

Week of September 2-8

## **YOUR CHURCH'S MINISTER**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Ephesians chapter 4

Ephesians chapter 4 marks a transition in Paul's epistle to the church. The first three chapters are filled with doctrine. The last three are stuffed with practical application. 4:1 is the pivot point: *"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."* In light of who we are in Christ and the significance of who Christ is in his church, we are called to live in a manner worthy of and consistent with this calling. Chapters 4-6 show us how this is done. It's clear for Paul as we read skim through these three chapters that there is to be no separation between our beliefs and our behaviors. We are to walk the talk. Who we are is to affect what we do and say, leading to a holy lifestyle.

One aspect of this, according to Paul, is that we are to grow up in Christ and become mature believers living in unified relationship with other Christians in the church. These twin ideas of maturity and unity are strongly emphasized by Paul in today's chapter reading. Notice, for example what he says in verses 11-16. God gave the leadership gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the church. He did so in order that these leaders would invest in God's people and prepare them for works of service, or, as the King James Version states, *"for the work of the ministry."* According to Paul, the result of this investment was *"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."*

Notice who the ministers are in verse 12. They are the people of God. Too often we view the paid professional clergy as the only ministers at the church. "We pay you to be the pastor and do the ministry" is sometimes heard in churches. That's poor theology according to Paul. Those with the leadership giftings of verse 11 are certainly in ministry and, according to both Jesus and Paul, are to be compensated financially for their efforts since they devote themselves fully to the flock. But, they are not the only ministers. If they are, then the church is an unhealthy and unbiblical church. Every child of God is called to serve in ministry in some capacity with whatever gift God has given him or her and it's the leadership's job, if you will, to help that child of God discover, develop, and deploy their gifting. Notice what happens when we get it right. *"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into 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."* Maturity and unity. Hmmm, sounds like living consistent with our calling. What do you think?

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Have you ever looked at your pastor as the church's minister? What would change in your life if you saw yourself as Paul did, as one of the ministers of the church? Spend some time in prayer today asking the Holy Spirit to reveal you to your giftings and your place in ministry. Then, tell your pastor about it.

**Take-a-way:** *Your church's minister is YOU!*