

# How God's Gifts of Grace Unite Us

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Our reading today is from Ephesians chapter 4. Starting in verse 1, we read, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, 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.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.

In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds 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 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.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] And this is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Karen. Let's pray together as we come to this passage and ask God to speak to us.

Why don't you join me? Father, this morning as we come to your word, this really amazing passage, I pray, God, that you will speak to us, God. And don't just speak to our minds, but speak to our hearts.

We ask, God, that you pour the Holy Spirit out upon us, that your word will come alive. It will take deep root in our heart. God, won't you both encourage us with the good news of Jesus, but also challenge us, God, to become more Christ-like, to become like you.

God, we want our church, and we pray for the church in Hong Kong, God, that we as a citywide church will become mature, as this passage calls us to, that we will grow to the fullness of the stature of Christ, that we will become more and more like Jesus.

God, I pray, help us to do that. And so this morning, equip us and show us, God, and call us to yourself. God, we know that many of us, God, are going through tough times, Lord, discouraged, lost a loved one, going through difficulty.

[ 3 : 4 7 ] God, this morning, won't you come and minister to us, we pray, Lord. We want to have the risen Lord, the ascended Christ, lift our heads, God, and to see you, and to be encouraged and full of hope.

And so, God, we ask you to come and do that, we pray. In your wonderful and gracious name, amen. I'm not sure if you remember being in high school.

For some of us, that was a long time ago. Nate, that was just a few years ago. Come on, you can't shake your head like that. I remember getting towards the end of high school, and the big question is, what do you want to do with your life?

Where are you going to go? What are you going to study? What is your calling? What is your purpose? How are you not going to waste your life? You've got these big questions about, what are your next steps?

What trajectory do you want to go in? Maybe some of us here are kind of like, mid-stage through life, you know, 45, 50, and you're wondering, how do I want to spend the second half of my life?

[ 4 : 56 ] How do I want to not waste my life? What is my calling and purpose in life? To have a vision, or clarity of purpose, or calling, is such a clarifying and liberating thing.

You know what you can say yes to, you know what you can say no to, it's so clarifying to know your calling in life. Well, in this passage that we're going to look at today, Paul gives us, in this incredibly important passage, a real sense of purpose and vision and calling for the church.

He tells us what it is that the church is called to be and called to do. In fact, this word calling is actually the word he uses. Look at verse 1. He says, I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling, there's our word, to which you have been called.

He says the same thing in verse 4. He says, You were called to the one hope which belongs to your call. Okay, so Paul is giving this church, the Ephesians, a vision for their calling as a church.

Over the last six weeks as we've been working through Ephesians, we've seen that God has this grand cosmic plan for the entire universe to unite all things together under Christ, 1 verse 10.

[ 6 : 12 ] And the church, he's been alluding to the fact that the church has some purpose in this calling. Today he's going to get really practical and show us what is the calling of the church and what role it plays in this cosmic plan and purpose of God.

And so Paul's big idea is this, to the church is called to build one another up so that together we can be a unified, united, and mature body of Christ.

Okay, that's what Paul's going to call us to today. To build one another up so that together we can be a mature, unified body of Christ. So look at what he says here.

He says, I urge you to walk with one another in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. So Paul wants us to walk out this calling. It's not just theory that you have on your website.

It's actually something we practice. And he says, verse 2, with all humility. Okay, that's a good thing. Humility means self-forgetfulness. Remember C.S. Lewis' famous quote, to be humble is not to think less of yourself.

[ 7 : 18 ] It's just to think about yourself less of the time. So with humility, with gentleness, with patience. Why do we need patience? Because sometimes people test our patience.

And he says, bearing with one another in love. Another translation says, making allowances for one another's faults. Which is such a great description.

That doesn't mean we just turn a blind eye to one another's sin, or hypocrisy, or willful wrongdoing. We don't just pretend that what is wrong is not wrong. What it means is, we don't need to go and point out every person's fault all the time.

Somebody does something that bothers you, and you kind of say, I can let this one go. It's alright. I don't need to go and point out every person's fault. So here he's got this amazing description.

Humble, patient, gentle, bearing with one another in love. Sign me up for that kind of church, right? Now, why should we pursue these characteristics? Well, look at verse 3.

[ 8 : 20 ] He says, being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And that makes sense. As we are humble, patient, bearing with one another, it will contribute towards this unity of the body of Christ.

