

Hi Everyone we are reading from Ephesians 4 and second Corinthians chapter 3 and we're in our 6th message of our vision.

This week I'm going to talk about being equipped. We've been using our vision statement to talk about God's vision for our life together as the body of Christ.

Now. I want us to say our vision statement. It will be up on the screen.

I'm asking you to memorize it so whenever someone asks what your church's vision /goal is you can say it.

So let's say our vision statement together.

Are you ready? Okay. **Growing communities of people saved, healed, set free, disciplined, equipped, empowered, and serving.**

This week is about equipped.

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 8.

It says Therefore He says: **“when he ascended on high, He led captivity captive and Jesus gave gifts to men.”** and then look at *verse 11*.

These are the gifts he gave, **“and he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,** now why did he do this?
verse 12 **for the equipping of the Saints?**

Why did the Saints need to be equipped **“for the work of the ministry,**

Why do we need to do the work of the ministry **“for the strengthening or the building up of the body of Christ,**

Now I want you to notice that it says Jesus himself gave these gifts. Now. We believe in all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but these are not gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They get lumped in with the gifts of the Holy Spirit the gifts of the Holy Spirit most people put them in four categories, but they're actually three.

Because these are not gifts of the Holy Spirit, the three categories of the Holy Spirit gifts are the manifestational gifts, the ministry gifts and the motivational gifts. You find in Romans 12 and First Corinthians 12 the beginning of the chapter and the end of the chapter, but Ephesians 4 tells us of the gifts of Jesus, Jesus gave gifts.

It doesn't say that he gave the gift of an apostle to *some* people. Here's what it says. It says he gave apostles. He gave prophets he gave pastors, evangelists, teachers. Okay. Listen to me.

I know this sounds a little weird, but I just want to just kind of get us thinking a little bit differently.

Listen. I am a gift to you from Jesus. I'm your minister. You can't return me either. I don't just have gifts. I am a gift.

I'm a gift, but listen. I'm not that important you, need to understand that. There is a word in verse 11 that is actually repeated or spoken four times in that verse and we miss this word and for him to say it four times. We need to catch it.

Do you see the word that's in there four times some. He gave some, apostles, some prophets, some evangelists do you know why some ? because we don't need that many.

The apostles prophets evangelists pastors teachers aren't as important as the other mention in verse 12.

We talk a lot about the fivefold, you heard of the fivefold offices the fivefold gifts.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and here's the **most important one Saints.**

Because I want you to notice that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, don't do the work of the ministry, as, an apostle or Prophet. As a minister/pastor I equip you to do the work of the ministry.

Now, that doesn't mean that I don't do the work of the ministry. I lead people to the Lord to, I pray for people. I do the work of the ministry. But I do that as a saint.

I'm a saint, so Saints do the work of the ministry, but as the minister/pastor I equip you to do the work of the ministry, so we need to be equipped.

So, how can I be equipped? Three things?

Here's number one **be available**. Be available and listen carefully. You probably heard this little phrase, but it's so true and it's very important.

God doesn't need people of ability. He needs **people of availability**.

He needs us and you know why? It's really simple, because God has all the ability in the world.

God has all ability. So he doesn't need someone with ability.

He just needs someone with *availability* and he will take care of the ability.

Listen, it's the water that that nourishes people. Not the Tap. It's the water. Jesus is the one.

You don't have to have ability, don't have to look at me or someone else and say I don't have that ability.

That's okay.

You just have to be available.

Listen to this scripture second. 2 Timothy Chapter 2: 2 says: "**And the things**", this is Paul an older Apostle speaking to a younger evangelist.

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, now hear this "commit these to faithful " notice the word faithful men "who will be able" notice the word *able*, "who will be able to teach others also." He said when you're looking for people, I want you to find *faithful* people. Who will be **able**.

He's where the church often gets it backwards. When we're looking for people - to put in leadership positions - many times we look for **able** people. People who have *ability* and we hope they will be *faithful*.

Here's what God said, find me a faithful person and I will make him **able**. I can take care of the rest.

You just find someone special and by the way, a faithful person is not a perfect person that's very important to understand as matter of fact, here's what the Lord says about righteous or faithful people.

Proverbs. 24:16 says "for though a righteous man falls seven times he rises again."

It doesn't say a righteous man never falls, that would be a perfect man, and there was only one perfect man. And there will always only be one.

But when we fall, see faithfulness is not described by never falling. Faithfulness is described by when we fall, we get up again.

So back to Ephesians 4 and look at verse 14 here is why we should be equipped.

Here's why we should be available, to be equipped, verse 14, "**that we should no longer be children,**" we have a lot of immature Believers in the body of Christ, because they've never been equipped. "**tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head of Christ** –

Here is something very simple, the reason we've not grown up in Him, we have not grown up in love. We don't speak the truth in love and were carried about by every wind of doctrine, is we've never made ourselves available to be equipped.

Well Tony, you might say, I'm just too busy to go to a home group or a class. I'll just remain an immature Christian.

That's what this is saying. We need to be equipped. I'm not saying that the home groups or classes are the only way, but it's one of our ways to do it.

Alright, so number one is to be **available**.

Here's number two, **to be a servant**. Be a servant.

I want to show you a position that in the kingdom is higher than an apostle. People tend to think many times that an apostle is the highest gift the highest position. It's not the highest.

Romans 1 says verse 1 **Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle,**

Philippians 1:1 Paul, and Timothy *servants* of Christ Jesus.

James 1:1 James a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ and

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter a *servant* and Apostle of Jesus Christ.

All of them put servant first, every one of them every one and when they start their letter that is going to be canonized in the scripture.

