

TRINITY SUNDAY - English

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[0 : 00] Just needed my translator. Ni hao? Hello. Sorry. Oh, I'm speaking English, you're speaking Mandarin.

Hello. All right. Well, let me pray before we begin. Dear God, thank you for your word. Help us to understand it now we pray and put it into practice in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Well, last week, my wife was in tears.

You see, our youngest child had their first day of school just last Thursday. Here she is, all dressed up. I'm doing a proud dad thing, I know.

And for my wife, there was a big part of her that didn't want to let her go. Whereas I thought, yes, another one out of the house. But of course, we want our children to grow up into maturity and develop their abilities and so on.

[1 : 06] We want them to be able to provide for themselves and also contribute to society and future generations. And to do that, they need to be trained or equipped.

And it's similar with the church. God wants us to grow in maturity. And to do that, we need to be trained and equipped to serve one another and build the body of Christ.

And we see this in Ephesians chapter 4. Let me first briefly put Ephesians 4 into context. Paul has spent the first three chapters speaking about our great calling as Christians and about how blessed we are.

Now, if you've got your Bibles open at Ephesians chapter 4, Paul then begins by asking them in verse 1 to live a life worthy of our great calling, especially when it comes to how we relate to one another.

If you've got your Bibles open, it would be great to do that. Have a read of verses 1 to 2 while Peter translates. And the reason we are to work hard at relating with one another is because we are united as one body in Christ.

[2 : 15] Again, have a read of verses 3 to 6 while it's being translated, while Peter translates what I'm saying now. And as you read, notice how many times the word one comes up.

You see, we are united as one body. That word one is repeated. Hopefully you had a chance to read that. But then notice verse 7. The language of one changes to each one.

That is, Paul moves from talking about the one body to talking about each part of the body. And he says each part has been given grace or gifts. And so now have a read of verses 7 to 8 as Peter translates.

Then in verse 11, Paul lists some of these gifts given to each part. But do you notice that these gifts are not things but people?

It says Christ gave the apostles, the prophets and the pastor teachers. You see, Christ gives us people who have different gifts. And so you are Christ's gift to us.

[3 : 18] The person sitting next to you is Christ's gift to you. And we are Christ's gifts to one another. Now this tells us something about why we come to church.

We come to church not just for ourselves, but rather to serve each other because we are God's gift to others to serve them. But here Paul particularly mentions particular people, the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor teachers, because they have a particular job.

And that job is in verse 12. So have a read again of verses 11 to 12 as Peter translates. You see, Paul is saying that people like Andrew Reid and David Ruan and so on, we are here to equip you for works of service.

Now the word for service is the same word in the Greek for ministry. And the word for servant is the same as the word for minister. So what Paul is saying here in verse 12 is that pastor teachers are here to equip you all to be ministers who do ministry.

You see, in the Bible, every Christian is a minister. So if someone asks you who the minister is at HTD, you can theologically say me.

[4 : 36] Of course, some of us are the pastor teachers who are here to equip you to be those ministers. But how do we equip you to serve? Well, it's firstly and primarily through teaching you the Bible.

See, why do you think Paul lists these particular people, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor teachers? What do they all have in common? They all involve speaking God's word. Because that's what grows people in Christian maturity. That's what equips or trains our character. You see, people may have all the skills in the world to serve at church.

But unless they have a mature Christian character, unless they have a servant heart, then they won't serve. They won't use their gifts. And so my job is to primarily teach you God's word so that by it your character might be equipped for works of service.

But secondly, we are to still equip and train you practically to equip you with skills like giving your testimony or leading a Bible study group and so on.

[5 : 41] Now, this sort of training has been happening at HTD for many years. But this year, we're wanting to introduce a training program that will hopefully give you more structure and clarity to training.

And so be more helpful in equipping you. I'll explain this more in a moment. But what is the point of all this? Well, in verses 12 to 13, we are told the point or the reason, beginning with the words, so that.

Have a read of those verses 12 to 13. Do you see the reason? We are to equip you to minister so that the body of Christ might be built up.

In other words, every Christian is not only a minister, but every Christian is to be into bodybuilding. Not this type of bodybuilding. But this type of bodybuilding.

Do you have a wave at the camera? It's just there. You might be able to see yourself. We are to build this body of Christ. And we are to build it, that it grows in Christ, in Christian maturity.

[6 : 52] God's goal for us in life is to be mature like Christ. That's where we are heading, as verse 13 suggests. Now, why is this so important? Well, verse 14 tells us.