Christ's body chooses the way of humility, and patience, and gentleness, and graciousness, because our unity, our oneness, is at stake. What happens when a church is marked by self-importance, not humility, by impatience, by pointing out everyone's faults?

It's not unity. It's division, right? It's not oneness. It's fighting. It's friction in the church. But Paul says, actually, behave like this because your unity, your oneness, is at stake.

And notice, it's not a unity that we create. It's a unity that's given to us in the gospel. Paul says, maintain the unity that's been given to you by the Spirit.

So when a church forms, let's say, watermark, we plant a new church, let's say, we don't get the core team together and say, how can we foster, how can we create a sense of unity?

[ 9 : 28 ] Actually, the unity is inherent in the gospel. We don't say, let's go on some team building exercises, or let's think how we can foster unity. Actually, the unity is inherent in the gospel.

Our unity is established by the gospel. Christians are united by the fact that all of us have a shared history. It's the fact that we are sinners saved by grace. Ephesians 2 says, we were once dead in our sins and now we've been made alive in Christ.

Our shared history of depravity and our shared oneness in coming together in Christ by grace builds and fosters a unity in and of itself.

Maybe another way of saying this is an analogy. Think of a group of people that were on a boat out at sea, right? Tragic situation, waves come, tip the boat over, they don't have life jackets, they're all going to die, they're all going to drown.

But miraculously, a boat comes past, sees them in peril, rescues them, and saves them. That group of people don't need to foster a sense of unity, right?

[ 10 : 35 ] Forever, their shared history is going to bind them together. There's something that they've experienced together that brings them together. Well, Paul says the same thing. Our inherent history fosters a sense of unity.

And yet, because of our sinful hearts, we have this tendency to break the unity, to undermine this gospel unity. And so Paul says, be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit that's been given you in the gospel.

But here's another reason that Paul gives. Look at verse 4 to 6. He says, the church should be unified, united, one, because that's who God is and that's what God is doing in the world.

Look at how he says in verse 4 to 6. It's almost written like a creed, an ancient creed. He says, there is one body, one spirit. Verse 5, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

We sang about that earlier. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. And Paul's point is, God is not divided. God doesn't parcel himself out, a little bit of the divine being in there, a little bit there, a little bit there.

[ 11 : 45 ] God is one. What God is doing is he's uniting all things together under Christ. Because of who God is, we as the billboard of God's grace should also be one.

It doesn't help if we say, God is this one supreme being, but we are divided and fighting. No, no, we may be a picture of God, a billboard of his grace and the gospel.

Think of this. I don't know how many of you have been to one of those majestic cathedrals in Europe. Europeans know how to build great cathedrals, right? St. John's Cathedral in Central kind of does something of this effect, but not quite the same effect.

You walk in and you are wowed, astounded by the grandeur and the majesty of it. Cathedrals are designed to take your breath away.

You walk in and you are meant to be astounded by the majesty. And the reason they are designed like that is it is meant to give us a sense of the majesty of God. The church building is meant to reflect who God is, right?

[ 12 : 51 ] I am not sure if you remember February 2011, Christchurch, New Zealand. An earthquake rocks Christchurch. And the grand cathedral in Christchurch is left in ruins, right?

Is a pile of rubble. And Paul says that's what happens when the church is divided, when we're fighting. This church that's meant to be a picture of the majesty and the grandeur and the oneness of God, actually the church as a cathedral is left in ruins.

Well, think about it this way. 20 years ago, my parents were part of a church. It was a small church and the church there was lots of fighting and friction and animosity and division and talking behind people's backs and everyone would come to church on a Sunday smiling and all wonderful but behind the scenes there was lots of friction.

And one night my dad had a dream and in this dream he saw a picture of a bride. You know, the Bible describes the church as the bride of Christ but this bride's dress was in tatters.

It was being torn apart and shredded and he woke up with such a heavy heart saying the church is meant to be this radiant picture of the majesty of God but all our fighting and our tearing each other apart we've left the picture of God in tatters, right?

[ 14 : 16 ] And that's Paul's argument here. He's saying we've got one Lord, one gospel, one God and Father. That's why the Bible says unity and community and restoring damaged relationships is such a big deal in the Bible.

It's not just this impossible ideal that we talk about but nobody ever really attains. It's so important to God because it's a picture of who He is and what the church is. Yes, the Trinity is Father, Son, and Spirit but there's this unbelievable unity and oneness even within the community of the Trinity and the church is meant to picture that and so Paul says therefore let your relationships put the beauty and the oneness of God on display.

