

EPHESIANS: Equipping the Saints Ephesians 4:7–16

For the Work and for the Faith

1. ILLUSTRATION: Fad Diets—does anyone remember the grapefruit diet?

Ot the Cabbage Diet? Or the ‘See-food’ diet :) Etc...

- Fad diets are appealing because they claim to be a cure all short-cut for health and fitness.
- But the fad wears off and a health study confirms regular exercise and healthy food works.

2. If you’ve been around long enough you know there are many spiritual fad diets.

- New Fads are for sale on the shelves of Christian bookstores—old fads at used bookstores

3. Jesus said: You will Know the Truth and the Truth Will Set You Free

- But a Misunderstanding of the True Gospel can be spiritual lethal (Matthew 13:18–19, 23)

—Equipping the Saints...

I. FOR THE WORK OF THE CHURCH (v.11-13)

A. EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

1. EQUIPPING (v.11)

- God used the Apostles and Prophets to **WRITE His inspired Word: The Bible**

2. TEACHING (v.11)

- And Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to **TEACH the Word: The Bible**

3. WORKING (v.12)

- The Word of God Equips the Saints for the Work of the Church
- The Bible is a Lamp to our Feet so we can be a Light in the World (Matt. 5:13–16)

4. SERVING (v.12)

- For the work of Ministry... the word Minister means to serve.
- We are serving God... and serving one another in His Kingdom.

5. ENCOURAGING (v.12)

- For the edifying (NKJ) Building up (ESV) the body of Christ, the Church.
- Not for tearing people down! — but Building People Up!
This is the work of Encouraging one another in the Faith.
- Root word: COURAGE. To En-Courage is the build up courage. To Dis-Courage is to breakdown a person’s courage and make the weaker in the Faith.

6. LEARNING (v.13)

- This requires Learning the True Faith

7. GROWING

- Growing in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ

8. CHANGING (v.13)

- Maturing in the Faith requires Learning, Growing, Changing.

9. BECOMING (v.13)

- This is the Point: To Become More and More Like Christ!

II. FOR KEEPING THE FAITH (v.14)

TO BECOME SPIRITUALLY MATURE SO WE ARE NOT LED ASTRAY...

A. FALSE ASSUMPTIONS LEAD TO FALSE DOCTRINES (v.14).

1. SELF: (Prov. 16:2)

- a) The Jews had been waiting and searching for the Messiah for centuries
- b) When Jesus fed the 5,000 they tried to take Him by force to make Him King
- c) But less than 3 years later they were willing to crucify Him.
- d) Some people don't want a Savior that makes them look in the mirror of their own dark heart. They wanted a King who will overthrow their enemies.
- e) So they turn their back on the Lord when He doesn't meet their expectations.
- f) Our Own False Assumptions about Jesus can cause us to turn from the true gospel to a counterfeit gospel that feels better. **(John 5:39-40)**

2. OTHERS:

- a) Another False Assumption that leads people astray is how we view others...
- b) EX We may think: **'Good' people go to heaven, and 'bad' people go to hell.**
 - (1) 1st: Think about a young person raised in a Christian family—but then meets atheists who are nicer or even better people than Christians! (2 Cor 10:12) Atheists who 'care more' and 'do more' for others than Christians do. They they compare that to Christians who are rude and condescending...
 - (2) 2nd: This Leads People to Believe in a "Good Person" Gospel! **(Rom 10:1-4)** Remember: Good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell right?!
 - (3) 3rd: it is false: Why would Jesus have to die on a cross if good people already go to heaven anyway? ALL have sinned against God: **(Rom 3:10-12; 3:23)** The Penalty of Sin is Death—We all Need forgiveness in Christ **(Rom 6:23)**

3. SUFFERING or LOSS:

- a) Another False Assumption that can lead people astray is the assumption that Bad things can't happen to good people, or good things happen to bad people.
- b) The Book of Job deals with this in depth. Job's friends were wrong.
- c) This False Assumption Leads People into a "Health and Wealth Gospel" that offers the false promise of prosperity if I have a strong enough Faith.
- d) The Problem is this is False: And When Something Bad Happens to a Christian then their Faith is shattered. WHY? Because their Faith wasn't in GOD, their faith was in what they Wanted from God. **(Romans 8:28)**

4. DOUBT:

- a) Another False Assumption is that you cannot have questions or doubts about God or the Bible. And if you do you must be a closet atheists for having doubts.
- b) But Questions and doubts are a normal part of growing in Faith. Having questions or doubts does not make you a closet atheist.
- c) Maybe your a rational human being who wants to know and understand God more!

- d) The Bible Teaches us to bring our questions and doubts to God... **(Mark 9:24)**
Like we see in the Psalms or in the book of Job, or even in the Gospels...

5. **GOD:**

- a) False Assumptions about God can also lead people astray.
- b) It's not Fair for everyone to pigeonhole your entire personality & existence into 1 thing
- c) But Many want to reduce God to one attribute: God is Love. **(1 John 4:8)**
- d) God is love—but our culture has redefined love to mean whatever we want it to.
- e) People label something love and use it to justify sin and create a counterfeit gospel.
- f) **God is Love — But God is Also Holy. (1 Corinthians 3:16–17)**
- g) **God is a Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:28–29)**
- h) **God is more interested in your Holiness than in your Happiness.**
- i) Only True Holiness will lead to True Happiness when you trust & obey God.
- j) But if your main focus is on your own happiness, then you probably won't be interested in your own holiness **(Eph 1:4; 5:27; Heb. 12:14)**

Equipping the Saints...

III. FOR SPEAKING TRUTH IN LOVE (v.15-16)

A. **SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE (v.15)**

- 1. **Truth & Love do not contradict—it is Conviction & Compassion Combined**
 - a) Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6)
 - b) Think of it as “conviction grown tender” (E.W. McMillan)
- 2. **We see this in Jesus.**
 - a) Even while in the shadow of the cross, Just a few hours before His crucifixion...
 - b) He told Peter, “Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat.”
 - c) “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” **(Luke 22:31–34)**
 - d) Jesus knew his own disciple would deny Him 3x that night!
 - e) But Jesus was praying for him! Jesus went to the Cross to Save Him and Us!
- 3. **The Love of God and the Holiness of God were proven at the cross**
 - a) Jesus went to the Cross to save us—we were powerless to save ourselves
 - b) only Jesus could be the perfect atoning sacrifice for the world.
 - c) Only Jesus could satisfy the wrath of God against sin & the Love of God for sinners

CONCLUSION:

- 1. **God Loves You Too Much to Leave you the way you are!**
He Wants You to Become Like Christ! (1 John 3:1–2)