So please read verse 14 while Peter translates. You see, growth is not an optional extra, is it? It is vital to the Christian life. Otherwise, as verse 14 says, we may be blown to and fro by false teaching.

And perhaps even blown away from following Christ. I've seen it happen. What's more, we sadly have churches in Melbourne who do not teach God's word faithfully.

And so we need to grow in Christian maturity so that we will not be blown away from the truth, but instead stand firm in the truth. But do you notice?

It's not just the pastor's job to speak the word of truth to help us grow. It's everyone's job. Have a look at verse number 15. In chapter 1, verse 13, Paul called the gospel the word of truth.

[7 : 57] And that's what he means here, the gospel word. We had to speak the gospel word in love to one another. Just as Paul has said elsewhere in places like Romans 15 or Colossians 3.

You see, in this passage, we're all to do two things. First, we are to be equipped to use our gifts to serve one another and grow the body.

Second, we are also to be equipped to speak the word of truth, the gospel, to one another in love. And the Bible adds a third thing. We are to speak the word in love to non-Christians as we have opportunity.

So that the body of Christ might grow not just in maturity, but in number as well. This is how God grows us. God grows us as we each do these three things in various ways.

That's how Paul finishes in verse 16. The body grows, he says, as each part does its work. See verse 16? So as I mentioned, we are launching a more deliberate training program this year.

[8 : 59] Last year, we focused on prayer. The year before was a focus on evangelism. This year, it's a focus on training. Now, it's not going to be too big a thing, this program, but the hope is it will bring various training together, as well as offer further training to help in equipping us for ministry.

So again, together we can keep building the body of Christ. Or put differently, the program is to help us grow and make disciples who will grow and make other disciples for Christ.

So on the slide is a picture of the process. The goal, the arrow, is to see everyone in the world mature in Christ, living with Christ as their Lord.

The way that happens is by speaking the truth of the gospel in some way. That will look different at different stages, depending on the context and where people are at.

But maturity in Christ is the goal. So we first need to engage with people. That's the first green square. We need to build relationships, live godly lives before them, and speaking some part of the gospel as the opportunity arises.

[10:09] And God willing, this will lead to the next green box, to explaining the gospel in full to them, to speak of Jesus' death for us, how Jesus died taking our judgment for our sin in our place.

And of course, also to speak of Jesus' resurrection to new life, which assures us of new spiritual life now, and new physical life later in heaven.

That's evangelism, explaining the gospel. And then next, God willing, we need to establish them in the faith as young disciples of Christ. And then we are to edify them, which is the top green square, which just simply means build up in maturity.

And at the same time, we need to equip them, you, us all, so that we can then speak the gospel to others, and use our various gifts to play our part in building the body of Christ.

And that's what all those arrows mean, that are coming out of the square equipping Christians to do all those other things, so that together under God, we can build the body of Christ in both maturity and number for God's glory.

[11:21] And so this year, the English congregations will be focusing on equipping people here at HTD, so that we can, with God's help, build the body of Christ. I understand that the Chinese are already doing this.

Well done. But you might be interested to hear what we are hoping to do in brief. We are hoping to offer training intensives three times a year. And at those intensives, there will be choices of topics for people to choose training in, from evangelism to serving on Sundays, to the doctrine of the Trinity, to key characters of the Reformation.

The intensives will run over three Wednesday nights, and again on a Saturday morning for those who cannot make a weeknight. And the weeks that they are on on a Wednesday night, the idea is to replace Bible study, so you still only have one night out a week.

If you're still not sure what it will look like, that's okay. It's hot, and we'll explain more later. There's also a booklet just outside on the little desk underneath the sign that says Main Switchboard.

That has a list of topics and things like that. You might like to pick up one of those. But I don't want to spend any more time on it, because as I said, it is hot, and it's not all that relevant for our Chinese brothers and sisters.

[12:32] So let's wrap up. Well, after her first day at school last Thursday, Megan, our youngest, was exhausted. She said, Daddy, I'm so tired from learning.

I'm glad the week is almost over. Training is hard work. It does require effort, but we want our children to be equipped so that they can be built up to be mature people in the world, able to get a job and so on.

How much more so then should we want to work hard at being equipped to build the body of Christ, to be mature like Christ, not to get a good job, but more importantly, to bring God glory.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for your word incarnate, the Lord Jesus. We thank you that you have given us to each other.

We pray that you would help us to do this for the glory of your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

[13:48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.