Let the church be a billboard of His grace, of His oneness, of His majesty. Let it be a cathedral of gospel grace. Therefore he says be eager, maintain the unity of the Spirit that is given to us in the gospel.

Okay, does that make sense so far? Now, how do we do that? How do we maintain this unity? I mean, do we just beat each other over the head and say be united? No, no, that's not how we do it.

What should we do? Should we go to more team building exercises? Maybe we should all sign up for dragon boat racing because that, you know, is really going to pull us together. How should we do this? Well, Paul in the rest of this section gives us a clear answer and this is his answer.

[ 15 : 43 ] He says unity is not something that you foster or manufacture or coerce. It actually is the fruit or comes as a result of spiritual maturity and that happens as you speak the gospel to one another.

Okay, unity is not something you can force or coerce. It's a fruit, a result of spiritual maturity and that happens as we point one another to Christ and speak the gospel over each other and that actually makes sense.

I don't know if any of you grew up in a family where you had rivalry with your siblings, right? So I was like that. My older brother and I, we fought a lot.

We fought with words and we fought with fists. Okay, we didn't have a very good relationship when we were kids but as we matured and grew up, well, actually, we put away our fists and eventually over time our words got a bit nicer and actually, we're now good friends.

We're actually very close. maturity produces a kind of unity. Well, that's what Paul says. He says the same thing in the church. As we grow in the gospel, as we mature in the faith, as we become more like Christ and Jesus in the gospel becomes deeper in our hearts and more real to us, it affects our relationships.

[ 17 : 04 ] This maturity will produce a unity in the body of Christ. Okay, well, how does that happen? Well, Paul's going to give us three things, okay, that we need to mature in the faith to produce this unity.

And the first thing he says is we need leaders. Leaders, okay, what Paul calls gifts of grace. Look at verse 7. So, up until verse 1 and 6, he talks about this unity in the church, may be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit.

Why? Because God is one. Verse 7, but grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift, or in other words, saying that according to Christ's choosing.

So, there's unity in the gospel, but unity doesn't mean uniformity. It doesn't mean we're all just exactly the same. There's a diversity of gifts and calling within the body of Christ.

And then Paul quotes Psalm 68. He talks about God ascending up on high, leading a host of captives in his wake, giving gifts to men.

[ 18 : 10 ] Now, Psalm 68 is a tricky Psalm, okay, so let me try and understand, explain what's going on here. Psalm 68 is what John Calvin called an ode to military victory.

It's a Psalm that describes God as this military leader that is victorious. Now, in the ancient world, every military leader, when they won a battle, they conquered their enemy, they would either just slaughter them and kill them, or they would take the people as their captives, and they would become slaves in their kind of city or town or army, right?

But Paul says God does something different. In the gospel, when God defeats his enemies, he actually defeats them with love.

That's what God did for all of us, right? We were once God's enemy. We were sinners and rebels. God won us over to his side, but he won us over with love. He didn't destroy us.

And what does he do? He now includes us in his church, in his family. And then God amazingly takes these people that he has won with love, and he actually gives them back to his church as gifts of grace.

[ 19 : 28 ] So in the old days, the military leader would go and if they didn't kill their enemies, they would bring them, you know, they'd walk back into their city, Rome or Jerusalem, whatever it is, with this host of captives trailing behind them, and all the city folk would throw tomatoes at them and jeer at them and laugh at them and scoff at them.

But Paul says in the gospel, those that God wins and defeats with his love, they come trailing behind him, but rather than everyone jeering at them, he actually now says these are your brothers and sisters.

He gives his captives back to the church as gifts of grace. And I think one of the best examples of this is the apostle Paul. Remember Saul? That was his name before.

He's an enemy of God. He wants to destroy the church, destroy Christianity. He does everything he can to wipe out these Christians. Oh, but the ascended, risen Christ meets him, wins him over with grace.

And then what does he do? He gives Paul back to the church as a gift of grace. And what a grace, what a gift he was, right? I mean, he wrote a whole lot of the New Testament.

[ 20 : 36 ] And actually in Ephesians, Paul's been saying this the whole time. We were once enemies, we were outsiders, dead in our sins, under God's wrath. And God has now included us, he's made us insiders.

And now we're part of God's cosmic plan. And these sinners, like you and I, like Saul and Paul, now God gives the church as gifts of grace. Like Saul.

