

Ephesians 4:7-13 Fostering a Leadership Factory

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Preacher: Dov

[0 : 00] Well, church, please take your seats. For the benefit of our guests, my name is Dov Cohen.

! I'm a pastor here at Providence, and I have the privilege to open up God's Word for us this morning. Today we're going to be looking at Ephesians 4, 7-13, as we continue our series in Ephesians, as we continue exploring Ephesians 4, as we turn the page last week from the indicatives of Ephesians, who God is, what He is doing, what He has done, what He will do, to the imperatives of Ephesians, how God has called us to live.

So we're in Ephesians 4, 7-13, and the title of today's message is Fostering a Leadership Factory. Fostering a Leadership Factory.

The main idea being that in Christ's church, every believer is gifted, every leader equips, and together we build up Christ's church to maturity.

I'll say it again. In Christ's church, every believer is gifted, every leader equips, and together we build up Christ's church to maturity. Now, factories are glorious places.

[1 : 28] Track to me here. For the past six years, I've had the privilege to work in four different factories, a few here in Kansas City, one out in Los Angeles, driving the continuous improvement of each of these factories.

And for me, it's been a learning experience. You know, I previously came from corporate environments, so it's been stretching and growing to work in these factories.

And yet, while factories are loud and complex environments, I've come to really appreciate them. Because factories are where value is produced.

Think about it. Raw materials come in one door, and then through intelligently engineered, intentional processes, something stronger, something more useful, something more mature, comes out the other side.

And here's what surprised me most about working in factories. Yeah, the machinery is super important. You need to have good machinery working.

[2 : 35] But the true strength of a factory is in its people. It's in its people. If you don't train and develop and equip the people on the floor, despite its great machinery, the plant will never reach its full potential.

Healthy factories don't just produce products. They mature people. They produce leaders. They discover potential.

They develop skill. And they deploy people with increasing responsibility. Now, the church is not a business.

The church is not a corporation. It is far more glorious than that. The church is the body of Christ, the pillar and buttress of the truth, the bride of Christ, the household of God.

But according to Ephesians 4, Christ intends the church to also be a place of intentional formation, a place where gifts of serving grace have been distributed, where saints are equipped, where every member is positioned to build up the body.

[4 : 05] And in that sense, the church is meant to be a leadership factory. not in a corporate sense, not in a worldly ladder-climbing sense, but in a Christ-exalting, body-building, maturity-producing sense.

And that's exactly what Paul is describing in Ephesians 4, 7-13. Today, we're going to be discussing how our church, how Providence, has adopted the mindset of being a leadership factory.

And how leaders of this church are dedicated, the leaders of this church are dedicated to stewarding the gifts that Christ has given to each of us for the sake of raising up more leaders.

And when I say leaders, I don't mean turning everyone into a pastor or an elder. I mean forming servants who influence others, their families, their community groups, even the church at large, toward Christ-like maturity.

That's a leader. A leader is someone who influences others toward Christ-like maturity. So today, we're going to be exploring Ephesians 4, 7-13, and observing some truths.

[5 : 33] Truths like that serving grace has been given to each one of us. And this grace came at a great cost. We just sang about it. It came at the cost of Christ's life and death and resurrection.

And these gifts have come in varied forms, in diverse forms. And that the leaders of providence are called to steward this grace for the sake of providence's deepening maturity.

And ultimately, we're going to discuss specific practical ways we can live out these truths, specifically by discussing the discovery, development, and deploying of the gifts that Christ has distributed to our church.

Ultimately, we build up our body to the stature and fullness of Christ. That's not a small thing.

Now, this might be challenging for some of us to hear. Maybe we've been hurt by a selfish, selfishly ambitious leader. Maybe we feel like our gifts have been overlooked or underdeveloped, even at our church.

[6 : 54] Or maybe we just never thought of stewarding and stretching our gifts for the glory of God and the good of others. Well, I hope to be especially useful through this sermon in addressing these challenges and helping us to push past those things and really to steward the grace that's been given to all of us.

My prayer for this morning is that we'd all grow in gratitude and godly ambition by interacting with this text. Gratitude that God has given us gifts to use in the church as well as leaders.

God's given leaders to help us to discover and develop and to deploy those gifts. and I want us to grow in godly ambition that we would aim to use those gifts in the right ways and for the right reasons.

Ultimately, I just pray that God be honored and that we all be built up through this sermon. So let's dig in. When we read Ephesians 4, 7 to 13, you can open your Bibles or scroll on your phone.

