

Fil-Am Community Church
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Becoming a Body Builder

Eph. 4:11-12

“11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

Becoming a body builder. That's my New Year's resolution! You don't believe me, do you? You better believe it. I'm not always joking. Because the body I'm talking about is the church. This year, I want us to become body builders who will build up other people in order for Fil-Am to grow. Growing is easy if each one of us will commit to growing our own bodies.

Let me tell you the story about four people. Four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody was angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

I chose this story because I thought this reflects the situation in many churches today. Many churches today are struggling to survive, to keep their heads above the water, so to speak. It is said that in North America, for every one church that opens, seven churches close. That's a staggering figure. Many factors contribute to the closures. It could be internal wranglings, the lack of leaders, ineffective programs, and the like. Yet, I believe that one important factor that could contribute to the death of a church is the passivity or complacency of people.

When members of the body of Christ don't get involved in church as much as they are expected to, then the body or the church becomes weak. It becomes unhealthy. It loses its vitality.

Apostle Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians as well that the church is one body but composed of many members. And as members of the body, each has a function to perform that contributes to the well-being of the body.

In the passage we're looking at this morning, we'll see how each one of us, as believers in Christ, as members of his body, can take an active part in the affairs of the church. I believe this passage can guide us into knowing how we can serve the Lord in the best way we can according to his will and purpose in our lives.

Today, I'd like to talk about how we can build up this local body of Christ, which is Fil-Am Church. That's Body-Building. In other words, how we can become involved in ministry, if we're not yet involved. And how we can enhance our involvement, if we're already involved.

Let us read together our passage this morning. (Read Ephesians 4:11-12)

Have you ever seen a professional Body Builder? Definitely, that's not me. That would be those guys (picture of John Tico). One of them looks familiar, doesn't he? A professional body builder has muscles rippling and bulging, every part in sync, his whole body a perfect specimen of health.

Today, I want to talk to you about becoming a Body Builder. Not the Body Builders we see on TV, in the gym, and what-not, but the Body Builders in the Church who work hard to make this Church Body a perfect specimen of health. Specifically, I'd like to answer the question, "How can the church grow broader through ministry?" The answer is by the members becoming Body Builders.

This afternoon, I want you to know that the Bible tells us you can become a body builder in just three easy steps! The first step is

I. UNDERSTAND WHAT A BODY BUILDER IS.

Somewhere in church history there developed a notion of a clergy --- those tasked to do ministry --- and a laity --- those who are ministered to. So today we have what is known as a clergy-laity distinction.

What this means is that there has developed a view that there are ministers tasked to do all the ministry, usually paid, and that the common folk in the pew pay them to do it. But this is not what the Bible teaches at all. How did we drift so far from biblical teaching?

What we need in our day is to refocus on the biblical model for ministry. What we find in the Bible may not be what we have accepted through tradition, but it will be what God intends, and it will be what will work.

The real need which the Word of God reveals is to eliminate the laity. The laity, as we define it in most of our churches, truly needs to be eliminated. I'm not saying you all resign and stop coming to church. I'm saying you eliminate the laity by equipping them to minister. Because the people of God are called to minister.

Having said that, let me add that there are those gifted people who have been given to the church. But those gifted people whom Christ has given as leaders are given for a purpose...to produce something desirable. Therefore, it is important to look at the people, the purpose, and the product.

1. The People

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

The people who are considered in this verse are the people God has gifted to provide leadership in His church. And these gifted people are Christ's gifts to the church. The New Living Translation renders this verse this way:

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.”

Apostles are the first category of gifted individuals. Contrary to what some people believe, the apostles are not the husbands of the epistles. An apostle is one who is sent. It’s from the Greek word that means “Sent one.”

In most of the places in the New Testament where this term occurs it refers to the original twelve apostles. These were men chosen by Jesus to be with Him and to occupy a special place in the future kingdom. But there is also a wider application given to apostles.