I think another example, if I can name and shame him, is Dan Tillis. I don't know if Dan is here. He's just gone out, right? And if you've heard Dan's story, we've played it a couple of times at church.

Man, Dan lived as if God was dead, right? Came to Hong Kong, lived it up, had no time for God. Oh God, the risen, ascended Lord, saved him, rescued him, redeemed him.

What a gift of grace he is to our church, right? I think another person is Henrika, if I can pick on you. Henrika came to Hong Kong eight, nine years ago, right? Didn't want to follow Jesus, living it up, on her own journey of trying to find the divine and the spirituality.

[ 21 : 43 ] Oh God saved her. What a gift of grace he is to our church. I could rattle through tons of names. I could tip you someone else had thought of, right? Came to faith at Watermark a few years ago. What a gift of grace.

And that's what Paul says here. He says that God takes these, he apportions gifts to his church. Look at verse 11. Now he elaborates on these gifts of grace and he says, and he gave these gifts, apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd teachers.

Okay, just pause here. In the New Testament there are lots and lots of gifts that the body has, right? There's gifts of encouragement, there's gifts of generosity, gifts of service, administration, hospitality, lots of different gifts.

But Paul here mentions four. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor teachers. Why does he just mention those four? Well, one of the things about those four is they're all leadership gifts.

Okay, they're called to be leaders in the church. But there's something else particular about them. They all speak God's word and the gospel to God's people.

[ 22 : 50 ] So apostles were those that originally wrote the New Testament. They took the gospel to the corners of the world. They gave us the New Testament. They proclaimed the word of God and the gospel.

Prophets aren't those that foretell the future. Prophets aren't fortune tellers. To be a prophet means you speak God's word to God's people. So prophets speak God's word.

Evangelists speak the gospel and God's word to those that don't yet know about Christ. They bring the gospel to people. And pastor teachers speak God's word to God's people week in and week out.

So what characterizes these four gifts is that they're those who speak the gospel and bring God's word to his people. They're not signs and wonders gifts. They're other gifts that do that.

These are word gifts. I think of 2 Corinthians 4 where the apostle Paul says, For what we proclaim is not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and we as your servants.

[ 23 : 48 ] What do pastors and elders do? We are just servants to the church proclaiming Christ and God's word to build up the church. Okay? So here Paul says God gives these gifts to the church and he highlights four word gifts that speak God's word and bring the gospel.

So God gives leaders to the church. And what are these leaders meant to do? Well, look at verse 12. It's very simple. They are to equip the saints, that means Christians, for work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

So God gives leaders to the church who speak God's word, speak the gospel to us, and they equip the saints, that's Christians, to do the work of ministry which builds up and matures the church so that the church can be a united, unified, mature body of Christ.

So, in this passage, who does the work of ministry? Well, it's actually not the pastors and elders. I mean, they do some of it. It's not the apostles and the prophets.

It's the saints. It's the community of God's people. It's the Christians and the members of the church. Or another way you could say it is, it's the lay ministers.

[ 25 : 01 ] The word lay means unprofessional or the non-professional, those that haven't necessarily been set apart as leaders in the church. It's every one of us.

And so look at what Paul says here in verse 13. We do this, this work of ministry, building up the body of Christ, until we attain to unity, there's our word again, of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, until we attain to mature manhood, literally in Greek it means becoming a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

It was one of Paul's wordy sentences, okay? What he means here is that the church with all its diversity of gifts is meant to minister to one another in order that we become a united, mature body of Christ until we each become more and more like Jesus.

And he says the same thing in verse 16. When each part working together makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now when Paul says here, until we attain mature manhood, what does that mean?

Until we become a mature man, is literally the Greek. Is Paul saying that we've all got to become more masculine, right? Ladies, you've got to become more like us men.

[ 26 : 21 ] Is Paul saying there's no room for women and femininity in the church? No, no, that's not what Paul is saying. Who is the most, who is the perfect man in the Bible?

Okay, Jesus. Jesus is the man that Paul wants us to all become like. And what he's saying is that as we become more and more like Christ with our diversity, whether you're male or female, whether you're African, Chinese, American, whether you're young or old, that we mature and become more like Christ.

So, and what is Christ like? Well, we saw it in verse 2. He is humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love.

Okay, so do you follow the argument here? God gives leaders to his church, what Paul calls gifts of grace, to serve the church by bringing God's word, flooding us with the gospel, and then he equips us as a church to minister to one another, so that we can become more and more mature and united, which means becoming more and more like Jesus.