Let's look at it together. Let's look at it together. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

[8 : 16] Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men. In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions, the earth?

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ 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.

Dear God, would you, holy God, would you bless the preaching of your word? All right.

Now, like I like to do after reading the passage, let's look at the context of Ephesians 4, 7 to 13.

Let's explore the context first, see where we're at in Ephesians.

So last week, like I mentioned earlier, we saw how Ephesians 4 is a turning point in the letter of Ephesians. It's moving from the indicatives of the gospel, the what God has done, what he is doing, what he will do, to the imperatives of the gospel, the commands of the gospel, the responsibilities we have as called ones, blessed ones, members of Christ's body.

[10 : 02] And we saw last week that our primary responsibility in walking in a manner worthy of the calling that we received in Christ is to maintain the unity that Christ died to produce in us.

We're going to be humble to one another, gentle, patient, and forbearing with each other. And in that, we will display a beautiful picture of unity for God's pleasure and for the watching world. So that's the context for today's passage. Let's consider, what is this passage saying? So a few observations. First, check out verse 7.

Look at verse 7. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Now, yes, grace was given to each one of us in the sense that we are all saved by God's grace.

But that's not the grace that Paul is referring to here. Rather, Paul is saying that every member of the church has been given grace for service, a gift for serving within the church.

[11 : 27] Truly, saving grace brings us into the body. Serving grace helps us to build up the body.

Saving grace brings us into the body. Serving grace helps us to build up the body. And every person's gift, every person's serving grace was determined by Christ according to the measure of his gift.

Think back to the factory metaphor. From the beginning of the sermon. When a new employee walks into the factory on day one, something very important happens.

They are not handed a visitor's badge. Instead, they are equipped for service. They're given training, they're assigned to a station, they're given responsibility that affects the production of the entire facility.

factory. No healthy factory hires people just to stand around and watch the production. In verse seven, likewise, Paul is saying when Christ brought you into the church, he didn't give you a spectator badge.

[12:48] No, he gave you an assignment. literally, he has good works, plan for you to walk in, determined before the foundation of the world.

And to help you do them, he's given us serving grace. not randomly, not accidentally, but because Christ, the head of the church, intentionally determined that you would fill a vital role in the church. You are truly not extra in the church. You've been gifted talents to serve, and if you're a member here of Providence, the leaders here of Providence want to help you to discover, and develop, and to deploy the gifts that you've been given, so that we can all help to deepen the church's maturity. Think about Galatians 5, where Paul writes, For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I'm going to come back to two specific examples of this in our church later in the sermon.

[14:15] But for now, continuing on in the passage, let's notice that these gifts, they came at a great cost. They were earned for us by Christ.

Check out verses 8 through 10. Look at verses 8 through 10. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.

And saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

He passed it. What in the world is Paul saying here? This is not an easy passage. But I think there is clear meaning that we can derive from this.

Essentially, what Paul is saying is that Jesus descended from the highest heavens to take on flesh and come to earth where he suffered, died, and was buried, where he also defeated death and rose again, then ascending to the highest heavens at the right hand of the Father.

[15:25] that first line, verse 8, is a reference and adaptation of Psalm 68. So if you were to turn to Psalm 68, you'd see something very similar. And in quoting that, throughout this whole section, essentially Paul is saying that these gifts that Christ has given to his church, they are precious gifts.

They are given from the hand of Christ, and they were earned by Christ's life, and death, and resurrection. Therefore, we should treasure these gifts, but not treasure them by putting them in a display case, and just looking at them and admiring these gifts once in a while, but truly treasure them by using these gifts.

Ultimately, so God would get glory, and we could increase the joy we all experience in God by boasting that we boast in Jesus in our church.

All right, third observation. The Christ has given diverse gifts. Check out verse 11. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers.

Now, without digging into the meaning and significance of these gifts that are listed, I just want to highlight how they are diverse gifts. Jesus is given a variety of gifts, all with a particular role and purpose.

[17:04] And in this diversity of gifts, we are to display a beautiful unity. Unity in diversity. All these various gifts work to accomplish the same glorious end.

end. And what is this end? Well, it's seen in verses 12 to 13. To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

To mature manner to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. the end is that the saints may be equipped for the work of ministry, that the body of Christ might be built up, that we attain the

unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, of Jesus Christ.

And notice what Paul doesn't say. He doesn't say that Christ gave leaders to do all the ministry. ministry.

