

# How do we walk in to church?

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Preacher: Jake Tasker

[ 0 : 0 0 ] and he gave the apostles the prophets the evangelists the pastors and teachers 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 to mature manhood to 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 with each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love what's the biggest project you've ever been involved in maybe that tower you built out of lego just the other day tim maybe that loft conversion you were thinking of and organized maybe that building project maybe the business deal that you were part of hopefully we've seen over the last few weeks the reality is the biggest project you could ever be involved in in the universe is this the church the biggest project you could ever be involved in just flick with me to ephesians chapter 3 verse 10 paul has been reminding the ephesian church of god's plan for all time to unite all things in christ and he's been explaining how it happens as all sorts of people trust jesus and become part of the building project or three verse 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of god might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places the universal church god's people all across history and the world is like god's firework display of wisdom and glory and grace church dulwich little tiny grace church dulwich we are a local expression of that universal church part of god's enormous building project we display the glory of god to the watching world and we saw last week our mission is to make disciples of jesus christ to build up followers of jesus so they're strengthened to live for him and to reach out inviting others to be jesus disciples themselves so that through us god is building his church there is nothing bigger you could ever be a part of if you're curious about christian things maybe you think the church looks a bit messy and unimpressive and in lots of ways you're right but this is god's project take a good look and if you're a follower of jesus whether you're two or 82 you are in on it you're part of things so what should our involvement in the church look like or more specifically this morning how do we walk into church given what this gathering is as i walk in the door as i log in online what am i thinking what's my attitude to be what am i here for what's my role well again i seek to answer all those questions by answering one big question

this people god is building the church how does it grow how does the church grow and as we answer that we'll see how we can play our part on a sunday morning and i'm sure you'll think of implications for how you can be involved in the life of the church day to day week by week as well so we're in ephesians 4 11 to 16 and i want us to see how paul says the church grows i think we can summarize it like this the church grows as pastors equip the saints so the saints can build up the body we're going to explore those two parts and we'll stop off along the way to think about implications for how we walk in or log in to church so firstly pastors equip the saints let's have a look at verses 11 and 12 again verse 11 and he jesus gave the apostles the prophets the evangelists the pastors and teachers why to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of christ christians 4 11 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 and 12 paul seems to have in mind two foundational roles and two ongoing roles but all of them involve teaching and instructing people about jesus and his message so apostles those eyewitnesses of jesus's life and ministry who he himself commissioned to take his message to the world prophets new testament messengers who first proclaimed the message from god about jesus then evangelists who then and now preach the good news about jesus from the scriptures to those who don't know it and fourthly pastors and teachers probably one role think kind of hyphenated

