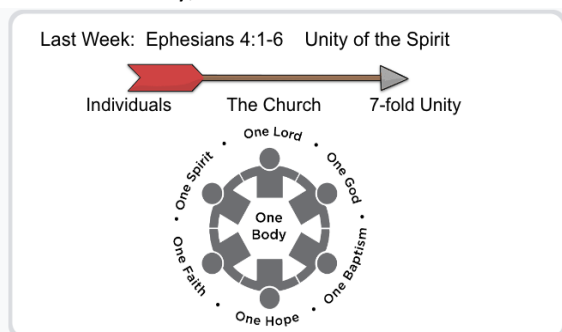


How a Church Functions

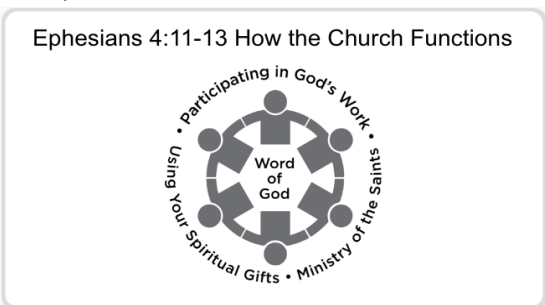
Eph 4:11-13 Jerry Tu

We are on the second sermon of a 2-part series on the functioning of a local church, based on verses from Ephesians Chapter 4.

Last week, we learned about the 7-fold unity of the church: we are one body, united by our common understanding of one faith, one hope, one baptism; we are under one Spirit, one Lord and one God and Father. We learned that as a church we are to eagerly maintain this 7-fold unity of the Spirit. And individually, we're to cover one another in agape love, with humility, gentleness and patience.



This week, we'll explore another facet of our local church. How does a church function? What makes a church vibrant and healthy? Is it sermons or bible studies, is it a charismatic preacher or evangelism? Is it the music, the ministries, or the management? Is it prayer, pulpit, programs? While all of these are undoubtedly important, they are outcomes or visible evidence of a healthy, well-functioning church. Paul uses a metaphor in Eph 2 to describe God's people: we are a holy temple, a dwelling for the Lord. The individual people are the bricks of the temple, and the whole temple is built on the foundational bricks of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus being the cornerstone. Applying this picture to our church: What you see of the building: ministries and programs, preaching and outreach, these are built on top of some foundational elements, "bricks" that stack together to make a healthy church.



What underlies the functioning of PBCC are some foundational concepts that we find in Paul's letter to Ephesians. PBCC has adopted these core values, and today we'll review a few of them. We'll look at **Devotion to the Word of God** at the center of our church; we'll explore how spiritual gifts are used to **equip** the individuals, who then **participate in God's work**, doing the ministry of the saints, to build up the whole body to unity and maturity. Over the last 20 years as I served as an elder here, I've found the core values, these important "bricks" contained within Ephesians 4 to be absolutely essential to the health and flourishing of our church.

Today we'll be covering verses 11-13 in Ephesians 4:

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

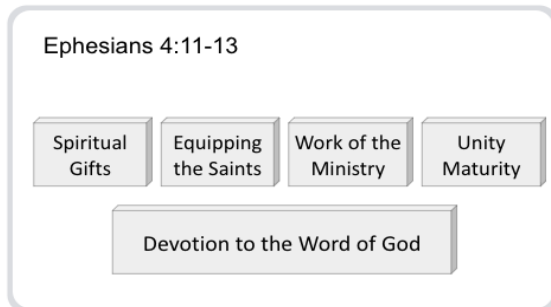
These verses can be broken down into four sections. They are the bricks we use to build a healthy, vibrant church.

- Spiritual Gifts (four are mentioned here)
- Equipping the Saints
- Doing the Work of the Ministry
- Attaining Unity & Maturity

Yet, underlying all of those bricks is a foundation... I know you're all saying "Jesus Christ, the cornerstone". Of course! But as it relates to PBCC's Core Values, I'll mention this one:

- Devotion to the Word of God

We'll see how this value is tied to the other four bricks.



Spiritual Gifts

Let's begin with the concept of Spiritual gifts. In Greek, the word for spiritual gifts is "*charismata*", a word which has its roots in "*charis*", which is divine, God-given grace. Ray Stedman describes spiritual gifts as "a capacity for service which is given to every true Christian without exception, and which each did not possess before becoming a Christian." Each of us has a unique blend of spiritual gifts, and we are to learn, discover, exercise, and use them for God's kingdom work.

