

Title: A Healthy Church

Passage: Ephesians 4:1-16

Introduction

Questions to consider:

- How do we know what is a healthy church?
- Caution: are your criteria of what makes a church good or healthy Biblical or merely personal preference?
- Today's passage outlines what a healthy church is supposed to be doing.

Overview:

Three Marks of a Healthy Church - characterized by...

I. Biblical Unity (v. 1-6)

II. Biblical Diversity (v.7-12)

III. Biblical Maturity (v.14-16)

I. Biblical Unity (v. 1-6)

A. United Around a Common Calling

- we are all called from something (out of darkness/sin) to another
- See Ephesians 1-3
- calling is for every person who is a Christian
- What is your call? Live in a manner worthy of your calling

- How to live out this calling?

Ephesians 4:2

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Humility

- recognizing we all don't deserve where we are, and
- placing other's needs first.
- Quote: essence of Gospel humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.
- "An attitude of lowliness and obedience, grounded in the recognition of one's status before God as his creatures"

Gentleness

- meaning: strength under control
- while you could take control or do things, you choose to do otherwise
- "An expression of compassion, seen in God's dealings with the frail and weak, and expected of believers in their dealings with others."

Patience

- "The quality of forbearance and self-control which shows itself particularly in a willingness to wait upon God and his will. Believers are called upon to be patient in their expectations of God's actions, and in their relationships with one another."

Accepting one another in love

- only way relationships can work: love covers a multitude of sins

- we are all united in keeping the unity of the body
- unity is active, not passive
- we are not called to create unity but to keep it.
- What breaks unity? The opposite of the qualities above (pride, controlling, impatience, not bearing with others, etc.)

C. United in the Same Belief (Gospel Confession)

Ephesians 4:4-6

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

- One body: common church
- One Spirit: Common origin in Spirit's work
- One hope: share common hope in Christ
- One Lord: Jesus Christ
- One faith: body of doctrine (Christ alone by faith alone)
- One baptism: common experience being baptized in Christ
- one God and Father: all part of one family under God

II. Biblical Diversity (v.7-12)

A. God gave us different gifts (v.7-10)

- ministry grace: grace to serve and build the body of Christ
- we have been saved to serve Christ to glorify Him

Ephesians 3:8

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

- Jesus is the model of giving and we are to follow Him.
- Book: "Finding God's Will: Just Do Something"
- you determine what your spiritual gifts are by serving somewhere and explore what they may be.

B. God gave us different responsibilities (v.11-12)

- responsibilities are different for every believer
- Also see other passages on spiritual gifts
(1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:11)
- approximately 19-20 gifts
- Ephesians passage - discussed 5 gifts

Apostles

- apostle = "sent ones"

Prophets

- prophets = one who is forth-telling (preach the Word)

Evangelists

- special zeal and heart to share the Gospel to others

Shepherds

- those called to oversee God's flock (pastors, elders)

Teachers

- distinct from pastor (different Greek word)

Caution: Temptation to dislike those who are different than us and/or only be with those who are like us.

- Truth: recognize the value of the diversity of the body of Christ. Not everyone can be like you.

Purpose

Ephesians 4:12-13

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until 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,

- caution: we are not consumers to watch but to be servants

- we are to grow in Christ not wearing a bib (what do I get?) but instead a towel (what can I do/give?)

III. Biblical Maturity (v.13-16)

Ephesians 4:13-16

until 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, *so 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, *we are to grow up in every way* into him who is the head, into Christ, from 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.

Four traits of a spiritually mature person

1) Christ-likeness (v.13)

"until 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,

- ultimate picture of maturity: Christ

2) Doctrinal stability (v.14)

"*so 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."

- doctrine: specific teachings

- we should know what the Bible says on key topics.

- goal of every Christian: disciple-making teachers

Hebrews 5:11-14

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

3) Speak truth in love

- be filled with love

4) Contribution

- not enough to just know but also give what you know to others.

- sharing that seeks the good of others to be like Christ (target is not to grow numerically but grow spiritually)

Summary:

We are all part of the body of Christ. As we use our gifts in love, the church becomes healthy.

- your life is bigger than you may think (good job, compliant children, fashionable clothes, etc.) but part of God's immense purposes to transform the world - God wants you to be part of it!

- caution: it is not about your feelings but about the key commitments you have made as being part of the body of Christ. (ex: one may not "feel" loving everyday in marriage but a vow/commitment was made)