

**PBC20070919CS**

**THE NAZARETH PROJECT**  
**Equipping the Saints to Work**

**Ephesians 4:4-13**

September 19, 2007- Wednesday, 6:15PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

**[Dr. McKinley, message, Equipping the Saints to Work]**

...and praise team, musicians, grateful for your leadership tonight.

And thank you for coming to confession. Ah... I don't know if you've ever thought about it, but in a very real sense when we gather together and we lift up our voices in worship, that's exactly what we're doing. We are confessing who God is, what Christ has done, the work of His Spirit in our lives, and in a very positive way and in a way that expresses faith, praise is confession of who God is. And so you can literally go out of here tonight and say I just spent an hour in confession and tell people that I've just enjoyed the opportunity to confess because we are confessing our confidence and our faith in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I want to ask you to share with me in one other form of confession tonight and it's not in lifting your voice in song and in praise. I want you to do a little bit of personal confession tonight. How many of you would say at some time in your life... some time, some place, some stage of life you have had an identity crisis? Alright a few of you have had an identity crisis. Now I didn't say raise your hand if you're schizophrenic. I didn't say that [laughter]! I didn't say, you know, I know who I am and so do I. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about having a sense in your life that who you are and what you do and how you live are not all adding up. There's a sense of fraying in life, a sense that things aren't coming together in life and that who you are and what you do and how you live isn't in sync. And when that happens in life we have a sense of lost identity.

Everyday right now you turn on the television and there's a debate going on about the identify of Britney Spears. Ah... she has been known as a celebrity, as an entertainer. She's also known as a mother. Ah... she's known as a pop star, ah... all these different things. But the reality is, is there's a conflict and crisis in this young woman's life right now between who she is and what she does and how she lives. And ah... that's really the struggle that's going on in her life. And I hope you'll pray for God to send a messenger into her life to help her to know the One who is "the way, the truth, and the life"; that's what Britney needs. That's what everybody needs, because without Christ and without a vital relationship with Him, we struggle with our identity over all in life.

But there are times in life where we have personal identity crisis and we tend to forget who we are and we struggle with where we are and what we do.

And I'm absolutely convinced that that's an issue that's going on in the church today. The church of Jesus Christ is struggling in this generation with an identity crisis. We don't seem to really know who we are, what we're supposed to do, and how we are to therefore live. And for this reason the Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians chapter 4 speaks to the church... speaks to you, speaks to me and helps us to hear and to understand the call that God has put upon our lives.

And so I want to ask you to take your Bible and open it with me tonight to Ephesians chapter 4, because Paul is saying, "I want you to remember God's purpose for which you were established and why you exist today. And if we are going to be the church and the individual believers that God would have us to be, then it is essential for us to understand the primary function and the operation of the church as God has designed it to be. In the fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians I have been discussing with you a topic... a series that I've called the Nazareth Project.

Jesus of Nazareth grew up in the home of a carpenter. Jesus as a child obviously spent time building things with His father. And really we don't know a lot about what happened in His life between birth and thirty years of age, but we know that until He was the age of thirty, He remained in Nazareth; He stayed with His family until He went forward in His public ministry.

But in the midst of His public ministry, Jesus Christ said this; He said [Matthew 16:18]: "*I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*" Jesus said, "I have come to establish... to build something. And it's not something that is built with hands, it is something that is built in hearts; it's not something that's built in time, but it's built in time for eternity. And I have a plan and a purpose for my church." And Jesus said, "*I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*"

So what the Nazareth Project is and how this Nazareth project is unfolding has been the subject of our study in these weeks that we've been together. Week one, we talked about answering your call. Paul says in verse one: "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called.*" And if you have said "yes" and have opened your heart and have turned from your sins and received Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you have begun to live life in a new dimension. You are no longer living according to the old flesh and the old way and the old pattern. You have turned from sin and turned to Christ, and now you are not going away from God in rebellion, you are now going toward God in answer to His call. So we talked about answering the call.

Last week we talked about honoring God's design, for the Bible says that we have been brought together in [Ephesians 4:4-7] "*one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, through all and in all; who by grace has given each one according to measure Christ's gift.*" And how that God has taken us and called us, but

then He's put us collectively together into this organism... not organization... organism called the church. And He is beginning to shape His design in us.