There are listed some 20 spiritual gifts in the New Testament, in passages I like to call the "4-12-4-12". Ephesians 4, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4, 1 Cor 12. I won't enumerate all 20 gifts today, but focus on just four that are mentioned in Ephesians 4, in verse 11.

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

These four gifts are sometimes called the teaching gifts, associated with church leaders. Let's briefly look at each of these.

- Apostles

The word *apostles* means "sent messengers". The original apostles include Jesus' twelve disciples and Paul. In 1 Cor 15, Paul describes himself as an apostle:

⁷ Then he (Jesus) appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

The Apostles were Jesus' disciples who personally witnessed Jesus and had a special, direct calling to lay the foundation of His church. Peter was an apostle to the Jews, Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles. Apostles had authority to establish doctrine; their inspired words formed Scripture. While these Apostles who had direct authority from Jesus lived only in the first century, the apostolic gift or role may be evident today in a secondary sense as "sent messengers". Church planters are sent to establish a beachhead in unreached people groups; while they don't establish doctrine, they do have an apostolic passion.

- Prophets

The Greek word for Prophet means "one who speaks forth" or the "spokesman of God". There are many prophets in the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, minor prophets, etc. These prophets heard directly from God; we read words such as "the Word of the Lord came to me" or "God spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz..." Prophets had direct revelation from God, and they proclaim God's Word as His spokesperson. God sent these spokesmen to warn Israel of impending judgment, to urge his people to repent and return, and to declare His promise of a future Messianic savior.

In the New Testament, clearly Jesus Christ was God's spokesman to us. The apostle John was a spokesman as well; he received direct revelation from God and recorded prophecy for us in Revelation. There were New Testament authors like Mark and Luke who weren't part of the original 12 disciples. (Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, Luke was a doctor/physician. Both accompanied Paul in his journeys). Nevertheless, they were spokesmen of God and worked under God's authority and with the Holy Spirit's inspiration. The writings of the apostles and prophets have become part of the canon of the Bible, and the foundation they laid is Jesus Christ, as it says in 1 Cor 3: "*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" 1Cor 3:11. The foundation is done, no more can be added to the Word.

- Evangelist

Evangelist is a bringer of the Good News of salvation (*euaggelion*). Evangelists have a special gift and passion to proclaim the Gospel to those who are not yet Christians. Philip, Mark, and other NT evangelists grew the body of Christ numerically by being witnesses for Christ. Clearly, Peter & Paul all had the gift and role of the evangelist.

All Christians are to evangelize as witness of Christ as Jesus commanded us to do in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*). And in our day-to-day lives, we are to be ready to tell our story and bring the Good News to others - *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect* (1 Peter 3:15).

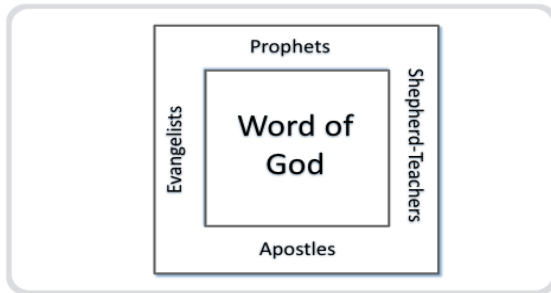
However, the *spiritual gift* of evangelism goes further than "lifestyle evangelism"; with this gift in operation, proclaiming the Word of God results in new birth and new converts. Billy Graham is one prime example of an evangelist. And there are many more evangelists throughout history and the world. They preach the whole truth of Jesus to non-believers, so that the Word of God becomes clear, compelling, and life-changing. I know some of us here have this gift, passion, and impact - in Salinas prison, in Kids Club, in your workplace, etc. The world is blessed by you.

- Shepherd-teacher

While it's not apparent in our English translation, it's clear from the Greek text that this is referring to one person, not two. The gift of shepherd-teacher - or more commonly pastor-teacher - is a single gift. Every pastor must be a teacher, but not every teacher is a pastor.

