
The Church's Dream

God has indeed given the Church a beautiful dream that one day we shall be united in perfect unity in submission at the feet of Jesus Christ. Paul mentions this great dream in Ephesians 1:10 and explains some of its implications in Ephesians 2:14-15, and in our text today he elaborates even further on this grand vision.

Ephesians 4:11-14

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **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.

In these verses Paul demonstrates how the dream of our perfect unity can only come through the teaching of the Word of God.

I. Teachers of God's Word are His gifts to us (vs. 11)

Here Paul explains that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all His gift to us. John Stott says, "Nothing is more necessary for the building up of God's Church in every age than an ample supply of God's gifted teachers."

II. Teachers of God's Word equip us to do our job (vs. 12a)

The purpose of teachers is not to do all of the ministry of the church, but rather to equip us to do so. We, therefore, must learn how to learn. John Calvin said that it would be "insane" for any of us to seek to attain to the full measure of Christ without submitting to teachers in the Church.

III. Our job is to build the body of Christ (vs. 12b, 13)

Here we see what our job is: to build the Body. In verse 13 Paul elaborates on what this building means: 1) the unity of doctrine; 2) a real experiential knowledge of Christ; and 3) the development of Christ-like character.

IV. Teachers of God's Word keep us when we are in the storms (vs. 14)

The reason for active, faithful Church teaching is that we shall constantly be faced with heresies in the Church. See Paul's comments to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30. We have "itching" ears, the world provides many cunning schemes to distract us, and the Evil One himself desires to trip us up. Only through faithful devotion to God's Word and careful teaching and hearing of His Word keep us in our times of trial.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul refer especially to the teaching gifts in verse 11?
2. How does the communication of God's Word promote unity in the church?
3. What is the job of Church teachers and pastors? (vs. 12a)
4. What is the job of those being taught? (vs. 12b)
5. What is the goal of the Church? How can we each promote that goal?
6. Why is training in the Word important? (vs. 14)
7. What are some current "winds of doctrine" and "deceitful schemes" that threaten the Church's unity?

Going Deeper

How can you strengthen your engagement with the teaching of the Church?

Do you sense that you are growing in doctrine? In your experience of Christ? In your Christ-like character? If not, how can you begin to grow significantly in these ways?