

# Our Part in Mending the Body of Christ Ephesians 4:11-16

When Jesus first met His disciples as He walked along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, do you remember what they were doing? Fishing, right? As we open to Matthew 4, think with me about the type of men Jesus called to start His team of disciples. The first four were noted as “fishermen”.

## Jesus Called Some Fishermen As His Apostles

Up before dawn, out in all types of weather, sitting in hard planked boats, straining over wet and smelly ropes and nets, fishing in Century One was not quite modern day sport fishing with a bass boat sporting swivel, high back, cushioned seats and a cooler of Cokes. Fishing was a messy, physically taxing, and never ending hard work.

Look with me at Matthew 4:18-22.

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, **casting a net into the sea**; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending their nets**. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

If you notice there is repeated word and it is the word “nets”: the first group was casting the nets and the second group was mending the nets. Think about that word nets and how tied to the trade of fishing would be the usage and care of nets.

## Mending Nets is What they did

Fishermen in the Sea of Galilee used special nets. These nets faced all the normal stresses of being the tools used in a fisherman’s work life: a net went back and forth from being wet and dry, from being in the Sun and shade; and from the weakening of dry rot to mold attacks.

Then there was the constant strain of being thrown into the water weighted down with small stone weights like lead sinkers all the way around the perimeter, and then as the nets were pulled back either ashore or into a boat they faced the fraying that would come of being pulled over the wooden edge of the boat or the rocks of the shore.

Beyond all that were also the tearing dangers and the various snags from sharp rocks, or submerged tree branches that would take their toll; and then finally as we see a bit later in Luke 5:6, there was the immense weight of a catch of fish that would at times rip and tear the nets.

So it would be common for these disciples to spend much time doing what verse 21 calls "mending" their nets. They would sit on the shore, and section by section look over the haul ropes, the mesh of the actual nets, all of the knots that held everything together, and the small weights that were dangling from the edges. This was a slow, methodical, expected part of keeping the nets always ready for use.

Nets had to be cleaned, mended, stored, and always ready—or the fishing would come to a standstill. Without a boat, a man could still fish from the shore, but without a net, a man could not be a fisherman. So why are we having a 'Fishing 101' lesson this morning? To help each of us understand our calling in Christ's Church.

I'd like to ask you to do something with me. As I read Matthew 4 this week I circled that word "mending" and wrote in the margin of my Bible a reference, and a definition. So, if you find a pen, please circle "mending" and some where nearby in the margin write: Ephesians 4:12 "equipping" is the same word.

Now if you did that small study note in your Bible, you just made a connection that could transform the rest of your life this side of Heaven. It just so happens that the simple work of a fisherman in Galilee in Christ's time of mending the nets is the same concept that Jesus said would be part of the dual "employment" of each of the members of His Church.

## **Mending is Part of Our Job Description**

You and I when we were saved became a part of a family that needs regular spiritual mending. To finish the picture of mending nets and our responsibility in the Church, please open with me to Ephesians 4:11-16.

Paul is here sharing with us the plan Jesus has to keep His saints all doing what He designed them to do.

Our theme this year is Our Shared Life: 100% Employment.

Our goal is to each individually see if we are employed doing what Jesus Christ left us here on earth to do until He came or called.

Listen to His plan as we stand, and hear the voice of God speaking out from His Book as you follow along as I read God's Word.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 **for the equipping** of the saints for the work of ministry, **for the edifying** of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— <sup>16</sup> from whom **the whole body, joined and knit together** by what **every joint supplies**, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes **growth of the body** for the edifying of itself in love.*  
NKJV

Pray

Those verses we just read describe what God has been doing here at Calvary for the past 80 years. He has been building His Church by saving lost sinners and placing them into this body to be mended and built up.

## **Mended and Built By The Truth**

Did you notice the two concepts Paul emphasizes in v. 12?