Pastor (*poimēn*) means shepherd, one who cares for the sheep, feeding them, protecting them from harm. Teacher *didaskalos* is an instructor, educator. In the present day, this spiritual gift is closely associated with pastors and preachers in a church. They apply the Word of God, they care for and nurture, protect and heal the family of God. Beyond the pastoral staff, though, there are so many other faithful saints in this body that have this gift and fulfill the role of pastor-teacher: leaders in Youth and Children's ministries, shepherds of growth groups, bible study leaders, and many more.

I'd like to use a word picture to tie together these four teaching gifts. Imagine a picture frame whose sides are these four teaching gifts: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherd-Teacher. The painting in the **center** of this frame - what these four gifts have in common - is



the Word of God, the Scriptures.

- The Apostles established the church's foundation on the Word of God
- Prophets receive God's word and proclaim it aloud with authority.
- Evangelists bring the Word of God out to non-believers.
- Pastor-Teachers apply the Word of God within the church to teach and care for the flock.

Each role or gift is used in different ways, impacting different people, yet each is firmly founded on God's Word.

I wish to use this to springboard to this next "foundational brick" of PBCC.

Devotion to the Word of God

One of the core values of PBCC is "Devotion to the Word of God". While church programs, preaching, missions, community service and outreach, are all vital, they all are undergirded by our devotion to God's Word. From the pulpit, in bible studies, and in the curricula of our ministries, expository teaching brings the Word of God into our hearts, so that we hear and obey. That's why at PBCC, we don't cherry-pick passages from the Bible to support a particular opinion. Rather, we use expository teaching; we want to study the Bible itself, word by word, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. In 2 Timothy, Paul stresses the importance of Scripture:

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

PBCC holds these convictions to be foundational: all Scripture is from God, all Scripture is profitable, all Scripture can bring us to maturity and **equipped** for every good work.

This transitions us to this next concept: being equipped to do God's work. Let's continue in Eph 4 and read what are everyone's roles within the Body of Christ.

Equipping the Saints

¹¹ And he gave ... the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ...

Note that the job description of the leaders of the local church includes only one verb: "equip". The pastor-teacher is not to equip the saints, *and* do ministry, *and* build up the body, *and* print the bulletins, *and* lead worship, *and* clean the bathrooms... It's a misconception that the paid clergy have to do all the work. If a church adopts that attitude you will have a burnt out pastor in no time. Instead, the role of the leaders is to **equip** the saints, and the saints (you, me, everyone) are to do the work of the ministry. "Equip" (*katartismos*) means to restore to proper function or make complete for the intended use. The word is used to refer to mending nets for fishing, setting bones to support the body. In our church, it means that our pastor-teachers make us completely sufficient for the job at hand. We are to be put into a condition so that we can do the work of the ministry. Our leaders do that by teaching us the Word of God, train us in bible studies and classes, counsel and disciple us in small groups. Their motto could be one from Home Depot: "You can do it, we can help."

Participating in God's Work

Continuing in Ephesians 4:12, we read *¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...*

This verse embodies another Family Value here at PBCC, which is "Ministry of the Saints" or "Participating in God's Work". How do we participate, how do we become God's instruments for His work? As members of the body, our job description is two-fold:

- Do the work of the ministry
- Build up the body of Christ

Work of the Ministry

The word ministry is "diakonia" which means "service", serving one another, meeting the needs of one another. Of course, from this word we get "deacons", who here at PBCC are wonderful hands and feet of Jesus to many in our body. But what's neat about our deacons is that they include and train other lay servants in the body to help, to use others' skills to meet the needs of individuals. So if you have a skill or gift, or power tools and know how to use them, then you are encouraged to offer your service (*diakonia*) to our church body. As 1 Peter 4:10 says, *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"*.

We must use our Spiritual Gifts. We each have a unique blend of spiritual gifts that enables us to do God's work. Many of you have the gift of teaching and knowledge, and you lead us in bible studies and growth groups. You have the gift of hospitality, so you serve us in Community Cafe. Your gift of evangelism is exercised in Kids Club, your gift of mercy in Rotating Safe Car Park. Your administration and gift of giving are evident in Grace Village project or Christmas Shoe Boxes. You help musically in

choir and music ministries, your creative juices fuel our VAM. In all these and other venues, we are encouraged, and we encourage you to continue exploring and using your spiritual gifts. And when you put them into service (diakonia), you are doing ministry of the saints; you are participating in God's work, and that's how PBCC functions.

Building up the Body of Christ

Our second job description is *building up the body of Christ*. This is the same word we encountered last week from Rom 14, where we are exhorted to *pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding*. Rom 14:19.

