

Body Building 101

Ephesians 4:12

We share life as saved and born-again believers, we are all God's building, we are all God's house, we are all members of His family. Each of those word pictures describe who we are and what we are here to do.

If I were to give you the short form of our shared job description as believers it would be:

We are all employed as workers in a Divine Construction Company. God is the Master Builder, and the project is building up the Body of Christ.

As we open to I Corinthians 3, we need to focus on our job site, and what God is building all around us. Each of us, at the moment of salvation, became a skilled worker at God's construction site. Listen to 1 Corinthians 3:9b:

*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, **you are God's building.***

God looks to each one of us to do our job as He constructs His Church as His House, Family, and Body; and each of us is a unique tools in His Hands; and each of us are programmed to do something God designed only for us to do. All of us have a responsibility to be a part of God's building process. In other words:

How Are Doing at Working on His House?

Jesus once said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20, NKJV). Most of us are far better off than that; in fact Americans spend the largest portion of their incomes on housing, with transportation second. So, by our choices we make of where we live, the house we rent or own, is very important.

It was about 15 years ago that we began constructing our very first new home we ever lived in. Like many of you that have built a home, we followed the same process:

We had to choose a builder, buy a lot, then watch as the land got cleared and ready, the slab or foundation was prepared and poured, then the framers came, the windows were put in, the electricians showed up and strung wires, plumbers, sheet rockers, cabinet makers, trim carpenters, painters, flooring specialists, and on and on it went. The whole process took months, and all the various workers came and went from our house and each did something whether large or small that was a part of the construction process.

We all know this is true about our houses, but do you understand the same is true about Christ's church? Just as it took an army of different craftsmen and workers to construct that house—God has the same planned for His Church. Each of us has a different giftedness for use in building and maintaining Christ's House.

To construct and maintain a house:

We can't all be electricians, or where would we get the plumbing done.

We can't all be painters or how would we get the roofing done?

In house construction, each one does a different part, **and all must work together**. That is why my vision and goal for Calvary can be summarized as:

"100% Employment—Every Member in Ministry"

And that brings us to the essence of our study this morning. All of us are to be a part of God's construction plan. In Christ's church each of us has a different spiritual giftedness God wants to use in His construction of the Church.

If you come to the building site and do not do what He made you to do—the entire process of building up the Church suffers. And that brings us to Ephesians 4:11-13.

How is this done within a local church? 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—**mending lives so that those lives can be engaged as tools in Christ's hands building up, helping, exhorting, and discipling others**.

*Ephesians 4:11-13 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, 13 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. NKJV*

Mending (or equipping) means finding that Jesus repairs our lives by His Spirit, through His Word and wants us to reach out and mend others with His Word. Now let's do another word study, this time it is on that second half of Ephesians 4:12

The other half of the plan is "edifying", or God using us as saints to work at— building up others by His Word.

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

The second key word in this verse is **oikodome** (#3619: n f; 18x in the N.T.¹)

Definition: (the act of) building, building up; metaphorically: edifying, edification; the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness; a building.¹ So we can assuredly say that God's plan for each of us is that we be involved in:

Building up others by His Word

Now, back at the construction site, please open with me to Romans 12 where we can find the job descriptions of—construction workers that God always wants to use.

Spiritual gifts are the empowerment God uses to build up His Church. There are several New Testament lists of the construction workers God deploys at each building site. The two main gift lists are Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12.

The easiest way to look at these lists is to say that the *I Corinthians 12 list* is primarily pointed at **temporary sign gifts** and the *Romans 12 list* is pointed at **ongoing edifying gifts** that we see today. For our construction site visit, we'll focus on the list in Romans 12:4-12. Please stand as I read these verses.

*Romans 12:4-12 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;⁷ or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering; he who **teaches**, in teaching;⁸ he who **exhorts**, in exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; NKJV*

Pray

What exactly does an edifying church do? Again, we learn that by seeing the early church in action through the New Testament. And, as we do so, go back to that house-building picture.

Think of what it takes to build a house: a succession of skilled workers that work together with a common goal, following the same plans, and guided by the master builder/contractor who is doing the bidding of the owner. Now think about that.