- In the NKJV the Greek words are translated: "**equipping**" and "**edifying**";
- In the NIV it is: "to **prepare** God's people for works of service" and "so that the body of Christ may be **built up**";
- In the NASB it is: "for the **equipping** of the saints for the work of service", and "to the **building up** of the body of Christ";
- In the KJV it is: "For the **perfecting** of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ";
- In the ESV it is: "to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up** the body of Christ" (ESV).

That verse contain God's goal for all of us in Christ's church this morning—bringing believers to spiritual health and spiritual growth through truth in Christ. Do you really understand why you are here?

Let's get a hold on these twin truths of Ephesians 4:12. First look at the words God chose to use to describe our purpose:

Ephesians 4:12 "...for **the equipping** (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. "mending"; KJV 'perfecting') of the saints for the work of ministry, for **the edifying** (Gk. #3619 lit. "building up") of the body of Christ..." NKJV

Here Paul introduces us to the twin concepts of the “equipping church” and the “edifying church”. Both ministries are vital. We all need to grasp our responsibility, so that we come to church and operate as a church in the way that God designed us to serve Him.

This week we need to discover the answer to, “What exactly is an equipping church”?

Because we know God's Word teaches us that every word of God was inspired, we first study that word “equipping” in our Bibles, and as we do so we find that:

## Equipping is Mending

The word “equipping” in Ephesians 4:12 [or prepare (NIV), perfecting (KJV)] is ***kart-artismos*** and is a noun used only here in the New Testament. But the verb form<sup>1</sup> of this noun is very descriptive; and its meaning is most clearly seen in the way this word is used in our Bibles.

**2675 katartizo** a verb used 13x in N.T. has a **Definition:** to render fit, sound, complete; to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair; to complete; to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust; to fit or frame for one's self, prepare; ethically: to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be. <sup>2</sup>

Remember looking at Christ's call of the first disciples? There we saw the first use of this word in the New Testament in Matthew 4:21.

*Matthew 4:21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending** their nets. He called them, NKJV*

In Mark we see the very same scene:

*Mark 1:19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat **mending** their nets. NKJV*

Now, as you look down at Ephesians 4:12 and circle the word “equipping” (NKJV/NASB), or “prepare” (NIV), or “perfecting” (KJV), or “equip” (ESV) you are looking at exactly the same word and concept we saw in Matthew and Mark of the disciples mending their nets.

If you haven't yet done this, you may want to write the word “mending” in your Bible by v. 12.

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<sup>1</sup> Katartizo is used 13x in the New Testament. Mending is also used in Mark 1:19.

<sup>2</sup> *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

When you do that, you have just made a powerful connection. The Holy Spirit led Paul to use the same word in Ephesians 4:12 as the Gospel writers used in describing the fishermen mending their nets in Matthew and Mark. It is the same idea, same activity, and the same work. What that means is that:

## **Mending Lives is God's Plan for all of us**

Now let this picture God's Word gives to us, sink into your heart and mind.

Jesus found his first disciples sitting and doing what fishermen do: looking through each part of their nets and stitching back up any tears, mending any holes, and fixing anywhere the nets had started to unravel. Mending is what this word portrays.

To even broaden our mental picture, if we trace this word outside the Bible and into the culture of Paul's day, this word is used for setting broken bones. So Paul grabs a word that gave an immediate picture in everyone's mind that read this letter. Saints need to be made whole, they need to be mended, and they need to be repaired.

So mending nets and setting bones both speak of taking injured, damaged, or weakened things and getting them back the way they are supposed to be. Can you see the connection?

As an equipping church, we are all about helping people move from where they are to where God wants them to be. We all need help, and we all need to help others.

Now plug those images into the purpose of Christ's church as we meet. And think about the band of men Jesus called to start His church—mostly fishermen weren't they? This picture of sewing, patching, mending, and repairing was so much a part of their lives. No wonder they had such powerful fellowship back then. They knew and felt in their hands what their task was to be.

