

God's Will for Our Church

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[0 : 00] Well, we're in the middle of a series on prayer, all kinds of prayer for all kinds of people. It's the Lord's desire that we pray lots for everyone.

And one of the critical questions that we've been challenged to ask as we do that is, God, what do you want to do in this situation?

What do you desire? What do you will for this person? The Lord wants us to pray according to his will. We probably, hopefully, all pray for ourselves on a regular basis.

We hopefully pray for our families and the people in our families every day. But this morning we want to talk about our church, one another.

Father, are you praying for each other here in this room and for those who aren't with us this morning regularly? We do pray every Sunday like we just did for some of the needs in our church.

[1 : 11] But I mean throughout the week. Are you praying for the people in this church? And if you are and when you do, what do you ask God to do in their lives?

What are you asking God for, for one another? That's the question that we're going to be focused on this morning. What should we be asking God for as we pray for each other here in our church? God, what do you want to do in our church, in this church, in Davidson? And our answer comes to us from Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

So if you have your Bibles, please open them up to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to pick it up in verse 7.

[2 : 21] Paul writes this. He says, But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. And drop down to verse 11.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

[3 : 37] This whole chapter is full of God's will for our church. We could go back all the way to right to the beginning of the chapter. We talked about that last summer a little bit in our One Another series.

God's desire is that we would be a people who love one another. But we want to bring it in here to verse 7. Paul sets up a bit of a contrast here.

He's been talking about in verse 4 how there's one body. There is one people of God in Christ. And now he sets up a bit of a contrast. Even though there's one body, there are many parts to this body. There are many gifts that have been given to the body. Verse 7. But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

Paul then supports that with going back into the Old Testament. And then he has a little bit of a tangent and then comes back in verse 11. To each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

[4 : 45] So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers.

There's lots that we could say about each of those different kinds of people or each of those different roles.

But what strikes me is the language that Paul uses. I expected him to say, so Christ himself gave the gift of apostleship.

The gift of evangelism. The gift of teaching. What is the gift that Christ has given to his church? It's not just the gift of apostleship.

The gift is the people. So Christ himself gave what? The apostles. The prophets. The evangelists.

[5 : 52] The pastors and the teachers. They are the gift. They are part of the gift. And I don't think this list is meant to be all inclusive. There could have been other things that he mentioned.

Other roles that he has given. But each of those is a special gift of grace that God has given to his church.

We could talk about each of those, but we probably don't have time to really get into each one. And so this morning I'm just going to focus on pastors. Probably the one that we're most familiar with.

The word pastor here, believe it or not, this is the only place in the whole Bible that you find the word pastor. And that might come as a surprise to some of you because it seems like every church has a pastor almost.

Why does it only show up once in the whole Bible? The reason is that this word is actually, it comes from the Latin word for shepherd. The original word that Paul uses here is actually the word shepherd.

[7 : 01] Literally. He gave shepherds. It kind of goes a little bit against some of the mindset that we typically have towards pastors today.

But essentially, shepherds, as he refers to them here, is that he's talking about the same role as elder or overseer in the church.

1 Peter 5, verse 1. Peter says there, When Paul was meeting up with the elders from this very church, the elders of Ephesus, he kind of charged them.

He said, Keep watch over yourselves and over the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

And so, the word that we so often use, pastor, really traces back to the idea of shepherd. And it's really synonymous with the position of elder or overseer in the church.

[8 : 15] That's the primary work of a pastor. And in our North American culture, we've maybe kind of come to this place where we have put the pastor up on a pedestal.

He's the paid professional that does the work, the job description that we've given him to do. And these elders, well, they're important, but they're kind of second rate, you know.

But that's not the teaching of the New Testament. What the apostles taught and set out as the pattern is that there is to be a plurality of elders or shepherds in the local church.

I appreciate the respect that people intend when they say to me, Pastor Josh. But I hope that you know that I'm not the only pastor of this church.

