

Mystery & Clarity // #5-Grow Up" // Ephesians 4:1-16

Announcements:

- Let me start off with some good news... Vote was 98% positive: that's good news; at least for 98% of you; now the fun starts
- Marriage Conference... If you've been at this church for a while, you've heard Paul David Tripp. Often. You may not have known you were hearing him, but I have plagiarized I mean quoted him for years. He's one of the most important national teachers on marriage.

Let me start off this message with a little good news/bad news.

Which do you want first?

- We grew by 26% last year... that's about 1100 people. That puts us pretty solidly on the list of the fastest growing churches in America. God is moving in the Triangle and this church is not the cause of but the reflection of that and we should all be grateful to be a part of it.
- But here's my question: Did you, personally, have any part of that growth? Is there anybody you can point to that is here because of you? (A little negative) but that we grew by 26% means that only 26% of us saw at least 1 person come into the church last year because of us. What's that say about the other 74%?
- Yeah, the church you are a part of is growing, but is it growing *because* of you? Or, is it just growing around you.
- More bad news... (sorry to be negative, this is from last week): Only about ½ of you are active in some kind of small group (whether ours or others); and only 1/3 of you are involved in some kind of intentional ministry.
- I love having 4000 people here, but Jesus did not die to create an audience, he died to create disciples and worshippers.

- No way to call yourself a disciple if you're not involved in community and ministry (I'm sorry)

The message in this passage is a little confrontational (and I'm feeling a little confrontational myself today, so, be warned). Paul's message to the new Ephesian believers in Ephesians 4:1-16 is "grow up." Vs. 15 he says, "I want you to grow up in every way..." and vs. 14, "I want you no longer to be children in the faith."

This really communicates to me because I'm a dad of 4 kids, and while I love my kids as kids... I really want them to grow up.

- (Some of you that are older tell me to "cherish" this time... because I think you've forgotten what it's like to have to get up at 3 a.m. and go change the sheets on a bed, nothing to cherish there... but, yeah, I know we should cherish this time, and I know they grow up too fast... but, that said, there's nothing worse than a kid not growing up when he should... Nobody wants to be around a 10 year old who still acts like he is 4...

I decided to have lots of kids so they could take care of me in my old age, not so I could take care of them forever.

Kids in their younger years will run you ragged... (can I get an Amen) it never ends... never. Sometimes in the morning I'm like, "Thank God, I am going to work, where I can rest!"

Now, as they get a little older, they become a little more useful...

- again, I had 4 because I think the chances of 1 of them marrying rich is really really good
- At age 7, kids become a 0-sum: what they take out from me they put back into the other kids. It basically evens out. I told Kharis, who is 6, that she's almost to the place where she's worth it, now... She's almost in the black.)

I say all this jokingly, of course, but the point is this... **There's nothing worse than an adult who still lives like a child.** No girl wants to marry a 35 year old guy who has no job and still lives in his momma's basement and plays "worlds of warcraft" until 3 a.m. each morning (that hit a little close to home over here). Some of you guys need to grow up and start taking some responsibility;

Some of you desperately need to grow up spiritually. You come here and you do a lot of taking; you need to start giving. You need to become useful...

So, let's look at chapter 4. Again, notice how it opens:

¹I therefore...

- Therefore connects what he's about to say with all the stuff that he's just said. Again, he's not randomly bringing up the church. Paul has just given (in Ephesians 1–2) one of the clearest explanations anywhere of what it means to know God. And now he's saying that if you get that, if you *really* understand it, you're going to be involved, actively, in the church.
- I said this last week: Can you grow in Christ and be a good Christian apart from active involvement in the church? The answer from Scripture, consistently and w/o exception, is no! Believing (real believing) always leads to belonging.

I therefore... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling...

- Worthy of the calling... in other words, in a way that is a proper response to what God has done in you. **Live as a proper response to the Gospel.** Do you see this?
- All I'm going to talk about today is a response to this great and glorious Gospel. And if you don't do that, it's b/c you don't get the Gospel.