pastor teacher it's their job to shepherd and instruct the church as they follow jesus i focused on pastor teachers pastors for simplicity but notice the reason christ gave these gifts to christ gave these gifts to the church verse 12 he gave pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry every christian is a saint and the pastor has a specific job to equip every christian in the church to train and prepare them to serve and minister to one another i guess we could think of a pastor as a kind of general manager or ceo where it's their job to manage the practical tasks and plan the outreach and do all the personal development planning but paul's suggesting a much more like a role much more like coach or trainer their focus is not directly to grow the church but to equip the church training the members of the church so they can serve and grow the body means we're not after a kind of hot shot charismatic figure to inspire us to personal development instead we want a pastor who will teach us show us god's word so that we're prepared and equipped to serve each other so a faithful pastor isn't so much asking am i growing my church rather they're asking am i equipping my church am i sermons preparing people for serving makes sense then for the pastor to spend lots of their time in their study faithfully praying for their church and faithfully preparing to preach and teach we don't want them inundated with administrative tasks we want them to be focused on doing everything they can to equip the church and it means we need a pastor who really will teach us able to explain wonderful truths but also willing and happy to say hard things that we need to hear if they're equipping us to serve that is going to involve stretching our thinking challenging our beliefs and behaviors and at times calling us to repent which will be painful we need them to be ready to teach us what's this got to do with how we walk into church then well i think the big thing is the same as what we saw in week one we walk in or we log on ready to be equipped expectant expectant that will be stretched and prodded helped and encouraged so as i walk in or as i click the link i want to be praying lord today help me to humbly listen to your voice help me to be equipped so i can live for you this week i guess practically it means we're going to want to fight distraction where we can ignoring the temptation to daydream or plan monday's emails ignoring the temptation if we're sat at home on zoom to be replying to loads of whatsapp messages maybe that's just me we want to be doing all that we can to aid the process of the pastor equipping the saints how does the church grow as the pastor equips the saints so the saints build up the body let's read from verse 11 he gave pastors verse 12 why 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 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 and deceitful schemes rather speaking the truth in love we're 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 there's loads there and we're going to look more properly at it at growth group in a couple of weeks time but the big picture is this the church is equipped by its pastor and then it builds itself up it grows as it builds itself up so it's all of us serving and speaking so all of us grow to be like jesus i've put a who a how and to what end on the handout to help us who's involved in this well verse 12 we've said the saints is the whole church verse 13 paul says until we all and verse 16 the whole body when each part is working this is collective responsibility all the saints each one of us pitching in to grow grace church dulwich i guess we could think it's all up to simon and a select few to do the ministry but paul wants us to see we all have a part to play look at the beautiful picture in verse 16 how does the body grow when each part is working properly every single one of us has a role to play now hopefully you've had a chance to see our snazzy new website it's a great example of someone in the church family using their gifts to serve the body i actually made some temporary edits to it this week to the people page hopefully you can see it at home here's my tweak on the screen there's simon looking sharp and there we all are the whole church family ministers in the body all of us key to the growth of the church i think often we consider growth to be a kind of one directional thing where i help you to grow or you help me to grow like parent child or teacher pupil or mentoring but paul says in the church everyone serves each other and he uses the body as an illustration each part needed each part supporting the others and if there's an injury or worse a piece missing we limp and we don't quite grow right so who's involved it's all of us but how well paul gives two main ways for us to help the body grow serving and speaking there in verse 12 the work of ministry it's literally works of service there's so much there's so much that happens to make church function and grow all sorts of works of service contribute to the building of the church on sunday morning

specifically the rotors are full of ways to serve from screen sharing and welcoming on zoom to reading and pa and in normal times tea and coffee that you long for the day we'll get back to that and that's not to mention all the informal ways we can serve on a sunday morning asking one another how can i pray for you this week walking in and praying for the service and the preacher arriving early to say hi and help things start on time every one of us can be serving to build the church and as i walk in or log in i can be praying lord how can i serve the body this morning but the other way for us to be growing each other is to speak verse 15 rather speaking the truth in love we're to grow up in every way into him who is the head into christ now all sorts of conversations are going to be an encouragement to us but paul really wants us to talk about jesus the message of the gospel the truth spoken in love nothing will build us up like the truth of the gospel sometimes it will be wonderful words of encouragement that spur us on sometimes it will be hard words of rebuke and correction that bring us back to jesus when i sin and you call me to repent reminding me of the forgiveness of my sins one at the cross that is balm to my weary sinful heart and it helps me turn back and look to jesus again and as you share your struggles with us we can remind you there's grace from god to help you now obviously that can be done in all sorts of ways through the week on the phone in growth groups walking in the park and if we're here in person it's much harder as we follow government guidelines but it is doable on zoom i've chatted to a few people who say some of the conversations they've had in breakout groups have been some of the joys of church life during covid whether it's the simplicity of sharing a prayer request before logging off before going off to sort out lunch or the longer conversations about the sermon and that involve praying together there and then and then in the future when we're all back to here back here again and we can all be speaking the truth in love over a cup of tea

