

MAIN POINT

We must all do our part in the work of the ministry, building up the body, and pressing on to maturity.

INTRODUCTION

Think back to your best experience of a group project, whether it be at work, school, or a volunteer organization. What was it that made this experience so good for you? What made it so good for the group as a whole?

If you had to describe what often makes group projects difficult, or what leaves people feeling like outsiders, what would you say the factors are?

Group projects are often polarizing—they are either great or terrible experiences. Individual personalities and the challenges of accomplishing goals make for unpredictable situations. In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul described church life as something like a big group project—everyone must do his or her part in the work of ministry. In Ephesians 4, Paul helped us think through what it means to be “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Paul said that if the church is going to be all that she can be, it takes individual Christians doing their part, building up the body, and pressing on to maturity.

DISCUSSION

> READ EPHESIANS 4:11-16.

In verse 11, Paul introduced some gifts that exist within the body of Christ. Who did Paul say gives those gifts? How does that change how those with these gifts see themselves and their role?

How did Paul describe the goal for which these gifts were given in verses 12-13?

According to verses 14-15, what did Paul say that responsibility is? To whom are we responsible?

What’s avoided when we do this? What’s gained?

As Paul finished this section in verse 16, how did he describe the relationship between individual Christians and the body of believers as a whole?

What did he describe as the goal for both the individual and the whole body? How are the two related?

What do you think he meant by “each part is working properly”?

In contrast, what would it look like for the individual parts of the body to be “working improperly”?

It’s easy to think that those who are paid, or those with official positions, are responsible for the church. How does this passage reshape that idea? What are the ways you most often misunderstand or underestimate your importance within the body of Christ?

APPLICATION

Consider the ways God has gifted you, whether through life experiences, formal training, or conviction. What would it look like to exercise these gifts not merely for yourself, but for the good of the body?