

Equip the Saints

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. — Ephesians 4:11-12

The pastor ought to have two voices: one, for gathering the sheep; and another, for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means of doing both. — John Calvin

Doctrine

Equipping the saints is one of the primary functions of church leadership. According to the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, the word “equip” in Ephesians 4:12 refers to “the preparation of the church for becoming perfect, but not to this perfection itself, as can be seen from the use of *teleios* (complete, mature; → Goal), *hēlikia* (stature; → Age, Stature), and *plērōma* (→ fullness) in v. 13.” Here, the saints are effectively equipped with truth from one source: The Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Scripture alone informs and matures the body of Christ for its protection and strength.

Philosophy

In the tenth chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul does not ask the question: *How are they to hear and believe unless someone invites them to join your fellowship?* Scripture never encourages us to invite unbelievers into the church so they might be saved. The church is not a clinic for waking dead souls, although many have come to Christ while visiting churches. Rather, we are called to strengthen the body through mutual edification and instruction for the purpose of sending those saints into the world to make disciples.

God has blessed the church with various roles and gifts. However, the emphasis of each station listed in Ephesians 4 is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. This is a shared responsibility that does not begin nor end with leadership. Leadership’s goal should be the arming of the saints for active works of service so that Christ may be glorified through the building up of His church. Unfortunately, many congregations view their pastors as priests. The seeds of pride and destruction find fertile soil in the hearts of men who say, “look at me” rather than “look to Christ!” It is a great disservice and abuse of position for leadership to stand in place of God’s Word as the saints’ authority for growth in righteousness. Rather, we must actively equip them with the living Word and encourage their gifting within the church.