There were a number of other people to whom this term was applied in the New Testament. Like Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14), Silas (1 Thess. 2:7), Apollos (1 Cor. 4:9), James, Jesus' brother (Gal. 1:19), and Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7). These were people of wide influence in the church generally. Their ministry was instrumental in the establishment of churches. And in that sense the ministry of an apostle lives on to this day.

Prophets are those who give a message from the Word of God, usually made to the gathered believers based on a spontaneous, personal revelation from the Holy Spirit. The purpose is for edification, encouragement, consolation, conviction or guidance.

Evangelists are those who are anointed to preach with power to the lost. This special anointing on their lives enables them to draw a net around lost people with keen effectiveness. Billy Graham is an example.

Pastors and teachers may be thought of as one gift. The Greek structure suggests that there is a linkage between the two words, thus establishing a leadership gift of pastor/teacher. There are good reasons for linking these two gifts together. A pastor is one who shepherds the sheep. The word from the Greek which is translated as pastor, literally means “shepherd” and has a root meaning of

“to feed.” While the image of a shepherd evokes many pictures, the chief job and responsibility of the shepherd was to keep the sheep fed.

Well-fed sheep produce much wool. Well-fed sheep are contented sheep. Well-fed sheep are productive sheep. Well-fed sheep are healthy sheep. And so the primary task of a pastor is to keep the sheep fed.

But teaching is also linked to the other leadership gifts as well. In the New Testament some people are referred to as apostles and teachers, and prophets and teachers. Indeed, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors all should be involved in discipling others to be what they are. In the New Testament, the training ground for ministry was an apprenticeship. These leaders had to be teachers.

Now, why has God given these leadership gifts to the church? We now come to the purpose

2. The Purpose

“to prepare God's people for works of service”

God has given them for the purpose of preparing or **equipping God's people for works of service**. The word **service** is also translated as *ministry*.

Now, the word “prepare” in this verse has a rich meaning and background.

In Mt. 4:21, it's used to describe James and John as they repaired and prepared their nets for fishing. They had to prepare the nets in order to catch more fish. In Lk. 6:40, Jesus uses this word to describe a student who is trained and prepared to imitate the model of his teacher. In 2 Cor. 13:9-11, Paul uses it to refer to bringing people to wholeness and spiritual maturity. In classical Greek, it referred to the setting of a bone, putting it back into proper alignment with the body.

The purpose of spiritual leaders then is to prepare and align the Body in order to do ministry. The body is composed of believers and, therefore, every believer is a minister!

And what results from God's people being equipped for ministry? We now come to the product.

3. The Product

“so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

To build up is to grow, to be strengthened, to become firm. That is the whole point of ministry. God gave spiritual leaders to the church for them to work alongside with God's people so that God's church will become strong. The only way that a church can grow is when each one in the body is doing its assigned task of work of service. Without service, we stagnate. Without ministry, we decline.

This is a dynamic truth. This means that everyone is to be engaged in ministry. It is not the work of one or two or a few people to do all the ministry.

A Christian Body Builder then is not only the leaders but the people as well.

So, how do we become Body Builders? First, by knowing what a body builder is. The second step to become a body builder is to

II. OVERCOME EXCUSES

Now, you wouldn't believe this, there was a time I actually became a body-builder, literally. I was in my early twenties and, I was tired of people saying I was thin and I looked sickly and all, and so I decided to join a body-building gym in Mandaluyong, in the Philippines. I worked out three times a week, usually after work. After a few weeks, I noticed some changes. I began to develop muscles in my arms, in my legs, my abs became firm, and so forth. I joined a competition and became Mr. Mandaluyong. You don't believe me, right? Ok, that was a joke. Some of you are thinking, he is saying that because he is from Mandaluyong.

Joking aside, I really did some work-out but after three months I quit. I had a lot of excuses. “It is painful.” “It is expensive.” “I can't see immediate results.” “I'm too tired.” When we make excuses, we miss opportunities for growth. And many members of the church miss opportunities to minister because of excuses.

They make up excuses. What are some of those excuses?