But tonight we want to pick up in verse 7, and in verse 7 we want to really go a step further in clarifying our identity and what God wants the church to be and what God wants the church to do. Where the being and the doing and the living all come together. So let's begin reading in chapter 4 and verse 7.

Am I echoing? Because I sure feel like I am up here. Can you help me? Let's try that just a minute... see if we can make this thing plain out just a little bit. Is that getting better? [laughter] No I'm just teasing. It's all fine. I hope it's just a little bit softer. I was beginning to feel like I was chasing myself around the room and that just didn't feel right. I was beginning to feel schizophrenic. So anyway... I was hearing two voices at once and that wasn't normal so.

Let's begin reading... Ephesians 4 and verse 7:

7) *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.* 8) *Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men."* 9) *(In saying He ascended, what does it mean but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?* 10) *He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)* 11) *And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,* 12) *to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ,* 13) *until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;* 13) *so that we may no longer live tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.* 15) *Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head—into Christ—* 16) *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by what every joint, which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

Now that is a mouthful. That is a lot of truth in a very compressed series of verses. But the truths that we see here we're going to talk about tonight and then again next Wednesday evening, but they're truths that are so vitally important because in many ways these verses are the very heart of the entire book of Ephesians. And these verses are in many ways at the most strategic point of the design of the Nazareth Project; of what it is that God is doing, and what God wants to do with the church.

So, having said that, let me speak to you about three insights tonight. First, I want to talk to you about what I would call individual functions... individual functions. Verse 7 says: *"Grace was given to each one of us according the measure of Christ's gift."* The most important thing about that verse is that it says grace was given to (listen) each one. That means

you and you and you and you and you and you and you... and you and you and you and you and you and you and you! That's just the first section right there. Grace is given to everyone. Not... not grace is given to all of us; it's given to each and every one of us. And God has given a grace to you and a grace to me that is all to be apart of the way that we are to function together within the body of Christ and in the mission of Christ in the world.

Of course, what it's talking about here is that this grace is a gift. And the gift is known as a spiritual gift. And one of the things that the Bible teaches is that God gives to those who come to Christ not only a new life, but a whole new capacity to live life! And God gives to us spiritual enablement... spiritual gifts so that we may individually be what God has called us to be, and yet that we may work collectively to do what God has called us to do. So here's what I'm trying to say to you: In the church of Jesus Christ we are all individuals, and the individual nature of each of us matters; but we are not independent individuals, we are interdependent individuals.

[The] Greatest picture I know of is my body... my body is a series of individual members that are all interdependent upon one another. My body could not function if various members of the body got together, had a meeting and decided they were all going to do different things. Now you think about it: if the five toes, the foot, the knee and the leg on this side decided that it wanted to go this way, and the five toes, the foot and the knee and the leg on this side decided that it wanted to go that way, while the hands and the arms decided to go this way, just imagine what I'm going to be dealing with! Everything's going wrong! I mean, I've got a problem with my body!

My body cannot function because it's got a bunch of members; it's because it's got interdependent members! And the members are not going away from one another; the members are being brought together! And while we have individual functions... And right now as I speak to you, I'm speaking to you in a variety of ways: my eyes are helping, my mouth is helping, my face is helping, ah... my hands are helping, my feet are helping! But they're all working together to accomplish that function!

So individuals come together as one in function so that the plan and the purpose of God can be accomplished through us. And there's nothing worse than when you have a rebellion somewhere in the members.

You ever had your stomach muscles have a rebellion after a meal? Hmm? What do you get when your stomach muscles go into rebellion? I don't mean the graphic but you know it begins with something called indigestion. Now what's your stomach supposed to help you do? Digest... it's suppose to take it in and start digesting, right? So it's abnormal for the stomach to have indigestion because the stomach is supposed to be all about digestion. But when the stomach isn't digesting and it's "indigesting", the whole body is struggling with the indigestion process that's going on. That's when you have a rebellion in the members! Therefore the members have to come

together; the members have to work together and the Bible says emphatically that God has given to each one of us a gift, and we are to be a part of that function in the body of Christ.

Warren Weirsbe says it well when he says, “A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and others in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.” And God has given spiritual gifts.

Now this study tonight is not a study on spiritual gifts. You could study 1 Corinthians chapter 12, you can study Romans chapter 12, you can read here in Ephesians chapter 4: those are the three primary passages in the Bible on the subject of spiritual gifts. But let me just say that gifts are not toys; they’re tools. And the reason that God has given us a gift is because He has a function, a tool... it’s a tool that He wants us to use to accomplish something. If we do not use our gifts as tools to love one another, we will begin to make them things whereby we conflict with one another.