Now, vs. 2, he expounds a little on what that looks like:

- He says, ²with all humility. If you get the Gospel at all—that all your righteousness was to God like a filthy rag and God purchased you back from the dead... and that God even had to drag you to Himself when you weren't interested in Him at all), if you get that, you won't look down on other people with feelings of superiority or self-righteousness. How could you? Humility...
- ...and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, if you're aware of how God treated you... with gentleness and patience, you'll treat others that way.
 - A lot of times when I really want to be irritated with people because they're lazy or dull I think, "I wonder how God looks at me." Others will never appear duller to me than I did to God.
 - When you are harsh or impatient with others, that is a clear demonstration you are not in touch with how patient and gentle God had to be, and has to be, with you.
- ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (***please keep up on ppt until I get to vs. 4***) He says, "If you get the Gospel, you'll be *eager* to see peace; you will not love controversy and seeing division and strife and hatred."
 - **Can I tell you what one of the most disappointing things about seminary was for me?** It was how much everybody seemed to love controversy... We love to talk about who was messed up and who failed... (not just them, I was part of all those discussions).
 - It seemed that for a group of people who had gone to school to study the Gospel there was little evidence that many of us had actually experienced it. We seemed to love calling people fools and idiots and heretics.
 - If you have experienced the Gospel, you love unity and you hate conflict.

See the word “maintain” in vs. 3? (very important) The unity Paul speaks of is not something we find or create, but something we “maintain.” The Gospel creates the unity, and when we lose unity between each other, it’s because we have lost the Gospel.

- Notice, vs 4 he likens our unity as Christians to the unity of a physical body (⁴There is one body and one Spirit...)
 - Think about your hand... you didn’t have to put your hand together; you don’t have to create the unity of your hand; it just grew together (it’s not all sown together, unless you are Frankenstein or something)... Your mom didn’t have to tell you growing up, “It’s really important that you put your hand together each day.” No, it was naturally that way.
 - But it **IS** important that you maintain the unity of your hand... don’t get one of your fingers sawn off (like **Charlie Wohl**nick at WCC). Not good.

It’s the same way with the body of Christ: the unity and love of Christians for one another is a natural, organic response *created by* the Gospel. If you get the Gospel, you’ll be unified. And it’s only when we completely forget the Gospel that we start to tear apart or neglect the body.

- If you relish a fight; you don’t know the Gospel. If you enjoy gossip; you don’t know the Gospel.
- If you don’t naturally want to connect with others and be involved in their lives and minister to them, you don’t know the Gospel.
- (Don’t blame your disconnectedness on your personality... I just like my personal time.... The reason you like your personal time is because the only person you really love is yourself... and that’s why you don’t want to be involved in the lives of others. That just screams that you’ve never really experienced the love of God... the Gospel is God, who was completely self-sufficient and didn’t need anybody else, getting involved in the lives of others.

Keep reading (vs. 4) —just as you were called to the one hope that **belongs** to your call— (seed again, this is all inherent in your call) ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Now, vs 7, he shifts... Paul starts to talk about what the fact that God lives inside of you means for how you relate to the church and the world.

Let me just read the next few verses and then make some comments on them together. ⁷Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

⁸Therefore it (the Old Testament) says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." OT reference to the fact that after Christ rose from the dead He would put His Spirit in people and give them gifts.

⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

¹¹And (so) he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love (to each other), we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the

whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

God's purpose in salvation was not just to save you and bring you to heaven. His purpose was to fill you with Himself. (see vs. 10, (¹⁰He descended and ascended... that he might fill all things.) The whole point of Christ's work was "that he might fill all things."

God's purpose was to fill you with Himself, to let you experience Him moving inside of you... to love the world like He does to be a conduit of His great power.

So, He fills you and gives you spiritual gifts, whereby you experience Him not just working for you and in you but also through you. This is truly one of the most exciting things about Christianity...

And sadly, many of you don't know anything about it, or at least you've never experienced it... You feel like Jesus saved you... but there is so much more. God wants to do some things through you that would blow your mind...

- The prayer Paul prayed in Eph 1 that we looked at a couple of weeks ago, it was that they would know the power at work in them... this is what he was talking about!
- My prayer for you is *not* that you would feel beat up today, but that you would leave with an astonished excitement about what God wants to do with you... an awareness that He wants to do so much more through you than you've ever dreamed.