We are all individual workmen, as Paul told Timothy 'rightly dividing' the plans in God's Word.

¹Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

The project managers are the elders who are to make sure that everyone is mended and spiritually healthy and as soon as they are—make sure they are helping out in the building. The Owner is always present and observing our work—and of course that is the Lord.

Edification is just building the house according to the plans God left us. Pleasing Him as we do so.

Construction Workers God Always Wants and Uses

This passage in Romans 12 gives us seven amazing types of gifted people God wants to use in every church. Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two of the gifts (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and another two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. So, these seven seem to resonate as a complete set that God loves to use. But whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

At every construction site where Christ is at work building His church, He will be sending believers that He has gifted for the following construction “jobs” or “duties”:

1. **Workers gifted in *Speaking Forth God's Word* or “prophecy” (Romans 12:6).** This Gr. word means “speaking forth” and does not necessarily have to involve prediction of the future or any other mystical or supernatural aspects. When used of a non-revelatory gift, this word “prophecy” simply identifies the skill of public proclamation of the Word of God (*1 Pet. 4:11*).

This person may be random, or may be systematic—but they love to proclaim the Word. But the key that tests the prompting of the Spirit is that a person’s “prophesying” is to be done **in proportion to the faith**, a better translation would be “in agreement to the (not his) faith.”

2. **Workers gifted in *Serving God's People* or “ministry” (Romans 12:7a).** From the same Gr. word as “deacon,” “deaconess” come from, it refers to those who serve. This gift, similar to the gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28), has broad application to include every kind of practical help (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 12:28).

This person never needs to be pointed towards a job, they are always looking for things to do for others.

3. **Workers gifted in *Explaining God's Word* or “teaching” (Romans 12:7b).** The ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain God’s truth clearly (cf. Acts 18:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors must have the gift of teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 4:16), but many mature, qualified laymen also have this gift. This differs from preaching (prophecy), not in content, but in the unique skill for public proclamation.

This person is very systematic and able to clearly communicate truth, even though they may be quiet and even prefer a small group.

4. **Workers gifted in Inspiring others to obey God's Word or "exhortation" (Romans 12:8a).** The gift which enables a believer to effectively call others to obey and follow God's truth.

In a negative sense this person may love to admonish and correct others regarding sin (2 Tim. 4:2), or in a positive sense, this person may be always drawn to encourage, comfort, and strengthen struggling believers (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-5; Heb. 10:24, 25).

5. **Workers gifted in Pouring out some what God gave them for others or "gives" (Romans 12:8b).** This denotes the sacrificial sharing and giving of one's resources and self to meet the needs of others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:3-5, 9; 11; Eph. 4:28).

This person has a simple desire, to just offer to others a single-minded and openhearted generosity. Contributing is to be done with generosity (en haplotepti), not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Prompted by the Spirit, they will give with no desire for thanks and personal recognition, but to glorify God (c.f. Matt. 6:2; Acts 2:44-45; 4:37-5:11; 2 Cor. 8:2-5).

6. **Workers gifted in Showing others the best way or "leads" (Romans 12:8c).** The Greek word means lit. "standing before", and when Paul describes this gift to the Corinthians he calls it "administrations" (1 Cor. 12:28). This word also means "to guide" and was used of the pilot who steered the ship (Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). In the NT, this word is used to describe only leadership in the home (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12) and the church (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17).

This person wants their home or church managing, leading, or administering is to be done **diligently** (en spoudeu, "in eagerness, earnestness"), not lazily or halfheartedly.

7. **Workers gifted in Incarnating Christ's Compassion or "shows mercy" (Romans 12:8d).** Frequently, this gift accompanies the gift of exhortation. But when prompted by the Spirit there is also an evident **cheerfulness**.

This person loves to actively show sympathy and sensitivity to those in suffering and sorrow; and they give both the willingness and the resources to help lessen the afflictions of those in need. This spirit-energized attitude is vital to ensure that the gift of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (see also Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18-19)².

