that has no maps, no helmsman or captain to get it to a destination. And there is no hope of getting to that destination. What is the destination for us? Christ-likeness.

This is like having Fall arrive and the leaves drop down to the ground and the wind comes and then the leaf is blown over here. And then five minutes later it is blown over there and then it is blown again and every time you come outside that leaf is in a different place. There are a lot of Christians like that every time you see them. One day they believe this thing, and the next time you see them over in this group, and a week later they are over involved in this other thing. And there are long days, weeks, months, and years when put together, and they are still being blown wherever the latest thing is that they are being told about. This is because there is no foundation in the world for them to base things upon. What is the next phase, what is the next fad, and the next charismatic teacher—that kind of living. Obedience to the word of God protects us from that kind of lifestyle.

Knowing the word of God also protects us from false teachers and “the trickery of men and cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (cf. [Ephesians 4:14](#)). Literally it is referring to the dice playing of men. It is talking about loaded dice. When a person does not know

the word of God, as a child of God, it is like sending a child to Las Vegas and hoping that they will come out with their diaper. If you send a child into sophisticated environments like that, where people are preying to separate you from everything you own and everything you hold dear, you have no hope. And spiritually there are people who exist in this world that have been trained to run into Christians that do not know the word of God and when they are done with that kind of person, the Christian will be separated from everything he once held spiritually dear.

Do you know where the biggest group of converts to Mormonism come from? By far, something like eighty percent of the people that convert were raised in Christian churches, but they never learned the Bible. They were not taught the Bible. As a shepherd, I personally never want to stand before God and give an account for doing that. I am not talking about the people who are deceived. I know that people have to bring the “want to” whether they go to the junior high group or the high school group or they come into the main service. But I never want anyone who desires to know the word of God to ever get into a place of being taken off by a cult or a non-Christian religion because they did not know the word of God. That is what happens and these deceiving people are out there and they are trained. They can see your scalp on their belt when they perceive that you are a Christian who does not know the word of God and they know just where to take you. They know just how to load the dice to take you where they want to take you on things. So the danger of it and the “cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” is that they have schemes and they have devices and they are just waiting for Christians who are in that category.

Remember how Jesus handled the temptations against Him? When the devil tempted Jesus the third time, he decided to quote some verses himself which were out of context and completely misapplied. But the devil does love to misquote the Bible. And Jesus corrected the him, but the Lord corrected with the accurate word of God. And every single time Jesus answered him by saying: “It is written.” “It is written.” “It is written.” And He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy each one of those times. Jesus was meeting that kind of temptation through the word of God.

Paul warned that there would be this kind of person lying in wait to deceive. Even in the local churches he spoke in Ephesus and as he spoke to the Ephesian elders he said that he was leaving, but he said the deceivers are not just going to come from outside the church. He said they will come from among their own group and that people are going to rise up with heresies and they are going to deny the Lord and they are going to draw people off to themselves. So Paul warned them regarding this deception.

So the same warning is needed today. Peter warned of this, John warned of it; all the way through the Scriptures we are warned. And so the church is to be a place where we are equipped to be ready for this kind of deception when it comes. And I do not care who any of us are, as Christians, there will be those who come to try and deceive you into false teachings. And so there is a necessity for the local church to build the word of God into all of our lives as a protection.

And then finally in [verse 15](#), the church is a place where the truth is to be spoken from a motive of love. The false teachers were speaking in order to gain a place of power in people's lives or to get money from them by telling the people what they wanted to hear. Paul comes along and exhorts the leaders saying, "You speak the truth, but do it in love." Those two things need to come together. It is not enough just to speak the truth. You cannot be like Christ and just speak the truth. You have to have love coupled with the truth to be like Christ. You cannot be loving with no truth. That is not like Christ at all. It has to be both things.

Remember when Jesus was with the woman who was caught in the very act of adultery and the accusers brought her to Him in [John 8](#). And they said, "We caught her in the very act." And they threw her down in front of Jesus and interrupted His teaching. And Jesus did not deal with her sin immediately; He dealt with it, but He dealt with her accusers sin first and then soon all of those guys were gone. All of those religious leaders left and then Jesus said to the woman, "Where are all your accusers? Is there no one to accuse you?" She did not know what in the world this was all about, because Jesus had the power to drive these guys off. She must have wondered what He was going to do to her. She said, "No one, there is no man left to accuse me here." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more" (cf. [John 8:10](#)). This is an example of the truth and love beautifully combined in the life of Jesus. And the Bible teaches us and conforms us into His image, so that it will be a part of our lives too.

And what will be the result? In [verses 15 and 16](#), the body will then be coordinated with the head. This is the image of the body as we spoke about last week. And when these things become the marks of the body of Christ, individual Christians all putting our lives together with these things built in, then our thinking, our actions and our movements are going to be in line with the Head. Now when the Head says, "Go do this" or "go left here" or "go do this over here," we are already aligned with Him. Otherwise, we are going to have this separation between what the Head is like, Jesus, and what the body is like, us. And if separated, we are going to have this very spastic thing that is not going to be effective at all. And I do not use that in a derogatory means.

And so when these things mark our lives, then we are working in perfect coordination with the Head. And that is when we are working in coordination with one another because we are all on the same page.

Let's pray.

Thank you, Lord, for this passage and the truth that is found there. How we need it. And I pray, Lord, that You would use it to encourage all who lead in Your body. Concerning Your emphases and Your priorities, Lord, there are so many pressures to become so many other things today. And we pray, Lord, for the grace to just settle on these things that You have chosen to honor and bless. These things alone produce maturity in Your people and something that is in good coordination with You and Your headship in our lives.

Servant Leadership – Lesson 22
Equipping, Edifying, Protecting by Damian Kyle

14

Lord, I pray for all of us as individual members of Your body. May these things shape our expectations concerning what the local church is to be. And we pray for what is to be happening within the local church and just what it is that You are wanting to produce within each and everyone of our lives also. We commit it to You and the continued work of Your Holy Spirit. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.