So I want to look at 3 questions, briefly:

- What are spiritual gifts how do I know what mine is?
 - Why is it so crucial that I know what mine is?
 - (Review, again) Really, why should I be involved in the church?
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- Then I want to give you a quick word about what all this means for our church's philosophy

- Then I want to make a challenge to you

I. What are spiritual gifts and how do I know what mine are?

- **Spiritual gifts are an experience or an ability God has given to you that He uses to build up others.**
- ⁷But grace was given to each one of us... ¹²"for the building up of the body of Christ"
- ¹³until we all attain to... the knowledge of the Son of God
 - I come to know God better through your gift. It may be an experience you've had with Christ that you share with me that helps me see him better; or maybe an ability that helps me know the truth about Christ or my life;
 - Gifted to speak for Christ (speaking God's words to me or over me)
 - Gifted to let people know the compassion of Christ... when you touch them, it is more than a touch of a human (you touch me and I feel Him)
 - Mind for ministry (you can dream and plan)
 - The way you pray, you know the mind of God
- ¹⁶...when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love It's how Christ ministers to His people, it's how we experience His power.
 - 1 Cor 12 calls spiritual gifts a "manifestation" of Christ: a "manifestation" is when something invisible is made visible.
 - I may be angry, but if I don't manifest it, you won't know. Punch you in the face, that is a manifestation of my anger.
 - Christ is made manifest: his character, his beauty, and his body are known in the gifts He has given to his church.
- Here's a question: You say, How are these gifts different than just talents? For example, J.D., I suppose your gift is preaching/teaching... but you seem to be a naturally talented

speaker... if you didn't do this, maybe you could sell vacuum cleaners...

- Good question: Great quote by J.I. Packer: *"The ability to speak or act in a certain way... is only a spiritual gift if and as God uses it to build up the body. Some natural abilities or talents that God has given He never uses in this way, while sometimes He chooses to build up his body through performances that in our eyes seem substandard. Explain What makes something a spiritual gift is not the quality of the performance, but the blessing of God."* – J.I. Packer
- What makes your talent a gift is if God uses it to reveal Himself to others.
 - Talents are given when you are born.
 - Gifts, when you are born-again
- Sometimes gifts are given are given on top of your talents and sometimes completely independent of your natural talents
- All of you have one, vs. 7 says, "Grace was given to each one of us."
- How do you know what your spiritual gift is?
 - **How many of you have ever taken one of those little tests?** I'll tell you when I totally lost confidence in those. Veronica, my wife, took one a few years ago, and her top gift came back as celibacy.
 - A lot of times you can feel it; usually other people tell you...

II. Why is it so crucial that I know what mine is?

- You are uniquely gifted, and you have a particular part of Christ only you can display and certain things only you can do in ministry.
 - Let me give you an analogy: Your physical body is completely unique. The human DNA code can be arranged in 1 in 10 to the 2 billionth power ways (I don't know who figured that out or how to count it),

but that's 1 w/ 2 billion zeroes after it. To put that in perspective, the number 1 trillion only has only 12 zeroes behind it. This 1 has 2 billion 0's behind it! That's how many different varieties of human there are. So, you are unique.

- It's the same way spiritually. There's nobody like you. You have gifts, vision, experiences, energies that drive you that are completely unique that God has given to you!
- **That means there are certain ways only you can reveal Christ and certain people that only you can influence to come under the lordship of Christ.** If you don't there will be people that God intended to reach through you who will otherwise not be reached.
 - ***Ephesians 2:10 says that there are good works God has pre-ordained for you.*** I really want you to embrace that.
 - There are people he wants you to reach and bring into the kingdom that nobody else can reach but you.
 - He's going to use your mouth to speak words of deliverance and freedom to people. To set captives free.
 - He's going to use you to minister to your healing to certain people who won't otherwise experience it.
 - There are some of you that God intends to take His power to certain people groups in the world; some of you He intends to take His power into certain professions. And if you don't play your part, it's not going to get done!
- **That's why you've got to find your gift.**
- **And the other thing is you'll never really experience fulfillment until you find your gift.**
 - He saved you that you could be filled and used by Him.