He gave Christ leaders, it says that Christ gave leaders to equip the saints, plural, for the work of ministry. This is one of the most important texts in the Bible for understanding how the church is supposed to function.

[18 : 31] And I'm grateful that providence gets it. We get this. Because I see examples of this all over the place.

The fact that the pastors, the elders, they're not the only ministers in this church. Rather, if you are in Christ, you are both a recipient of ministry and a minister yourself.

You all, we all, are participants of ministry. think back to the factory metaphor. Think back to the factory metaphor.

In a manufacturing plant, the managers are not the ones who produce the product. Truly, the managers are vital for vision, for direction, for training, for developing their people.

But, a plant where the managers do all the work for the factory is a plant that will fail. A church that has a few select leaders that do ministry for people will never be as fruitful as a church that is leveraging and built up all the members of the church so that we are all members doing ministry together.

[20 : 00] together. And we do this ultimately, we might be mature believers to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ.

Now, note, not everyone will hold the same roles. Not everyone will have the same visibility. But everyone is called to mature, to serve, and to build others up.

That's what leadership is, to mature, and to build others up. And the leaders, the pastors, the elders of this church, are called to envision and equip and position all our members so that we can all serve each other to the fullest extent possible.

What a privilege. What a responsibility, and what an opportunity. Christ has given us all gifts. by his grace through his life and death and resurrection.

We might all build up the church to the stature and fullness of Christ. So here's the pattern. Christ gives grace.

[21 : 19] Leaders equip saints. Saints build up the body, and the body grows to maturity. Now, as application, I want to touch on the how.

How are we to make the most of the gifts that Christ has given us? Well, this passage is why we consider ourselves, Providence Community Church, to be a leadership factory.

Christ has given us gifts, all of us. And it's our job, all of our jobs, but especially the job of the pastors and elders and leaders of the church to discover and develop and deploy these gifts.

Through serving within the church, serving within our families, serving within our community, we have the privilege to discover and develop and deploy these gifts, and in particular, leadership gifts. Now, first, be aware that this is a whole-life pursuit. We don't just discover, develop, and deploy gifts by serving in the church.

[22 : 26] We do do that. We do discover our gifts by serving in the church. But praise God for the opportunity to discover our gifts within our families, and even in our workplaces.

Be that our workplaces inside the home or outside the home. May we look upon all of life as an opportunity to leverage and deploy the grace of service gifts in our lives.

Now, second, note that as a church, we do want to steward well the gifts that Christ, from his pierced hands, has given to us.

we don't want to waste any. So when you see a gift in someone, even the smallest bud, the smallest green shoot of a gift in somebody, see it, celebrate it, call it out, bring it to their attention, that they may develop and deploy it.

and then, when you discover that you have a gift, consider how can you develop it and what context can you use it?

[23 : 45] Where can you use it to serve others and build others up? You can do this in small private ways ways, and you can do this in large public ways.

I'd encourage you to start in small private ways. For private victories generally precede public victories.

I'll say it again. Private victories generally precede public victories. develop gifts by serving. Serve quietly, serve humbly, serve for God's glory and your joy in the Lord.

And serve knowing that, as Peter wrote, humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so the proper time he may exalt you. And finally, as you discover and develop the gifts that Christ has given to you by using them in small private ways, consider mentioning them to others.

It can still be humble and have godly ambition. Just want to recognize that you have gifts and you can mention them to others, humbly, but with godly ambition.

[25 : 07] You can say to people, God, I think I have a gift here. In community group or even to your husband or wife. You can say, I think I have a gift here. How can I use it? Take the initiative to take out a friend or talk to a spouse or talk to a community group leader or take out an elder for coffee or whatever and mention that you think you might have a gift that you want to use to serve others and build others up.

Your friends or your spouse or the elders here, will give you perspective. They'll help you to think through how can you deploy your gift and use your gift and serve others with your gift.

Ultimately, and all for God's glory and the maturing of our church. And in that, you will help Providence to become a leadership factory.

Now, Providence, we especially had the privilege of watching a couple guys, Noah Maher, Noah Larson, emerge over the years as leaders within our church. And I want to show them and use them, maybe to their embarrassment, as patterns.

These guys have discovered, developed, and deployed those gifts. These guys have served quietly. Like I mentioned, they served quietly and humbly for years. And we've benefited from their service, from them using their gifts.

[26 : 43] Look at the sanctuary. It, in many ways, is an evidence of them using their gifts, and not just knowing how to lay down flooring or cut ceiling tiles, but how to engage and lead and leverage the gifts of others.