## **Can you see the Vivid Picture Paul Gave to the Church?**

We are all a part of mending lives, so that those lives can be engaged as tools in Christ's hands! We are all a part of the ongoing ministries of building up, helping, exhorting, and discipling others.

As believers, we are all out in life getting frayed, torn, and ripped by the troubles and struggles we all go through each day.

We each sustain some degree of damage through struggles at work, conflicts at home, temptations nagging us everywhere, and fears assaulting us when we are alone.

We also are often just like a net dragged along the shore in daily use—we have sustained wear and tear to our lives, just by the daily pressures and stresses of living.

But now comes the wonderful part. This truth is what has strengthened Christ's church through all these centuries since Pentecost—when we gather obediently as Christ's church, He is present; and when Christ is present ***He uses us to do his work of repairing one another from the injuries of life's struggles.***

So Ephesians 4:12 is God using Paul to explain the occupation we all are to do for Him. 100% employment in the Church comes as we each see that God wants us to actually do something for Christ in the lives of those around us.

- We gather to hear the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures, to have the torn places in our lives mended with God's Word.
- We come seeking to see God fixing parts of our lives that have started to unravel like relationships, hope, confidence and assurance—by His Spirit, and through His Word, and using other believers.

## **Mending means the Application of God's Truth**

Just as physical mending means the application of thread to the torn place, or the application of calk to the leaking place, or the application of glue or a nail to the loosened place—the same is true spiritually. Note the reoccurring use of the word “application”. Mending involves more than talking, the application of the repairing agent must occur.

Can you imagine the disciples in Christ's day going to classes on mending nets where they watched great fishermen mending their nets, and they were able to hold and admire nets that were expertly mended; and there were spools of strong thread passed around; and there were shiny, sharp needles displayed—but they never actually mended a net?

That would be ludicrous. They would have laughed. No, they learned to mend sitting next to an old fisherman, most likely their dad. And they held a net and a needle and mended right along with him until they knew the art of mending.

For a moment ask yourself, “Do I hear teaching about things God wants me to do, that I never do?” Is an equipping church only a classroom with no accountability for actual participation? Can we have any truly Biblical class without half of the class being the actual doing?

## **Get Started Today On Your Job**

For example, here are some simple, practical steps each one of us here, who are born-again believers of any age, can begin.

When we do these things we are employed, and doing what God called us to do in Christ's Church:

- **PRAYER:** Have you ever been taught how to pray by an older, mature believer? If not, there are many sitting all around you that could do that.

They would say that you write down specific areas of your life you want God to change, then you find a verse that expresses His will, and then you say, "Lord, that is what I ask you to do in my life". Then, as you start doing that, you ask a friend in Christ what they need prayer for. Write it down.

Try that week, as you pray, to find a verse to share with them that you will pray for them. As the weeks go by, ask them how the Lord is at work in that area in their life. Then tell them what the Lord is doing in your life. That is a prayer partnership.

Every one of us needs a prayer partner. If you don't have one, you need to ask God to help you find one, and be one!

- **DEVOTIONS:** How about how to have daily devotions? It is not a lecture people need, it is a personal face-to-face meeting with a fellow believer who shows you what they do.

They would say, "I start with prayer, read a chapter, ask God to teach me as I read, mark a truth, jot a note, and think about that truth through my day". And then they should tell you, "When I get home I tell someone what I learned, and show them in my Bible".

Start doing that and then ask someone else what they do. If they have a daily time with the Lord, ask them to share a bit of what they are learning and then share what you are learning. That is an exhorting partnership.

Everyone needs an encouraging, spiritual exhorter in their life. If you are married it should be your partner. Just knowing someone will ask makes us start being consistent. Then sharing what we find and hearing what they find stirs our hearts.

## **The Choice Is Yours**

Are we an equipping/mending church if we only STUDY well-mended nets, strong threads, sharp needles, and admire the great menders of the past and present—but never actually require individuals to actually mend another person's life?

For decades in America we have equated a healthy church with hearing and optional doing. But that was never the model in Christ's Church from the start.