Rob Workington, Byron Dahl, Charles Schmidt, and some of you other men have even served in the past as shepherds in this church.

[9 : 21] The Lord's desire is that there be a plurality of shepherds, of pastors, of elders. Why? Why has he given that to the church?

Hmm. I want to give something special to my people. But I don't really know what to get them. So I'll just get them a box of chocolates. No. It's not a gift like that.

This is a gift that Christ has thought through. A very thoughtful gift for a very specific purpose. To meet a very specific need.

What is that need? Paul goes on to say, So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers to equip his people for works of service.

Christ himself has given shepherds and those other roles as gifts to the church. Why? To equip his people for works of service.

[10 : 35] And this is another place where sometimes in our North American culture, we maybe have it a little bit backwards. We maybe see the pastor as being the one that we pay to do the works of service for us.

Or the elders are the ones that we have elected so that they can do the work of the church for us. But actually it's the opposite.

Christ has given shepherds to equip the rest of us to do the work of service.

To serve one another well. To serve our community. And in all of these things, to serve God. And so God's desire is that each person in his church be working, be serving, be using the gifts that he has given them.

Under the equipping and the coordinating and the guidance and the leadership of these roles. The shepherds.

[11 : 48] Those of you who are shepherds. God's desire is that you not only serve like the rest of us, but that you equip the rest of us as a church to serve.

That you give us the tools to know how do we serve? How do we work together as a church to reach this community?

That's a heavy mantle. And so if you're not currently serving as a shepherd, pray for the shepherds in this church, the elders.

That they would have God's leading as they seek to do that. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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[12 : 57] Amen. God bless langley. Amen. ■■ decision. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. same way as a church it is critical that we learn to function together in a coordinated manner so that we can achieve the miracle of standing and walking and serving and blessing it's only as we work together under the guidance together under the coordination of the shepherds that we can achieve this paul goes on from here to paint a bit of a picture of what god desires for the church generally we've talked a little bit about leaders and how they've been given as a gift but to what to what end so what we're all serving together they're equipping that's great but what what's the overall big picture where are we going what is christ's desire for his church what's his will for us here in davidson paul goes on to spell this out a little bit starting in verse 12 he gave the apostles the prophets the evangelists the pastors and teachers why to equip his people for works of service so that the body of christ may be built up and then here it is until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of god and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of christ then will we we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming instead speaking the truth in love we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head that is christ from him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work there's a lot in there there's a lot of little details in there and rather than going through every single one i'm just going to try to hit on a couple different themes what does christ desire for his people his church twice paul uses the phrase built up that they would be built up god is at work he is building something with and in his people with and in us here in the davidson community bible church he has already laid the foundation jesus has come the apostles have carried the teaching of christ and the witness of christ and now he is building something there is the theme here of growth from infancy to adulthood it's a very interesting way to describe what what what he longs to see happen we're kind of like infants he implies in verse 14 then we will no longer be infants we're like the seed form that has now sprouted the plant that is just now blossomed but christ's desire is that as a as a body as a people that we would grow to become the full adult mature body people that he wants for us to be what does that maturity look like paul gives a number of uh indicators here a group of people that's characterized by a group of people that's characterized by speaking the truth to one another a group of people that is well coordinated and functions well together like it like an adult body does we're no longer learning how to walk and how to move we work together we're coordinated maturity the word mature is used a couple of times fully developed i love this phrase in verse 13 he says and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of christ you can just think of the picture of kind of that the little growth chart that we do for our kids on the wall as they grow up well eventually there's a line and that's that's it they're fully grown fully adult that's christ's desire for his people that we reach the full maturity as a group where the fullness of christ we we match up to to the fullness of christ we come to share in that measure of his glory that he is going to give us it's a beautiful picture there's also a theme here of a ship out at sea paul likes to use his metaphors and he likes to use them one after the other sometimes you get this picture of a ship out in the sea the waves are coming and the winds blowing and it's just going all over the place and he uses this as a metaphor to describe how some christians probably that he's known and seen some churches even you know a person rolls into town with a new teaching