- Do you know what that is like? Listen, a lot of you know that Jesus saved you... but do you live daily with the knowledge of His fullness and that He is using you?
- For most of you, the answer is no. You know Jesus as Savior but not as the power surging through you.
 - **One of the reasons I love mission trips...** people go and they experience, for the first time, God using them, and there is absolutely nothing like it...like seeing the God of the universe use you in someone else's life!
 - **I remember the first time God really used me in someone's else life...**
- The point: many of you feel unfulfilled and bored spiritually because you've never experienced the power of Christ surging through you.

III. Why should I involved in the church?

- ⁷But grace was given to each one of us... ¹²for the building up of the body of Christ... ¹³until we all attain to... the knowledge of the Son of God")
 - Again, these verses tell us that God reveals a part of Himself through each of us.
 - Last week I said it was like a Mosaic: each tile may be pretty alone, but it combines to make a beautiful picture. Each of us gives a picture of Christ.
 - **Same way with Jesus.** There are parts of Jesus I will only know by knowing you, because certain dimensions of His beauty have been revealed in your life that haven't been revealed in mine.
 - If you really want to know Jesus, you have to be involved
- Furthermore, the power of God flows through the church. Thus, if you want the power of God to be at work in your life, you have to be involved in the church.

- Last week I explained that a lot of people pray to God and ask Him to help them with something, and it's like they expect God to zap them from heaven with the Holy Ghost tazer gun... "God help us in our marriage. Like he's going to zap you and you wake up one morning playing the harp, totally in love, you're not selfish anymore... And, if He doesn't do it that way, well I guess you could go get some help from the church, but that's plan B.
- But according to Ephesians, the church is plan A. That's where God put His power and where He lives.
 - Some of you pray for power but you're not connected to the church and God's like... why are you asking me to work in your life, and I've put my power over here... and you're not connected.
- Think of the analogy of the body: You decide that your elbow itches. So, it sends a little message up to your brain: "I itch!" What does your brain do... send down a "no itch" answer to prayer? Tells your fingers to go scratch. Now, what scratched you, the brain or the finger? What a dumb question. The brain through the finger.
- How does God do His work in your life? Through His body!
- What right do you think you have to ask for the power of God if you've separated yourself from the place where His power dwells?
 - Last week I went so far as to say this: **You have no right asking for the power of God if you have separated yourself from the means of that power, i.e. the church.** I mean that. Stop praying!
- *So the question, somebody asks, "How involved should I be in the church?"* Again, based on all that this chapter tells us, a better way to phrase that question is: How much do you want to Christ to be a part of your life?

- How much do you want to know Him? That's how much you should be involved in the church!

Now, in light of all this, let me give you a quick word about:

IV. Our church's philosophy of ministry

- I understand that God has filled you for ministry. So my role as a pastor is mostly to teach you to discover and how to access that power, not to come and see and be amazed at that power in me.
- I don't mean to be crude, but when you are a baby, you have to be fed/nursed by your mother.
 - (Veronica gets our kid out of bed; feeds him from our breast, and then he recycles her milk into a neon rainbow collage of colors an hour later... she changes him and puts him to sleep... they do this 6–8 times a day). That's ok as a baby... but she doesn't want to do that forever.
- Listen, I don't want your relationship to me to be, in any way, similar to that (because that is disturbing on so many levels). I want to empower you; I want you to grow up...
- Paul says in vs. 11 (¹¹And (so) he gave the pastor-teachers... ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry...) that pastors and teachers, specifically, are put into the church to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry."
- **Who does the ministry?** The Saints. Who are the Saints? You.
- **What's my role?** Starts with E, rhymes with whipper... Equipper.
- This verse is why I say, "When I became a pastor, I left the ministry." The ministry happens in the community. The people I work with are mostly saved! So ministry happens through you in the community, my role is to equip.
 - I often point out... 39 of 40 miracles. Where is the power of God? In you!