That happened in the church of Corinth and there was a great conflict over spiritual gifts in the church in Corinth. That’s why I’ve never been able to understand why so many people want to emulate all the gifts of the church of Corinth. It was the most conflicted church in the New Testament. And yet we bring conflict when we don’t have a proper understanding and use of spiritual gifts.

So let me just say this about gifts: Gifts are specific. Each one of us has a gift. It is a specific gift. Our gifts are given sovereignly. I don’t choose my gift, you don’t choose your gift. God sovereignly chooses and gives you a gift... at least one, sometimes many. And then that gift is supercharged, that gift is supercharged in your life. It is the place where you are in the zone and where you are able to make things happen for the kingdom of God. And the supercharging force of your spiritual gift is the Holy Spirit of God who is at work in you.

That’s why the Bible says that each one of us has been given grace. That word *grace* is the Greek work *kharece*. That’s where we get our word charismatic. Sometimes people ask me: are you a charismatic Christian? Absolutely! There’s no such thing as a noncharismatic Christian! Now if you mean do I speak in tongues and do I try to heal other people, and do I have miracles and effects? No, I don’t have those things. That doesn’t make a person charismatic. What is charismatic is the grace of God enabling you and me to live out our function for the glory of Christ and for His purpose and His kingdom. And the Spirit of God becomes the supercharging force in the life of the Christian.

Calvin, the theologian (not the comic strip character) said this, “The noblest triumph which God ever gained was when Christ, after subduing sin, conquered death and, putting Satan to flight, rose majestically to heaven that He might exercise His glorious reign over the church.” All that Christ has done... conquering Satan, destroying the kingdom of darkness, bringing us into the kingdom of light, breaking the bondage of sin... is that He might

empower us to live lives according to His plan and purpose and for His glory today. So individual functions... that's where we start.

But there's a second thing and it's called instrumental offices... instrumental offices. After it talks to us about these individual functions that God has given, it says this, beginning in verse 11: *"And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers..."* Here we're talking about church offices. And the Bible says that just as God has given to the members individual functions, God has established within the church some instrumental offices... some people who are given leadership roles and functions in those roles to help to accomplish what God wants to do in and through His church.

Once again, let me go back to the human body as a ... a way of trying to help you to understand how these offices function in the church. You know that in your human body you have several systems that are at work right now. Ah... one of those systems is the muscular-skeletal system. It's what everything hangs on. (And I mean for some of us it hangs on, right? You know what I'm talking about.) [laughter] And so there's the muscular-skeletal system. It is the foundation; it's how everything else is being supported.

And so the Bible tells us that there is a muscular-skeletal system in the body of Christ and it says that is the apostles. You say, how do you know that? Well hold your hand in Ephesians 4 and look back over in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 19. The Bible says: 19) *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the members of the household of God,* 20) *built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the key cornerstone."* If the human body is all hinged on a skeletal structure that is the foundation, in the same way when you build something the cornerstone and the foundation is that upon which everything else is going to be established.

And the message and the mission of the church begins with the apostles. Who are the apostles? They were the twelve called followers of Jesus Christ minus one whose name was Judas. They later added another and then there was the Apostle Paul. What were the qualifications of an apostle? They had to have seen the resurrected and living Christ. Only those who had not only walked with Christ, but seen the risen Christ qualified to be apostles.

There are not modern day apostles in that sense. There may be a sense of being an apostolic ministry of going out and planting and establishing churches and going places where no one else has ever been, but to be an apostle in the New Testament sense, you had to see the resurrected and living Christ. So they're like the muscular system.

Then we have in our bodies another system called the nervous system. And the nervous system is what increases receptivity and response. It's what makes you sensitive. It's what... it's what makes you stimulated in what you do. Well, the prophets are just like the nervous system. The prophets God's used to move... to impulse... to drive the heart and the passion of the church.

The office of the prophet is that one who speaks truth by inspiration for impact. And the role of the prophet is like the nervous system to help to move and to help to function according to truth. It quickens the conscience, galvanizes the church and motivates us to work.