1. That's the Pastor's Job.

This is the excuse of some people who think that they hire or they pay the pastor or leader to do ministry. As we've already seen, the Bible is clear that the leader's job is to equip and the member's job is to minister.

In Acts 6, the apostles refused to do ministry because it was taking them away from their God-given role and responsibility – to pray and preach the Word. And so they chose seven men to do ministry. Those seven men became the first deacons. It's interesting that deacon comes from the Greek Diakonos which is also translated Minister.

If I don't have time to pray and prepare to preach the Word because I'm doing all the other ministries, I will never be able to feed or equip God's people. Worse yet, I will have failed in my calling and responsibility as a pastor. Ministry is NOT just the Pastor's job. It's everybody's job.

2. I'm Not Gifted.

There is no such thing as an Ungifted Christian. If you are a Christian, you have at least one spiritual gift.

1 Cor. 12:7 says, *"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."*

It's up to you then to discover this gift. How? By praying that God reveal it to you. By filling out a Spiritual Gifts Inventory Form, by asking other Christians to affirm what you believe your gift is, by joining a ministry that you're interested in and finding out whether you're a good fit. But you really don't have to sweat it out. In time, you'll know.

3. I'm Not Trained.

Then, we'll train you. Or we'll send you somewhere to be trained.

Just come up to any of the directors or myself and let us know what you believe your gifts are and you're looking for training and we'll help you. Do you want to play an instrument? Tita Annie can help you be trained. Do you want to be a life coach. Pastor Dave can train you. Do you want to bring food in church? We have many cooks like May, and Faith, and Ate Rose, and my wife who'll train you. Just let us know.

4. I'm Not Needed.

Please don't even think about it. You are needed. God did not save you and then forgot about you. He wants to use you. That's why he gave you a spiritual gift. 1 Corinthians 12:27 says, *"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*

Someone said "Maybe you're an eyeball, or kidney, or big toe, or gall bladder, or jaw bone. Whatever it is, you have a distinct and important function within the Body. You are needed within the Body to do what you were designed by God to do. There are no unnecessary parts in the Body of Christ! Even if you think of yourself as just a big toenail, just imagine how it would hurt the whole Body if you became ingrown!"

Folks, to become a Body-Builder, you need to overcome those excuses. You may have some other excuses but they wouldn't really hold water in the light of Scriptures. It is clear that as a follower of Christ, you have to do ministry.

How do we become Body Builders? First, know what a body builder is. Second, overcome excuses and third

III. GET IN SHAPE

We get in shape by discovering our own unique SHAPE. Earlier, I mentioned how we need to find out what our spiritual gift is. But, that's just part of the story. We need to realize that God has uniquely shaped us for a unique ministry.

Aside from spiritual gifts, we need to consider four other things that would make us effective in our ministry. Altogether, these five things form the acronym SHAPE. Maybe you're already familiar with this. But it's good to review.

S stands for Spiritual Gifts, H for Heart, A for Ability, P for Personality, and E for Experiences.

Now, very briefly, your Spiritual Gifts are “a set of special abilities that God has given you [by the Holy Spirit] to share his love and serve others” . These are not the same as talents like singing or drawing. Some of these spiritual gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 such as healing, message of wisdom, faith, miraculous powers, prophecy, speaking in tongues. There are others more mentioned in Romans and Ephesians such as leadership, teaching, giving, and service.

Your Heart is “the special passion God has given you so that you can glorify him on earth.” These can be things that you are deeply interested in that drive you.

Your Abilities are “the set of talents that God gave you when you were born, which he also wants you to use to make an impact for him.” These are things you do well and where you naturally excel like singing or drawing or computing.

Your Personality is “the special way God wired you to navigate life and fulfill your unique Kingdom Purpose.” It's how you relate to others and respond to opportunities.

Your Experiences are “those parts of your past, both positive and painful, which God intends to use in great ways”.

If we can understand our S.H.A.P.E. it will keep us from serving in places that are awkward and just don't seem to work; it will help us to know where we can excel and be fulfilled; and it will help us walk in confidence and claim much territory for the Lord. Knowing our S.H.A.P.E. will help us find our “element” and our “sweet spot.”