And we are blessed and grateful for these men, and I've got to say, their wives, too, who support them and free them up for hours to serve within our church.

Truly, even their wives are serving our church when they free up their husbands to serve in the church. And the thing I want to highlight the most about them, and again, use them as a pattern for other aspiring leaders is to highlight the fact that they served quietly in the church for years before receiving any kind of official title.

They serve within various contexts, their families, their community groups, their workplaces, and yes, the church at large. In the Bible, a leadership title is never conferred to create faithfulness.

It is recognized because faithfulness and using one's gifts already exists. Let me say it again. In the Bible, a leadership title is never given to create faithfulness.

[28 : 16] It is recognized because faithfulness and using one's gifts already exists. God, I'll say it another way, God doesn't give titles to grow leaders.

He grows leaders and then gives titles. Consider how Jesus himself, Jesus himself built up and set apart the apostles.

Jesus first calls them as disciples in John 1, Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 5. And then before ever naming them as apostles, Jesus already had them serving.

Traveling with him, assisting his ministry, baptizing new disciples, and bearing responsibility in public spaces. So we here at Providence, we want to follow Christ and his way of building up leaders.

We want to discover, develop, and deploy individuals to serve in small, faithful ways, testing, and refining, and challenging, and ultimately discerning how the Lord may want to use us, again, for his glory and our good.

[29 : 31] And in doing that, we believe that the Lord will make all of us, our ambition, all of our ambition, is to be an increasing blessing to our families, to our community groups, to our workplaces, all the context of life, and ultimately to the church at large, to friends, to wrap things up.

We are so blessed to have so much serving grace in this church. I mean, if you were at the in-service a couple weeks back, and we're going to have another one in a month and a half or so, a lot of people serving using the gifts that they have to build up the body and mature our body to the stature and fullness of Christ.

And, like in a healthy manufacturing plant, the leaders, the pastors, the elders, here in Providence, we want to steward well the grace Christ has given us, we would all be equipped to do the work of ministry for the building up of his body.

So let's remember, Christ has given gifts. Christ came to earth, lived, died, and rose to give these gifts.

They are precious. And these gifts are diverse and varied. But these gifts are also ultimately for the building up of the body, that we may as a body attain to the unity of the faith, to the measure and the stature of the fullness of Christ.

[31 : 16] Friends, where is God inviting you to take a small step of service and using your gifts for the glory of God?

Ultimately, so we can all be part of maturing our church body, of building up our leadership factory, Providence Community Church, for God's glory and our joy.

God's Let's pray. Dear God, let all the peoples praise you.

Let all the nations praise you. Lord, we thank you that you have saved us. We thank you that you have given us gifts so we could serve you and build up your body.

Lord, thank you that you took on flesh, died, rose from the grave so we could know you, so we could boast in you, and ultimately so we could serve you.

[32 : 37] so Lord, please envision us. Help us to see the gifts that you've given to us so that we can display you more in this community, in our families, in our community groups, in our church, and in Lenexa and beyond.

For your glory, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right, so as we think about communion this morning, let's reflect on the ultimate leader.

Let's reflect on Jesus. He was the one who came to serve by teaching others how they could care for his people, by equipping others to care for his people, and by calling others, by summoning others to care for and build up his people.

He's the one who came to do that. before Christ ever equipped the saints, he gave himself for the saints.

He gave himself for us. As the great example of leadership and service and sacrifice, and ultimately as the effectual atoning sacrifice.

[34 : 02] Jesus gave his life, his body, his blood, as an atoning sacrifice, for his loved one's salvation. Ultimately, so he could give not only gifts of serving grace, but so that he could give saving grace.

God, that he will be saved. In all our service, in all our leadership, and the privilege it is to have and use the gifts that Christ has given us, may we never lose amazement, true puzzlement, may we be baffled that our names are written in the book of life, that we're saved, that we know God, that our sins are forgiven, washed and cleansed white as snow, and that we are adopted, sons and daughters, of the God of the universe, our Father.

God of God. So let's come to the table today, renewed in our grateful humility before Christ, and renewed in our godly ambition to bring God glory by building up his people, and renewed in our assurance of Christ's love, of Christ's affection for us.

Because we see particularly at the cross that Christ gave himself, his life, so that we could be saved.

So come to the table today, celebrating Christ in your hearts, for truly all grace, all grace is from him, and through him, and to him.

[35 : 58] Come to the table. Amen. God of God of Thank you.