- Our vision at this church is not a group of people basking in the gifts of one leader, but a group of people empowered to be leaders themselves.
- Not a group of people coming to be awed at the power of God in me; but a group of people being released to take God's power into the community.
 - The greatest access to power is not in me in the church, it's in you in the community.
 - This is a little radical: I believe the best ideas for ministry are in you, not in me.
 - You come to me and say, "Pastor, we need a ministry doing this." I'm like, "We sure do..." (there's always an awkward moment as they wait for me to tell them what to do...) but then I say, "Well, Since God gave you the desire, you should look to Him to give you the plan for what to do."
 - There's only a few things we as a church do—it's equipping, and it's mainly related to equipping. The rest of it you do.
 - **Golden Corral** (something for every one, but none of it is any good... they have Asian food... no restaurant should serve Asian food that has "Corral" in the name. Vs. **Ruth's Chris** (can only do it with a gift card).
- Here's an interesting thought: never in the New Testament is the world commanded to come into the church. The church however, is frequently commanded to go into the world.
 - Our primary evangelism in this church is not for me to share the Gospel each week through a megaphone, but you doing it in the streets.
 - You're like, "But you share the Gospel." For two reasons: One of my man purposes is to teach

you how to do it. I want you to hear me doing it.

- The other is I do want to partner with you. I want to provoke conversations you can have, later. You take the guest out to dinner and explain to them what I said. If you're a guest, the person who brought you is personally obligated to take you to dinner... and to talk to you about these things, and to pay...
- I want you to grow up in Christ, and not depend on me. I don't want to build a safe house where you spend all your time in a holy huddle.
 - Listen, Christians over the years have often confused what discipleship is, and I don't want you to be confused here... Christian discipleship is teaching people to be filled with the Spirit of God so they can be used in the mission of God. A lot of Christians often think it is a sanitation process. You take dirty people from the world and dip them in Holy Ghost Clorox and set them in a sterile environment. No R movies; no beer; no tobacco; no dancing... we define holiness by what you avoid.
 - That's not discipleship. Christian discipleship is teaching people to be like Jesus; Being like Jesus means being involved in people's lives and bringing heaven's healing.
 - My fear is that we often disinfect Christians rather than disciple them.
- Our vision is seeing Jesus released in and through you in the community, not contained in the pulpit.
 - (Example... the Gospel of John)
 - A lot of churches are like huddles... where you never run the play! (I'm like the quarterback... you're like "what a great play" "no one calls the play like you" "my hair stood up when you were calling it" then you go

mess with the cheerleaders (they are like the worship team) Run the play!

V. A challenge for you

- Simply, grow up!
 - Some of you have been sitting on the sidelines for way too long. Time to take the bib off and
 - Stop complaining about how the church is not meeting all of your needs and be a part of the ministry! People are like, "this church isn't doing this for me and I'm not being fed in this area..."
 - I want to go get you a bib and then put you down for a nap
 - I think about Ryah my daughter... if she is not satisfied after dinner, she screams "feed me!" I get this image of church members... feed me. My diaper needs to be changed. Seriously, grow up.
 - It's one thing when Ryah does that to me. It's another if I did that to Veronica... After dinner I was like... "I'm still hungry... and I think I wet my pants..." She'd say, "Go change your own pants; and if you're hungry, fix yourself something to eat.
 - If you see something wrong in this church, try and fix it. If you see a ministry that we're not doing it, try and get it started.
 - People come up to me and say, "*Pastor, I think this and this and this needs to be changed in your church*" (it always bothers me that they say "your," not "our," b/c I know then they have not grown up yet enough to take ownership). But they tell me these things need to be changed in "my church" as if I think the church is

perfect, and I just didn't know about these areas and now that I know I can wave my wand and just fix them all.