The third system that I would point out to you tonight is not only the muscular-skeletal system, the nervous system, but then there is the digestive system. And of course, the digestive system is about intake. It's about how you gain. You do the intake process in your body to restore and to renew. Food is taken in and it's assimilated to the body. And in many ways that's the work of the evangelist. The en... the evangelist have been given unique gifts to help the church in its intake mission, to reach lost people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now I'm not saying that there is just a gift of evangelism. Every member of the church is called to do evangelism. We are all to go to all the world and preach the whole Gospel. But there are some who are uniquely gifted in the role of an evangelist; they are instrumental officers in the church that God uses in a unique way to help to bring in and to gather the harvest.

Certainly in our day and time we've seen that ministry through the life of Dr. Billy Graham. Several days ago you know that we talked about the death of Dr. D. James Kennedy. Ah... he was a Presbyterian minister down in south Florida that had a passion for evangelism and taught thousands upon thousand of people how to share their faith. Ah... I think about Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. I think about Ray Comfort who stood here on Saturday as a part of our Transform Conference, not like any of the other men I just talked about, but a man who had a passion to be about teaching people how to intake for the Gospel of Christ. That's the digestive system.

And then there's the circulatory system... the circulatory system... the blood that fuels and feeds the entire body by which the entire body is maintained. And that job is given to pastors and teachers. Literally the Greek... the way it is written is teaching pastors. I just want you to know my role is clearly biblical. It's a teaching pastor.

And so the Bible says that there apostles and prophets and evangelists and teaching pastors who God has put into the body in order to accomplish the instrumental purposes that enable us to mobilize all of the other functions of the body.

That brings me to the third thing that I will call your attention to tonight and that is not only that there are individual functions (each of you), there are instrumental offices (the role that I'm fulfilling and that some of our other ministers and our senior pastor, Dr. Jack Graham, performs in this ministry; a biblical function, a biblical instrumentality). But here's what it all comes down to: intentional outcomes. God has established this process because there are some things [tap] that he wants [tap] to have [tap] happen [tap]. And these intentional

outcomes are so important for us because this is where there is core identity for the church. And this is where the churches loses its identity.

[Are] You ready? Or have you already had enough? If you've had enough, we can quit. Oh alright, good, thanks. I... I'm asking you to beg now. [laughter] So anyway, I'm just... [laughter]

I want us to see what are the intentional outcomes that God has for His church. Well, let's look at it; there are two of them. Two things that God wants to have happen. He's given us individual functions; He has instrumental offices; and this is what it says: chapter 4, verse 11. He gave the apostles, the prophets and the pastor teachers... Look at verse 12:

*12)... to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain the faith and knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood...*

Now that's a lot being said. I haven't even finished the sentence, but it clearly says that God has an intention with what He's doing with you and with what He's doing with me. Now in the early English translations... the original King James... anybody here tonight have a King James Bible. I'm not talking about a New King James... I'm talking about King... God bless thee, brother. Any other thee's and thou's in here tonight? King James... You know what I'm talking about. Alright.

Unfortunately in the early English translations when you read this passage of Scripture this is how it read. Now be careful; this is... this is technical but I want you to understand it because it's important. The early English translations read: "to equip the saints (comma) for the work..." Excuse me, it actually says, "for the equipping of the saints (comma) for the work of the ministry (comma) for the building up of the body of Christ." And for many years people believed... not all, but many mistakenly believed that the role of the pastor and the role of the apostle and the role of the evangelist was for the equipping of the saints, for doing the work of the ministry and for building up of the body of Christ.

The only problem is that comma does not exist in the text. So here's what it really says. Okay, here's what it really says. Let me read it to you. "To equip the saints for the work of the ministry." That's all one phrase. "To equip the saints for the work of the ministry." Now why does that matter? Because now we're talking about your job. Now we're delineating what my job is and what your job is. My job is to equip.

Have you ever tried to do something when you didn't have the right equipment? Is there anything more frustrating than trying to unscrew a screw when you don't have a screwdriver? Is there anything harder than trying to hammer something into the wall if you don't really have a hammer? I mean, you can take your shoe, you can take something else, but it just... You need a hammer, you need the right instrument. And when you have the right instrument, you're equipped. So the Bible says when these offices God



has given are being used rightly, they are functioning to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.

Now who are the saints? Who are the saints? Who am I supposed to be equipping to do the work of the ministry?