that takes them away from the teaching of christ and they just kind of get blown along and go with it the culture says this sure let's do that the pressures of society of the of local local cities whatever say you go in this direction so we just okay that sounds great paul's desire is that we not be like that but that we be anchored in the truth in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of god he says so that when those things come they just go under the boat we're not moving this is our original conviction this is the truth jesus is the way the truth and the life and it doesn't matter what anybody else says over here or if somebody else teaches something contrary we're not going with that flow that wind isn't taking us anywhere we're anchored here in christ that's what he longs to see for us as a church to summarize i'm just going to quickly read through some of these and just highlight on a few words what christ wills for his people is for them to be built up to reach unity no divisions faith filled knowing the son of god maturity steadfastness ability with to withstand well coordinated functioning together

in truthfulness in love what a beautiful picture in a moment we'll talk about how this should inform our prayers but before we get there i just want to say the thing that hit me the most this week as i was preparing this message is simply isn't it amazing that god wants to do this for us that he wants to make us part of a people a body like this as undeserving as we are this whole week i've been without my family they've been in valley view enjoying time with um jen's parents and throughout this whole week i've been thinking about how can i be a better husband how can i be a better father what can we do together with them when they come back i've been tucking away some ideas making some plans and then all of a sudden as i was reading this it just hit me the lord has made some plans for us as his church and how things are going to be and he is working to bring us to that isn't that amazing that we have a god who loves us like that that he has come up with this plan of what we will look like one day when we're fully grown and that he is moving us along towards that what a gift what love that we as sinners as people who have shaken our fist against him rejected him that he has desired to save us and to pull us into this incredible family of his to be his people and so as we pray for one another as a church of course we pray for the typical things matters of health and well-being but what if we started to use this picture and this isn't the only picture there's lots of pictures throughout scripture but what if we started to use this picture to inform how we pray for one another

I've already mentioned about how we should pray for the shepherds in the church that they would equip and lead well but we can pray for one another that each person would be valued by every other person in the church that they would use their gifts that they would serve well that we would be a church characterized by love and by truth pray for our church that we wouldn't be tossed by the storm but that we would hold fast to Christ pray that you that each person in our church would understand how what kind of part they are what gift or grace that God has given them and how they can use that to serve because it's only as each part does its work that the body can be well coordinated and well functioning that's true of the church as a whole and that's true of our church here in Davidson and so last week

[25 : 03] I encouraged you to make a bit of a list if you need to to pray for your family this week I want to encourage you to make a regular habit of praying for one another in the church there's a couple easy ways to do that first of all we have a new directory that's going to be ready soon here that's one way to do it you have your list right there you can just work your way through it we can do a few families each week or a family every day however you decide one of the things that's really been helping me that I use I use an app called prayer mate I found this online by recommendation from someone and you can just set up your lists of different people in your life family extended family church missionaries and every time you open it up it gives you a fresh set of people drawn from all of those lists so that you can pray for those people and ensure that you pray for everyone and it's good when we pray for everyone in our church by name that we take time to think about that person and what

God wants for that person and so I encourage you if that's something you think might help you download that fill it up with the names of the people in our church and as I have done this I found it to be very helpful because it's easy sometimes to just get into the rut of oh I'm supposed to be praying for so and so so God please be with Charles and Ellie bless them be with them bless them and be with them but we don't really get into thinking about that person but if you set aside that I'm praying for one family a day in our church or something like that you begin to think through each person in that family have you been praying for the kids in our church not just your kids but the

other children there's so much that we can that we can easily miss or pass over and so having a list and working through it regularly I'll be honest there are days where I miss I'm sure we all do the day takes you by surprise especially when you have kids and you wake up with them right there but we need to make this a habit

God wants to do amazing things in our church and that will come in answer to our prayers when we pray according to his will and so let's ask God to do what he has shown us here he wants to do in our church for his glory amen for let's to recognize him in and again he wants to you