That's our second job, to build up and edify the whole body. We can do this by:

- building relationships, helping each other get connected.
 - If you feel like you're not plugged in or not connected, we have a ministry called Connection Groups, which I'll invite Eugene to come describe in a few minutes.
- pray for and disciple each other through these relationships
- physical acts of service by bringing meals, offering rides, babysitting for date night

Many other kind and generous acts can help build up & strengthen our bonds and relationships. The whole body is edified, growing stronger in faith and intimacy with each other and with God.

Results are Unity and Maturity

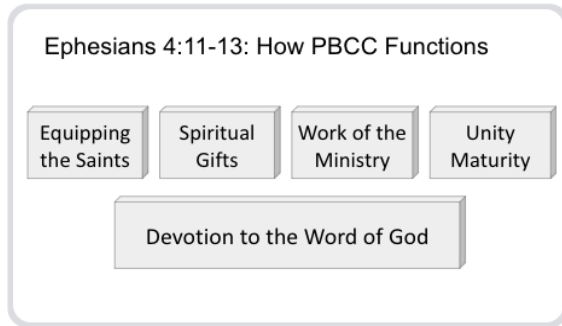
Building up the body of Christ does not necessarily mean our numbers grow or our parking lot overflows. Rather, what results when our church body grows are unity and maturity and much more: ¹³ *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*

First, we attain the unity of faith, which we talked about last week. It's a beautiful Spirit-created unity which we eagerly maintain by being gentle, humble, and patient, binding us with agape love in the "ligament" of peace.

Second, we increase in the knowledge of Jesus the Son of God, an intimate knowledge and relationship in which we love Jesus more each day. "Knowing Him and Making Him Known" is PBCC's "mission statement".

Third, we become more mature, as we are no longer *"tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes"* (Eph 4:14)

Fourth, we begin to reflect the fullness of Christ as a body. Last week we talked about *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* - this is that concept repeated, that our church reflects the full stature of Christ - his glory, character and agape love - to a watching world. We become a comforting and attractive light that draws our neighbors and friends to Christ and brings them to the praise of God's glory. That, in the end, is the goal of our church and our calling as His body.



Conclusion

Let me wrap up my portion of today's message: these are the foundational "bricks" underlying the functioning of PBCC, from which the visible ministries, teaching, and programs are built.

- Devotion to the Word of God
- Our leaders use teaching gifts to equip the saints
- Saints exercise spiritual gifts to do the work of the ministry, participating in God's Work
- When we function this way, we become mature and reflect the fullness of Jesus and glory of God to the world.

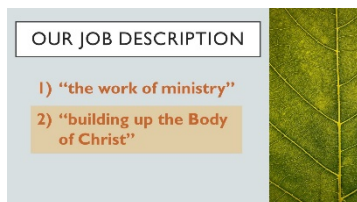
Transition to Eugene

Having covered these principles, I will now invite Eugene to wrap up this sermon with practical ways to apply these principles through his ministry of Connection Groups.

CONNECTION GROUPS



Thank you, Jerry, for giving me the chance to talk about Connection Groups and how we can use them to put what you've shared into action.



We have many ways to "do the work of ministry" at PBCC, and we will be hearing more about them in the coming weeks. But we also have many ways to participate in God's Work of "building up the Body of Christ".



For example, we have men's and women's groups; we have growth groups; we have groups that study the Bible, groups that learn Biblical languages, groups that review the Sunday sermons, groups that read Christian books – we have many different groups for "building up the Body of Christ".

But sometimes it has been a little difficult to find out more about those groups if we aren't already in them.

And maybe there have been times when some of us had an idea to bring people together – but we weren't sure how to get that idea off the ground.

Or maybe some of us have wondered if we were called to lead something – but we weren't sure how to test that calling out, unless it was teaching the Word or guiding a study.

Maybe we've wanted to connect in new ways – but we haven't been sure how to channel that desire. Well, let's change that today!



After much observation, prayer, and discussion, the Pastors and Elders of PBCC have decided to bring our existing groups – and open up the possibility for new groups – under a new initiative we call "Connection Groups".

CONNECTION GROUPS

What is a Connection Group?
 A group of people who gather around a common interest and build relationships that become the context for discipleship & formation.