They started by saying let me give you my qualifications for writing this scripture to the body of Christ, writing this this letter to the body of Christ. *I'm a servant*. Now I'm also an apostle but mainly *I'm a servant* I want you know, this is so important. For in the past we have had battles because of not getting this. This is what Jesus kept trying to get in the disciples. They could not get this.

Remember they're walking along the road here. I'll read it to you **Mark chapter 9 verse 33, Then he came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house, He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" but they kept silent, for on the road They had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.**

verse 35,

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

And in Matthew when he says this he said listen to me. I did not come to be served. I came to serve.

And if you want to be great in the kingdom, and there's nothing wrong with wanting to be great in the Kingdom.

If you want to be great in the Kingdom, you become the servant of all.

Now something about being a servant, you may serve somewhere that is not your ultimate place of service. You may serve somewhere that is not your ultimate place of gifting.

In one of my books a church had a policy that if you had a child or children in an age class on Sunday, you had to work once a month in there. Or if you enjoyed the food and drinks afterwards that you could put your hand up to help serve, provide hospitality.

When I was an apprentice I got the jobs of sweeping the floors and making the drinks and cleaning the dishes when I wanted to do all the good things.

Have you ever served somewhere? And you said that's not my gift.

That's not my gift.

Look at verse Ephesians 4:16. **from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, notice the word *joint*, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the strengthening of itself in love.**

This is very important.

The body grows because every part does its share.

Here's a really simple question. Are you doing your share?

That's really simple, are you doing your share?

Because that's how the body's going to grow, and I'm not saying just numerically that's how we're going to grow spiritually.

So by every part shares and by what every joint supplies.

What's a joint? a joint is where two parts come together.

The best way you could help the body of Christ is not do your own thing, but join with someone else and let a joint form, and the joint then nourishes the body.

It's kind of like an engine in a car, have you ever thought about this, if the engine had not joined itself to the drive-shaft, obviously, we know a mechanic or a robot has done that, but if they hadn't come together the car would not move. Now think about this, the engine and all its parts working to make everything around it to move forward.

They're all important.

But you know what the Bible tells us in First Corinthians 12 the members that you can't see, are the most important parts of the body?

So everybody on the weekends. They see me.

I hope you realize I'm not the most important part of St Francis Church, and St Andrews. It's the ones that are teaching our children. And teaching the next generation about God.

Or the person who gets things ready for you so you can enjoy their songs.

It's the ones that you can't see and if you think about the car it would be the engine under the hood that would be the most important.

And what if a engine under the hood thinks of himself, you know, I can't see what's happening out there and where we're going. And those guys up there make all the decisions and they never tell me and they never asked me anything. This is just, this is just not my place. So he kind of jumps out, and then he jumps up on the roof and just enjoys what he can see. Now this is my place. I can see so much better. You know, all I ever saw hidden down there was asphalt and this is great, you know.

And the bodywork looks down and the tires look and they see they are not moving. And they look about and see the engine sitting on the roof and they say well, what are you doing?

The engine says all of you didn't appreciate me.

Well, our response should be, well maybe we didn't tell you we appreciated you, but we appreciate you and if you don't get back in place. We're all going nowhere.

You realize that when the children of Israel going in the wilderness that one person Miriam got out of place and it stopped them completely, stopped everybody.

See we're a body. A leg can't just go this way and an arm that way, we have to move together.

So, be a servant find somewhere to serve and get in that place.

And here's number three **be a minister.**

Be a minister now look at 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

Look at verse 5 & 6 **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant,** he made us sufficient as Ministers of the New Covenant.

v.6 -The New International Version says, he has made us competent as Ministers of a New Covenant.

v.6 -The New Living Translation says he is the one who has enabled us to represent his new covenant.

v.6 -The Message version says His letter authorizes us to help carry out this new plan of action.

Do you know a phrase that I think we misunderstand in the body of Christ? "full-time Ministry"

You see I'm in vocational Ministry.

But I hope you are in full-time Ministry.

I hope during the day you are ready to minister and always give an answer of the hope that is in you.

I hope anytime someone is going through a difficulty that you're willing and able to say I want to pray for you. I you have to understand that as a vocational Ministry. My job is to not do ministry. My job is to equip you to do the ministry.

The way that the church is going to reach the world is that the Saints get equipped and began doing Ministry.

Have you ever thought about this? How does God Reach people in the medical industry how does he Reach people in the medical field? It's real, He takes full time ministers and disguises them as doctors and nurses. That's what He does, they're full-time ministers. That they do that as their vocation. I have a vocation, but they do that as their vocation, but they know they are there to minister to people. That's what they're there for.

How does God reach teachers he takes full time ministers and disguises them as teachers.

How does God reach neighbours? He takes full time ministers and disguises them as neighbours. That's what Saints do. Who have been equipped?

And you might say well, I'd love to do all that stuff. Listen, you might say I'd love to do all that stuff, but I don't know how. That's why the need to be equipped. Get into a home group, start one, get a mentor.

Jesus not only want's you saved, healed, set free, and discipled. He want's you equipped to do the work of the ministry.

Let's pause and close your eyes. What's the Holy Spirit saying to you? -----

What's the Holy Spirit saying to you, and when I really I ask this, I want to ask you for two responses, one is what's the Holy Spirit saying to you? Through the words that I brought at the beginning of the message.

How he would want you to step out in faith because it's to our advantage.

I believe God wants to bless us and protect us during this time.

And I believe that it's going to take a step of faith on our part. But also what is God saying to you about being equipped? About growing up in love.

So you're not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that comes through. What's the Lord saying to you? Amen.