- I promise you, whatever you're concerned about, I'm probably concerned about it, too. Whatever your list is, I probably have a longer one. Some of you are probably on my list.
 - But I'm not the one who fixes the church. God doesn't run all his power through me. He runs it through you, too. If you see a need, that might be because God is raising you up to meet that need.”
 - So, grow up. Some of you need to step out in ministry. Worship guide. Go on a mission trip.
 - Listen, the great truth about salvation is that this great God we serve has put all of Himself and all of His redemptive power in you... so, unleash Him!
 - Let me close with some insight about how you are made. Scripture tells us that we are made in the image of God. Two fundamental qualities of God: He's a Trinity, which means He's always been in community; Scripture says “He is love” and He showed His love by giving His life for others, taking on our pain... and interweaving his life in ours, and even coming to live inside of us. So, if you are in the image of God, you'll only feel fulfilled when you are experiencing those 2 things as well: intimate community and pouring out your lives for others.
 - This completely challenges American ideas of self-fulfillment. (two words define the American dream: alone—relationships encumber—don't get tied down in marriage; don't get committed, it will only tie you down; don't have many kids: they mess up your life, you can't go to movies whenever you want and the good life is going to movies whenever you want;) The
- other thing you should do is acquire... money and power and leverage it for yourself.
- But these things won't fulfill us, because we are in the image of God! It's a design thing. If you pour coffee into your gas tank to make it run better... that makes sense on one level, but it is not how your engine is designed.
 - Same with you. We're not designed to be alone or to live our lives for ourselves. We're in the image of God, which means you're designed to be in community and pour yourself out for others.
- So, if you're a believer, get into a community (small group) and into a ministry.
 - If you're not a believer, realize this is what you are created for. What you have been looking for, what you always feel like you've been missing, is a relationship with the God of the Universe. It starts with knowing Jesus.
 - Go out to dinner with the person who brought you and they'll explain all the rest of this to you, let me pray over you.

BULLPEN:

- Sometimes seminary students come up to me and say, “Why don’t you teach about this and this...” I’m like, “Why do you want to learn a bunch more stuff you don’t plan to obey?” Get busy being used by the Spirit of God and quit demanding food all the time. GROW UP!
- Listen, there is a part of Jesus you can only know by serving Him. Luther: study (every verse like a tree branch); prayer (passion); affliction... All 3 are necessary. There is a part of God you can only know by serving and suffering, that you’ll never get by learning. You can learn more by being filled with and used by Jesus in the church than you can in hours and hours of seminary classes. Not that seminary, book learning, isn’t helpful. Just that it can never replace the knowledge that comes from fellowship *with* Jesus in the mission of God.
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- Our vision is for the people of God to be in the world performing the mission of God by the power of the Spirit of God.
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- Our vision is for the people of God to be in the world performing the mission of God by the power of the Spirit of God.
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 - Look at our songs. Most Christian music is about how Jesus died for us, but how much of it

is about how He lives in and how His power surges through us?

- Christ didn’t just die to be the Savior of the church; He died to become the inhabitant of the church.
 - In chapter 2 Paul explained that Jesus is the foundation of the building; now, in chapter 4, Jesus is the inhabitant of the building.

How much do you want to know Christ?

- Dig deeper: Lewis example
- “The church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning.”

“How involved should you be in the church?” How involved do you want Christ to be in your life?

“The church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning.”

Like a team that only calls the huddle, or professors who only prepare others to be college professors

What do we do? Speak the truth in love.” Help each other grow up. Help each other work properly?

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Humility: (“Because we want glory for ourselves, we find fault in others.”)

- This is how God is going to fill you. ⁸he gave gifts to men...¹⁰that he might fill all things.

- We only do a few things well (Golden Corral; Ruth’s Chris). You do the community ministry.)

- The church doesn't send missionaries, it is the missionary.

A lot of churches want to be a Golden Corral; compare that to a Ruth's Chris. I love Ruth's Chris. It's kind of expensive, so I only go when I get a giftcard... like, for my birthday which is coming up real soon.

- Example: couple struggling in their marriage, and they need God's help, so they pray and ask God to help. Now, God could zap them from heaven and they come home all cheery and loving and selfless, playing the harp, doing quiet times together... or, if God doesn't do that, I guess they could be in a small group where they learn godly relationship patters, where others are able to speak into their lives and support them.

C. S. Lewis had a great analogy here: "There were three very, very close friends: Jack, Ronald, and Charles. When Charles died, Jack thought 'I'll get more of Ronald now. I won't have to share him anymore.' But to his shock he found that when Charles died he didn't get more of Ronald, he got less of Ronald, because there were certain things in Ronald that only Charles brought out. There was a certain way that Ronald would laugh at a Charles joke; certain ways that Ronald would respond to Charles thoughts or discussions. **When he had Ronald all to himself, he actually had less of Ronald. The more alone he was with Ronald, the less he really knew him.**