James said those who merely heard and were never required to do were deceiving themselves.

*James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. NKJV*

*James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. NIV*

How is your life? Is it in need of a little mending this morning?

God's Word is available and in action this morning. Why not pause now and ask God to sew your soul, mend your heart, heal your emotions that are frayed, quiet your mind that is spinning or darkened or saddened, and get you back on track with the Lord.

Then look around, ask God to let you encourage and help another believer in prayer or the Word, or both this week.

That is what God wants to do here in and through His Church. That is every member in ministry, 100% employment in Christ's Church!



# SERIES: Our Shared Life

## **Our Responsibilities to Christ's Church**

We as members of Christ's church are:

1. His TEMPLE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **God's new temple**—*should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet.*

*I Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

I am Christ's Temple. I should want to grow in my awareness of living in His Holy Presence. That is what happens as we read His Word if we bow first in adoration and whisper a prayer of seeking Him.

Have you personally sought your God, this week, in His Word? If so say **"Yes"** aloud right now! God wants us 100% employed in His Temple.

2. His PRIEST: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a priesthood**—*should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him.*

Hebrews 13:15-16 Therefore by Him let us continually **offer the sacrifice** of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

I am part of Christ's Priesthood. I should want to delight in offering the sacrifices He desires. Have you thanked God for eyes to see with, ears to hear with, feet that walk, a mind that still functions? Offer Him the sacrifice of thanks for sins forever gone, of hope that it endless, of joy that never runs out. And then pick someone to "do good and to share" with.

We all need to be spiritual Boy Scouts, each doing a "good deed" for others each week. And then, each day, and then all day long. God wants us 100% employed as His Priests.

3. His RELATIVE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a family**—*should increase our love and fellowship with one another.*

I Timothy 5:1-2 *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a **father**, younger men **as brothers**, 2 older women **as mothers**, younger women **as sisters**, with all purity.*

*I am Christ's Relative.* I should want to increase my love and fellowship with those in Christ who are my true family. Try writing down a name each week of one person, and asking them how to encourage them. Then pray for that area all week long, and look for them next week and find out what God did in their lives. Can you imagine coming each week and looking for people you've prayed for and seeing people looking for you? That is what we need to be employed in doing. God wants to see us having 100% employment in serving and encouraging our spiritual relatives.

4. His BODY: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the body of Christ—should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.**

I Corinthians 12:27 Now **you are the body of Christ**, and members individually.

I am Christ's Body. I should want my body to do what His did. Jesus went around doing good. He had compassion for the confused, He helped the poor, healed the sick, loved the outcasts, and comforted the lonely.

God has no Hands but yours.  
Brand & Yancey

God wants us 100% employed as His Body.

5. His BUILDING PROJECT: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a house that is being built—should stir each of us to be a part of the process of building up, edifying, and discipling one another.**

*1 Corinthians 3:9b For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, **you are God's building.***

I am a working partner in Christ's Building Project. I should want to be stirring up those around me to love an good works. I should become an expert in building up others, mending others.

Christ should find me 100% employed in doing what He created me to do.

6. His BRIDE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the bride of Christ—should stimulate us to personally strive for greater purity, deeper love for Christ, and swifter fuller obedience to Him.**

II Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have  **betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as a  **chaste virgin** to Christ.

I am Christ's Bride. I should want to strive to stay pure for Him. When I watch TV I am seeking His approval. When I dress its for His adoring gaze. I think of Him as my beloved.

God wants us 100% employed as His Bride.

7. His FARM: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **an agricultural crop**—*should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper spiritual nutrients to grow.*

*1 Corinthians 3:6-9a I **planted**, Apollos **watered**, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are **God's field**, you are God's building.*

I am Christ's Farm, His own personal garden that He planted. I should want to bear the fruit He planted into my life. Jesus wants to harvest from me a crop of His love, His joy, His peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All these are what I want Him to find me 100% employed in growing by the power of His Spirit, in the soil of my life.