What is a Connection Group? The technical definition is up on the screen, but here's the simple one: A Connection Group is a place for people to grow with one another. To share life with one another. To be disciplined and spiritually formed. And they can use just about anything as their point of connection.

CONNECTION GROUPS

"Common Interest"?

- Studying the Bible
- Reviewing the Sermon
- Learning the Languages
- Extra-Biblical Books
- Growing through Life Stages



We call these "Common Interests"; across the Connection Groups that currently exist at PBCC, the Common Interest has generally been either: (1) Biblical/Christian studies and (2) Life Stages.

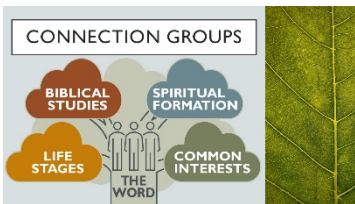
CONNECTION GROUPS

"Common Interest"?

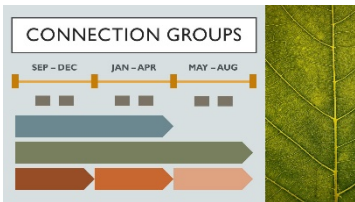
- Studying the Bible
- Reviewing the Sermon
- Learning the Languages
- Extra-Biblical Books
- Growing through Life Stages
- Interests & Affinities



But what if we broadened that to include other Common Interests? What if we had a group where the Common Interest was ping pong – sorry, table tennis? Or learning how to paint? Or sharing family recipes once a month? Or prayer walking through downtown San Jose? Or practicing Lectio Divina on the weekend? Or exploring what it means to become a Christian for the first time? What if we could take our interests, affinities, gifts, and hobbies and use them as connection points?



Imagine a church where connections branch out in this way: Rooted in devotion to God's Word, each member reaches out and connects with others, creating spaces where discipleship and formation can happen. This is already happening at PBCC – so why not recognize what God is already doing and join in? And why not give it a little more structure to engage more of us in what God is doing?



"Connection Groups" come with a new structure: Connection Groups will be termed – meaning, they will be offered at set times of the year, which will be broken up into four-month trimesters: September to December, January to April, and May to August. Each Connection Group will decide which trimesters they will be active and which they won't. And at the end of each term, Connection Group members and leaders will be given the opportunity to decide whether they'd like to continue – or take a break!

This gives leaders and members easy on-ramps and off-ramps to decide how they'd like to engage with the Body of Christ at PBCC. This will also give potential leaders a chance to try leading a group without having to commit the rest of their lives to it!

But this isn't the only way this new initiative will support its leaders: Connection Group Leaders will receive at least two trainings per trimester, consisting of prayer, sharing, brainstorming, and teaching how to support our groups.

CONNECTION GROUPS

How do you
want to **connect**
at PBCC?



So, brothers and sisters, how do you want to connect at PBCC? What kind of Connection Groups would you like to see added to what we already have? Do you have an interest, a book, an activity, or even just a space in-person or online that you'd like to use as a connection point for "building up the Body of Christ"?

If you have an idea for a Connection Group, share it with me, with Shawn, and with the other pastors who will be helping me in my role as Pastor of Discipleship and Formation. Whether it's just a scribble on a napkin or a fully fleshed-out concept ready to go, share your ideas with us, and let's see how we can get connecting!

CONNECTIONS DAYS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 21st
WAYS TO CONNECT
SUNDAY, AUGUST 28th
WAYS TO SERVE



And let's do it soon – our first trimester is just around the corner! While we might have to save your idea for a future trimester, we'd like to get as many groups going as possible so we can give everyone a chance to sign up on the first of our two Connections Sundays at the end of this month.

Yes, you heard me correctly: At the end of this month, we will have two Connections Sundays; on the 21st, we will be focusing on Ways to Connect, offering sign-ups after service for all the Connection Groups that will be ready to go for the Fall; on the 28th, we will be presenting Ways to Serve, offering sign-ups for ministry teams.

That's what's coming later this month, and you'll hear more details about it next Sunday. But for now, would you join me in praying for this new initiative? I'd like to invite the praise team to return to the stage, and as they do, let's begin praying for our Connection Groups, for our current and future Connection Group Leaders, for new ideas to sprout and grow into new Connection Groups, and for discipleship and spiritual formation to thrive at PBCC. Let's ask God to not only continue the good work He's been doing here, but to expand it – and to use us to do it. Let's pray.