Well, look at Acts 9:32. Just look at these scriptures quickly on the screen. Ah... Peter, the Bible says here... *"Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all the parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelled in Lydda."* Look again in Romans 1:7, Paul was writing: *"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be (say it with me) saints [saints]. Grace to you and peace from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ."* Then he says in Ephesians 2:19: *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with saints and the members of the household of God."* And then listen to the ah... book of Jude, verse 14: *"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints."* Who are the saints? You are the saints!

Look at your neighbor and say, "I'm a saint." [laughter] Now I know some of you are going "Who is my neighbor?" Now just tell them you're a saint, because the saints are not some elite group with the apostles and the prophets and the pastors and the teachers! No, they're not some group in an ins... in an office! The saints are the members of the body of Christ! And you are to serve Christ as a saint!

Saint Nick even, right our here! Look at him right there! Saint Nick Farrell. Good ol' Saint Nicholas! I appreciate that, Saint Nick.

But we are saints! And the Bible says that my job is to help to equip you to do what? What does the Bible say you are to do? "The work of the ministry."

Now think about this. The work of the ministry... I'm to equip you to do the work of the ministry. What is the work of the ministry? What is the work of the church? What is this all about? Is it not to [Matthew 28:19-20] *"go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every nation and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us"*? Is that not the work of the ministry? Therefore, my job is to equip you to do the work of the ministry. And my job is an equipping job; it is not a performing job!

The great identity crisis in the church is that most people think that ministers in the church are the performers. The idea is that we're the kickers. You know how it is on Sunday. You get down to that moment in the game and you've only got a few seconds left on the clock and the field goal unit runs out, and the kicker gets there and he lines up and he gets ready, and he kicks the ball, and if it goes through the goal posts, the whole place explodes and what a great job! And if the guy misses it, aw man, everybody wants to fire him. [laughter]

You know that's what it's like being in the ministry most of the time? [laughter] Most people seem to think we're the kickers! You come to church, you drag yourself out of bed on Sunday and you get yourself here and you do what your work is, which is sitting, and I do my work, which is performing, and I get up here and I do my best and I kick, and I'm just waiting to see, are they all going to cheer? Or are they all going to go out the door going, "Aw, I don't know, maybe next week we'll do better." [laughter] You see, that's what most people think the church is all about.

It's not about performing. The role of the ministers in the church is to do an equipping job, and that's being like a quarterback. It's helping to see the game, to make the call, and then to pass or to handoff the ball to the best equipped player, to the one who has the gifts to make the play, and let them go make the play.

So many people think that the work of the ministry for the saints is sitting and listening and taking notes. That's not what it is, folks. This is not a sitting experience. This is a serving experience. And God wants you to be engaged in the work of the ministry. And for us to be able to do that, then we've all got to understand these functions and let them function together.

The human body is sustained through two processes: one is assimilation. I have to have air and food and water; there has to be assimilation. And so our church exists for the purpose of assimilation to the body. We reach people who are coming to Christ and we bring them into the body... we assimilate them into the body so that they begin to become a part of the body: One body, one Lord, one faith, one Spirit, one baptism... we are answering the call, we're coming together, we're assimilating the body of Christ.

But you know what the other function of the body is? How a body maintains life and health? It's not only assimilation, but it's reproduction. Your body has to keep reproducing cells for growth and life and health and strength. And God's plan is that your body would also reproduce in its own kind. God wants His church to be on business of reproduct... reproduction and bringing believers into the kingdom of God.

I want you to look at a chart that I brought with us tonight that I think is important. This is actually done in a secular study. It combines in the quadrant called Christianity all sorts of things that we would call Christian and some that we would say really aren't. But they've simply put them there. You see Islam, 21 percent of the world population; Christianity, 33 percent; nonreligious, 16 percent; Hindus, 14 percent; Buddhism about 6 percent; Judaism a little less than 1 percent of the total world population. Looking at billions here. It's a pretty interesting chart.

But can I tell you that the crisis in that chart is that if you do take out those who are not truly Christian in the sense of bringing people to a conversion experience... of understanding the power and the authority of

Christ, that we are sinners, that we can only be saved by the work of Christ on the cross and turning from our sins and trusting in Christ... what you begin to realize is that there is a great sense in which Christianity, though it has been very predominant is losing ground today.

And you know why we're losing ground? Because we are not reproducing. And we're not going to reproduce just having some kickers in an auditorium on Sunday, kicking the ball and hoping that everybody says, "Oh, that was great. That's what I'm looking for!" The way we're going to reproduce is go out in the world and make an impact with people.