Friends, this is the point of community, this is why we do CGs and family groups, so that we can minister to one another, encourage one another, build up one another. One of the implications of this, and this isn't aimed at any camera in the room in particular, one of the implications of this is that online church is not really a thing, right?

[ 27 : 52 ] because when you're watching a service online, you're not doing church, you're watching other people do church, because the church is the body that encourages and ministers to one another.

Now, here's a question, what happens when only a few people in the church minister to one another? Let's say you've got this superstar pastor, okay, not a watermark, the other church down the road, and he's like unbelievable, right?

He's an incredible preacher and he's an incredible visionary leader and he's a great manager of the staff team and he's a brilliant discipler and he's this great marriage counselor and one-on-one counselor and you feel like you can go to him and pull out all your troubles because he listens so brilliantly, but he's also gifted at everything and he's just unbelievable and he does everything, okay, that's not going to be a healthy body, right?

Or let's say you've got a church where you've got 10 or 15 people that are amazing and they do everything and the other 200 just coast along are consumers.

That's not a healthy body. Have you ever seen somebody who, they only like working out one part of the body, right, just maybe just the top off and the other part doesn't look so good, okay?

[ 29 : 08 ] That's not a healthy body. In the same way, Paul says, the body, the church, as we all minister to one another and encourage one another, we build each other up, okay?

Look at verse 14. Paul says the same thing, but this time he states it negatively. He says the opposite, what we're not trying to become. What's the opposite of one mature man or adult?

The opposite is lots of children running around causing chaos, okay? He says here, verse 14, every member ministers to one another so that we may no longer be immature children.

The word there is plural, okay? Tossed to and fro by waves carried about by every wind of doctrine and human cunning and craftiness. So the role of every member ministry is to help one another grow into spiritual maturity so that we're not all over the place.

So we don't have one group of the church going off in that direction saying, oh, you know, there's this celebrity pastor. He's mainly teaching us that. And then another group of the church going off in that direction, listening to that thing.

[ 30 : 15 ] And then one group of the church saying, oh, I read this book and this is wonderful. Let's go in that direction. And then another group say, oh, we just want to do our own thing over here. And the church becomes no unity, no gospel, no picture of the glory of God.

Actually, as we grow up and mature and flood one another with the gospel, we become united around who Christ is. That's how we grow. And so God gives us leaders, people who we actually know in real life.

We can know what their lives are like. We can know what their marriage is like. We can know what their parenting is like. It's one of the problems with just following a celebrity preacher. He could be amazing on stage, but he could be a dog at home.

God actually wants to give us leaders that we can actually know, see what they're like in real life, who will bring us God's words that we as a body can minister to one another and help us grow.

So what is Paul's strategy? God gives us leaders and he gives us lay ministers, and there's one last thing he gives us, which is we need the gospel. Paul says here that leaders speak God's word so that we can do the work of ministry.

[ 31 : 26 ] Now what is that work of ministry? What does he mean by that? Well, he gives us two clues here in the passage. The one is that word work is actually in the singular.

It's not plural. In Ephesians 2, remember he says, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Okay, that's plural. But here he says, there is one work that God has called us to.

What is that one work? Well, we find out in verse 14 and 15. Look at what he says. He says, we're no longer children tossed about by every wind of doctrine and teaching, verse 15.



Rather, speaking the truth in love, we grow up in every way into him who is the head that is Christ. So what is this work of ministry that Christians are called to?

How do we minister to one another as a church family? We speak the truth in love. Okay, well, what does that mean, right?

[ 32 : 24 ] Does that mean we go around pointing out everybody's faults and then when they get offended, we say, hey, I'm just speaking the truth in love, right? No, that's not what it means. It means we flood one another with the truth of the gospel, which is truth and love together in the person of Jesus.

We wash one another with God's word and the gospel. We point one another to Christ. Say, look to Christ. Christ, we flood one another with the gospel.

Speaking the truth in love, we grow up into Christ who is the head, into Jesus from whom the whole body is joined together. In Colossians 1, Paul says this. I read this this morning in my devotions.

He says, this is my calling to make the word of God fully known, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, Jesus, warning and teaching everyone that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

What did Paul the apostle do? He went and he brought the word of God, but what was the word of God? Christ in you, the hope of glory. And so the way we build up one another is we flood one another with who Christ is.

[ 33 : 40 ] We point one another to Jesus. We encourage one another in the gospel. We don't just go around telling everyone to be better Christians, do more. No, we flood and we encourage them.