we'll grow so it's all of us serving and speaking but to what end verse 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 and verse 15 speaking the truth in love we're to grow up in every way into him who is the head into christ the aim of our growing that grace church would look collectively more and more like jesus so as i serve and i speak on a sunday morning of course i want people to feel welcome and i'd love it if after chatting to me people feel happier and more joyful and they're encouraged but much more paul wants me asking myself how can i serve and speak the truth to help andrew and mary or anne or simon grow to be more like jesus sometimes that will mean reminding them of great truths sometimes it might be a more awkward conversation as we talk about sin or something else that's confrontational perhaps because above all we're not aiming for happiness we're aiming for christlikeness in him is found great joy and we want to be like him so who how and to what end are we building well it's all of us serving and speaking so all of us grow to be like jesus so we're not cruise ship passengers sitting back while pastor simon captains the ship we're more like builders on a building site or a family on a mission a picture of family mealtime or better still maybe you remember the days when we could have a church family lunch here and some people will be rolling those huge round tables out from the back others will be out in the playground playing with the kids other people have popped home to get the food they've prepared some have brought treats from the shop shop and he's got the pringles everybody is mucking in so that everyone is fed and served and built up everyone has a role to play everyone matters and that's the picture paul gives us all of us serving and speaking so all of us grow to be like jesus together so when it comes to our involvement in church especially on a sunday morning we can't think no not me i've nothing to offer that's just not true everyone has a part to play in building the church i guess we could think okay me but i don't know how i can serve and i don't know what i can say why not ask a friend this week or your growth group leader for some advice and i haven't checked but i'm confident vicky would love it if you rang her and said look vicky i'd like to serve the church family on a sunday morning to help things grow but i don't know what to do test that theory somebody please i'm sure she'll love it some of us though will be serving in all sorts of ways and speaking faithfully to one another about jesus regularly building the church well done it's hard work thank you be encouraged press on but it's possible some of us have

[ 20 : 10 ] got into bad habits because of covid or for other reasons and maybe we think yeah i know i've got a part to play but and whatever that but is we need to have a rethink because otherwise grace church delich will limp without you we need everyone even if all you can muster is a lot of problems and stress on a sunday morning you sharing your struggles might just be the thing that helps the church to grow in a way we never have before it's all of us serving and speaking so all of us grow to be like jesus together as we consider then how we walk into church the big thing for

each of us to be asking ourselves and praying about how can i help build the church how can i serve and speak so that others grow ask yourself that pray about it we'll each have different ways of doing that with our very gifts but here are some practical thoughts i've had whilst preparing and chatting it with others when you're here in person obviously we're limited by not being able to mingle but you can legally as far as i can tell you can legally talk to the staff team so make the most of that and you can chat amongst your family why not on the way home ask your parent or your child what's one thing you liked about church today if you're young enjoy putting your parent on the spot by asking them what's one thing you enjoyed about church today dad how about setting up a walk with someone for before or after church so that you can arrive on time or leave together also whilst we can't speak or sing as we normally would saying the confession and prayers clearly and loudly but not too loudly because we're not allowed to shout so that others can hear you joining in that will encourage them and there are ways as well that we can demonstrate to others what's going on in our hearts by using our bodies we could display our dependence on the lord by posturing or kneeling to confess and pray we could demonstrate our reflection during the songs with our hands held out or we could demonstrate we're praising the lord with our hearts by raising a hand there are songs we can clap to there are even actions sometimes that you can join in with to encourage others to do the same you could dance to the lord here in celebration of all he's done but what about as i join online well i quite often sit over there running the zoom call from church and i love seeing people at home arrive and chat so log in on time to wave and say hi and then if you're up to it keep your camera on so that other people can see you're still there and engaging i hope i don't embarrass anybody watching at home with this but i tend to have zoom on gallery view during the songs and i always am encouraged when i see one or two people standing and really obviously belting out the songs at home and i'm always hoping that the neighbours can really hear why not do that i've mentioned staying for breakout groups that's an obvious one but not always possible i'm sure there are loads of other things let me know if you think of anything but as we close with us split over

two physical and one online service because of covid i think the big danger is that because we don't see each other we forget we need each other if simon just imagine what would happen if this were the turn of events if simon stopped preaching if we stopped coming to church to be equipped and to encourage each other if we stopped serving and stopped speaking the truth in love what would happen at grace church dulwich this body of believers this family we'd limp and then slowly but surely we'd shrivel up at a time like this it's tempting to fall into the trap of thinking the church is small and insignificant and they won't miss me but god's building project is the biggest project in all the world there's nothing bigger you could ever be involved in and paul says and history proves that the church grows as pastors equip the saints and the saints build the body so as all of us serve and speak grace church dulwich will grow to be more like jesus and increasingly we will display god's wisdom and glory to the watching world that will be wonderful let's pray together ephesians chapter 3 verse 20 now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us to him be glory in the church and in christ jesus throughout all generations forever and ever amen you