Every day you turn on your news and read the headlines, you read about new terrorist cells in the world that are proliferating. But can I sway to you that the only answer to terrorism in this world is not politics, it's not war, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I'm not saying for a moment that all Muslims or people who practice the Islamic faith are terrorists. But to the best of my knowledge to this day, all of those terrorist have professed praise and honor and recognition of Allah as the god that they worship.

And so all I'm saying to you is, ladies and gentlemen, from the national and international crisis of our world to the deep and heartfelt needs of our community, what the world needs is a church that's doing what the church is to do, and the church doesn't need to be in an identity crisis; we need to be in the process of being equipped to do the work of the ministry.

That's why we're talking a lot today in Prestonwood about the DNA... the spiritual DNA of Prestonwood. This month's Prestonwood Life talks about the spiritual DNA of our church. One church, one heart, one mission. We are understanding that to be the church that God wants us to be and as we keep growing, that we can't simply just focus on getting people together; we've got to really be intentional about equipping people for life and for ministry. And so that's why we're talking about some new equipping initiatives in our ministry.

On the headline of your "Connection News" tonight, you see the Connection classes that are listed there. And why are we offering these classes now on Wednesday nights beginning in the month of October? Because the goal of our ministry is to equip people and to mature people for the glory of Christ. Aren't those the two functions mentioned here? That the role of the pastors and teachers is to equip people for the work of the ministry and then for the building up of the body of Christ. We want to build people up and we want to equip them to do the work of the ministry. And that's exactly what this new initiative that we're talking about is all about.

And I'm hoping that tonight many of you will take the card that's there, look at one of those areas of needed growth and needed impact in your life, one of these being what's called intentional live, teaching you how to share your faith, and that you'll take advantage of being able to do that.

Some of you are wondering, “Well, what does that mean? I mean, I don’t know if I want to do any of these classes. I like coming to a service.” That’s fine. We’re still going to have a mid-week service. It’s going to be in the chapel with Jerrett Stephens for the first four weeks. The Chapel Connection along with all of these classes. And we’re going to have a study in the book of Hosea. We’re going to have studies and equipping modules to help grow the church and we’re going to keep intentionally handing the ball to you, to help you do the work of the ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

Well, I’m going to talk about building up the body of the Chr... of Christ next week, and about this whole idea of spiritual maturity. But let me just... let me just bring this into a close tonight by saying this: If there are in fact nearly a billion and half Christians... maybe two billion in the world, scattered through all levels and locations, occupations, races, cultures and classes of society, and these all begin to witness the powerful and wonderful message of the name of Jesus of Nazareth, do you not think that that would make a difference in our world? Do you not think that that would make a difference? Given all the places, all the locations, all the people, would that not make a difference?

Then let me ask you this: if that’s true conceptually in the world, how much truer is that personally for us in this community? We have thousands of people who gather here every weekend at this campus and our north campus, and we are naming the name of Jesus! But the issue for us is not how many people worship with us on Sunday. What is important for us is how many of us take the mission and go back out there and make a difference in the community for Jesus Christ. And the heartbeat and the passion of our church, of our pastor, of our ministry in these days is that we are going to equip [tap] the saints [tap] to work [tap]... to do the work of the ministry.

Equipping... that... that’s the new watchword. That’s the new dynamic of everything that we are doing at Prestonwood. We are going to be about equipping. Now while we do that, we’re going to keep building community, we’re going to keep growing in maturity, but the key thing that we’re going to do is we’re going to be equipping. And one of the reasons’ were going to do this mid-week is because this is prime time for this opportunity. We can maximize different gifts that we have within the body, gifts within the membership of the body, and we can maximize this campus in a way like we’ve never seen before. And it’s all for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Let me take you back to then end of chapter 3 of Ephesians. It simply says this [Ephesians 3:21]: *21) Now to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.* And all the saints said, [AMEN] Amen.

*Father, tonight I pray that You will help us to continue to see and understand the function that You have for us as Your people. And Lord, help us not to miss the understanding that this is about some individual gifts and functions that You have for us; that there are offices that You’ve*

*established for the purpose of equipping; and that there is an intentional outcome that together we would impact this community for Christ. Help us to discover who we are in You. Help us to use the gifts that You've given us to reach the world and to build up the body of Christ. Teach us, Lord, what it is to give glory to You in this church in this generation and together we also. Amen*

[Prayer meeting ends with invitation to pray for several specific needs]