Sports experts have determined that there is a “sweet spot” on certain equipment like baseball bats, tennis rackets, and golf clubs. When an athlete hits the ball on that sweet spot he gets the maximum return.

Look at this tennis racket. There is a sweet spot somewhere here. I googled it and here’s what I found:

“Every racquet has three different sweet spots, but in a general sense, the sweet spot is the area of the string bed that produces the best combination of feel and power.

The most powerful spot on the string bed is that with the greatest **coefficient of restitution**. The one with least vibration is found at the **node of the first harmonic**. The one with least shock is found at the **center of percussion**.”

Now, if you can explain that to me, I’ll give you this tennis racket. It seems like you have to be a rocket scientist to find the sweet spot. But it is there. In theory, a tennis player who hits the ball on the sweet spot of this racket will hit it so powerfully that his opponent will have no chance of returning it successfully. Well, I would say Federer and Sampras and Agassi have discovered this sweet spot that’s why they have been so successful in their sport.

Let me ask you...Have you ever been involved in some project or ...done something at church that just felt right? When you did it you knew you were in the right place doing the right thing? We all have a sweet spot. We’ve all experienced the joy of knowing that something we did gave the maximum return for our effort. But we have also known the frustration of trying so hard to be good at a particular thing that we simply could not do. The effort was an exercise in frustration and pain.

God has given every one of us a sweet spot so we can produce maximum results. Mark McGwire said, “When I feel the ball hit right on the sweet spot, a home run is just around the corner.”

When we serve Jesus from our spiritual sweet spot, our SHAPE, a spiritual home run is just around the corner. Our sweet spot is the convergence of all these five elements of SHAPE. We need to discover that. To discover that, you need to take Class 301. After taking Class 201 and 101. We'll give you the schedule of the classes next week.

Now, if Pete Sampras spent his time watching tennis videos or listening to his coach without actually hitting the ball, he would never have become one of tennis's greatest champions. If we as believers simply sit on the sidelines and just listen and learn all about our SHAPE without exercising it, we will never become the children of God He wants us to be.

Worse yet, we will remain spiritual infants, vulnerable to the storms and uncertainties of life. So, not only do we need to learn how to be a Body Builder, we need to be one!

Listen to this music. (Play "Chariots of Fire") Can you name that tune? Yes, that's the theme song of the movie of the same title. It is the story of a great athlete from Scotland named Eric Liddle.

In the 1924 Olympics, Eric Liddle was scheduled to race on a Sunday. Because he was a devout Christian, he refused. His coach allowed him to run the next day and he won.

Liddle believed God had given him the special ability to run. When asked why he chose this sport, he said, "I believe God made me for a purpose—he also made me fast—and when I run I feel His pleasure."

Brothers and sisters, we need to get in the game and hit that sweet spot and feel God's pleasure! There is nothing more exciting than knowing and serving the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Amen?

How can we grow broader through ministry? It's the Bottom Line.
The Bottom Line: Be A Body Builder!

You can be a Body Builder by understanding what a body builder is, by overcoming excuses, and by getting in shape.

Today, here's my challenge to each of you. Will you commit to be a body builder this year? Will you commit to finding your spiritual sweet spot so you can be participating in the game and not just be sitting on the sidelines? Will you commit to body building so that you'll be able to see this local body of Christ, Fil-Am Church, grow and become an oasis of hope and comfort for all types of people in our community? Will you commit to building people – ministering to them, teaching them, counseling them, discipling them, witnessing to them – in order to see bkChrist's body grow and glow?

Folks, that is my resolution this year. And not this year only, but for the years to come. I want us to be body builders so we can build others up which in turn will build this church. Would you make this your resolution too?

In line with this, in order to keep our focus on body building this is the theme that I've come up with for this year:

“Building People to Build the Church”

The text, of course, is Ephesians 4:11-12.

Let us all close our eyes as the Praise and Worship team leads us in a song.