We challenge, we encourage with the gospel. And so think about this. Someone in your CG is going through a tough time. So what do you do? You text them, keep calm and carry on.

No, no, no, you don't do that, okay? No, no, you point them to Jesus. You walk with them. You pray with them. You listen to them. And you remind them about who Christ is and to hold on to Jesus.

Hey, quick disclaimer. I did this really badly recently. I had someone come and speak to me and say, hey, Kevin, I was going through a tough time and I felt like all you did was told me to do better.

And I was trying in a way to encourage them to Christ, but I completely did it badly, right? So I don't always do this right. We don't always get it right. But that's our goal. Someone's going through a tough time.

[ 34 : 43 ] We don't say, do better, try harder. And we go and say, Jesus is so wonderful. He's so faithful. Look to Christ. Press into Christ. Or maybe you're concerned that someone you love and know is drifting far away from Jesus.

We could just say, well, it's none of my business. Or we could go be a family member with them and say, hey, how are you doing? How are your devotions going? How vivid and real is Jesus to you at the moment?

Hey, hold on to Christ. He's so precious. He's so good. We sang about it earlier. When darkness seems to hide his face, our trust in his unchanging grace, well, sometimes it's hard to do that.

Sometimes life is so hard. You can't even hold on to his unchanging grace. You can't say, on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking stand.

But a friend can help you do that. And so when somebody in your CG is going through a tough time, what do you do? You go to them and you encourage them. You say, let's stand on Christ. Christ is faithful.

[ 35 : 43 ] Christ is enough. Or maybe someone's struggling at work and you sit down and you listen and you pray with them. Or you do what Oscar did this week. He texted in the men's group, Colossians 3 verse 1.

Set your sights on things above where Christ is seated. He is your hope and glory. And so this is Paul's word to us. Speaking the gospel truth and love. Flooding one another with the truth of who God is.

We grow up in every way into him. Into Christ who is the head. From whom the whole body, joined and held together, is equipped. Every part doing its work. Making the body grow.

So that it builds itself up in love. Friends, this is the church. This is what it means to be the church. Church isn't a building. As wonderful as those cathedrals are.

And if anyone wants to donate us a cathedral, we'll take it. Okay? As wonderful as they are, this is the church. The church isn't a service that you can just watch. The church is God's people, encouraging and stirring up one another.

[ 36 : 45 ] And what that means is that every member in the church is called to be ministers of God's grace. Speaking the gospel, God's word over one another. Friends, maybe you'll never preach on a Sunday.

That's okay. Doesn't make you better or worse. Maybe you won't lead a CG. That's okay. But you can be an agent of God's grace. You can build up the body. You can help the church become the mature stature of Christ through every member ministry.

This is what Paul wants us to see. That God has called the church to be a united body. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One church united in the gospel.

And how does he do that? He gives us leaders who are really just servants. Speak God's word and the gospel to us to equip us as the church. To speak the truth and love.

The gospel. To minister to one another. So that we as a church can grow and mature to the full stature of the measure of Christ. Let's pray together.

[ 37 : 44 ] And then we'll come to the communion table. Oh Father God as we hear your call to be a cathedral of grace God.

A picture of the majesty of God. Oh God I pray won't you help us to do that Lord. God we confess that our sinful hearts.

God we so easily turn in on ourselves and look after ourselves. God won't you help us God. Won't you make us humble. Patient.

Gentle. Bearing with one another in love. And God won't you help us to grow up and to mature. To be the church that you've called us to be. Unified around Christ and the gospel.

God won't you make us as a church a billboard of your grace. God we pray that for ourselves and we pray that for the church of Hong Kong. We pray for every church in Hong Kong. God the English church, the Chinese church, the Korean, the Japanese, the Filipino church.

[ 38 : 48 ] God every church in Hong Kong. God I pray won't you unite us and unify us. May we be God a picture of heaven on earth. God we know that it's one thing to call us that.

We need a work of grace in our hearts. God won't you speak to us this morning Lord. Where it is hard God. God sometimes maybe we feel like we've been bearing with one another in love for a long time.

Maybe our patience is worn thin. Oh God by your grace God won't you help us. We need you Jesus. We need you Jesus. Fathers we come to the communion table now.

I pray God. Won't you remind us of our common history. Our common depravity. Our common lostness. And our common hope in Jesus. And may that God unify us and mature us.

And make us a cathedral of grace. God I pray this in your wonderful and your gracious name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.