² This list has been abridged, edited and adapted from John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

Edification is God's Plan For All of us

The terms edify and edification, were some of Paul's favorite words, when describing our ministry in Christ's church as believers. These words come from the realm of building and architecture and mean literally "to build up". Even today we get the term popular in health clubs of "body building" and the disciplined usage of exercises to accomplish that goal. Paul lived in a world where athletics and body-building were paramount, so using the words of his culture he called saints to action.

The basic meaning of the Greek word for **edify** (oikodomeo) is "to build a house" and by extension led to mean the building of anything. When used in our New Testaments it took the meaning of growing spiritually and helping others to grow up in a spiritual way. Anything that contributes to spiritual growth was said to edify.

Peter exhorts everyone at the end of his epistle to "grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ" (II Peter 3:18), and to do that we can find in God's Word at least three basic means that God uses through us to grow others:

1. **God's Word.** As Paul was leaving behind the beloved church he had invested his life into for over three years, he told the elders of the church standing with him at the port city of Miletus, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The Bible, God's Word, is the key tool that the Lord uses to build our spiritual lives (John 17:17).
2. **Preaching and teaching.** Later in this letter to the Corinthians Paul tells them that, rather than being so concerned about speaking in tongues, they should focus on prophesying, or preaching, which "speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation." The "one who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Cor. 14:3-4).
3. **Obedient Ministry prompted by Love.** Our purpose as believers is to do "the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12); and as Paul reminds us only with love can this edify others, because only "love edifies" (1 Cor. 8:1).

The conclusion is that every believer is called to be an edifier, or a person who builds up others around them.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself" (Rom 15:2-3).

"Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).

Report to Work Today

Here are three jobs we all should do at the construction site of Christ's Body.

1. If we are each called by God to edify, build up and help others to grow spiritually, the question is: whose life are you investing in this week? **(If not, find one!)** Do you have a person you pray for? **(If not, find one!)**
2. If you have someone you are praying for and investing your time into their life, do you know where they are eating from in God's Word? **(If not, find out today—ask them and note what they say. Ask them to share just one truth they have found and eaten for the nourishment of their soul!)**
3. If you have someone you are praying for and investing your time into their life, do you know what passage they are memorizing and then starting to meditate upon from God's Word? **(If not, find out today—ask them and note what they say. Ask them to share just one truth they have found and incorporated into the transformation of their minds into Christlikeness!)**

And using that Thanksgiving Praises card is just another way to edify or build up whoever you are sharing Thanksgiving dinner with this year!

SERIES: Our Shared Life

Our Responsibilities to Christ's Church

Today if I could ask each of you to hold onto just one concept from this entire message it would be this question:

***Are you doing what
God designed you to do?***

You were made to be His temple, His priest, His relative, His bride, His body, His farm, and a construction worker in His building project.

Are you functioning as a healthy member of Christ's church this morning?

Remember that there are no less than twelve metaphors in God's Word for the Church³. Each metaphor is a powerful way for us to see how God looks upon us who are Christ's church.

God uses these metaphors to help us understand our responsibilities as believers. He wants us to apply each of the truths revealed by these descriptions of the church into our daily lives. We often need to be reminded that as members of Christ's church:

1. We are 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. We are 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.*

³ Adapted from Wayne Grudem; *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 858.

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. We are 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. We are 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. God wants us 100% employed as a fully functioning part of His Body.

5. We are 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. We are 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. We are 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.

ⁱ Matthew 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the **buildings** of the temple. NKJV; Mark 13:1-2 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what **buildings** are here!"² And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." NKJV; Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify** another. NKJV; Romans 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to **edification**. NKJV; 1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's **building**. NKJV; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 12, 26 But he who prophesies speaks **edification** and exhortation and comfort to men. 5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive **edification**.¹² Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the **edification** of the church that you seek to excel.²⁶ How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification**. NKJV; 2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a **building** from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. NKJV; 2 Corinthians 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for **edification** and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—NKJV; 2 Corinthians 12:19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your **edification**. NKJV; 2 Corinthians 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for **edification** and not for destruction. NKJV; Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole **building**, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, NKJV; Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ,¹³ 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;¹⁴ 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,¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ 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. ²⁹ Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary **edification**, that it may impart grace to the hearers. NKJV