

What Is the Church Meant to Be?

by Mark Emery

Part 6: The Church Builds One Another Up

Thank you for continuing this inquiry with me into what Scripture says the Church is meant to be. I'm always open to and interested in your insights, gifts, and special perspectives. Your importance to the Body of Christ and your particular take on things might start an important conversation that leads to real change.

So far, we have seen the Church as a living **body**, a people called to **action**, a life marked by **freedom**, a faith that produces **fruit**, and a community built on meaningful **fellowship**.

This leads us to another important question:

How does the Church grow and become strong?

Is growth something that comes from one direction, or is it something shared among the whole body?

Once again, Scripture gives us a clear picture.

In **Ephesians 4:11–13**, Paul writes:

“And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”

Notice the purpose of these roles.

They are not given so that a few would do all the work, while others simply receive.

They are given to *equip the saints*.

In other words, the goal is not a small number of active participants, but a fully engaged body.

And as Paul continues in **Ephesians 4:15–16**:

“Speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

That phrase is important:

the proper working of each individual part.

Growth happens when each person is involved. Involvement need not be complex. After all, consider that skeletal muscles contract in one direction. It is when these fairly simple muscles work in coordination with others that we see the complexity of the Olympic figure skater, or our favorite baseball pitcher.

Each voice matters.

Each gift matters.

Each act of faithfulness matters.

We see this same principle in **1 Corinthians 14:26**:

“Whenever you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything is to be done for building up.”

There is a shared participation here.

That's what makes the choir such a beautiful reflection of the Body of Christ. It's not one voice alone, but many voices contributing to the strengthening of the whole.

And Paul echoes this again in **Colossians 3:16**:

“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Notice two key words here: *one another*.

Also notice that teaching is not absent—but it is not isolated.

Encouragement, correction, wisdom, and truth are meant to flow throughout the body.

This does not diminish the importance of leadership or teaching.

It rightly places it.

Yes, teaching is part of equipping the saints.

But the goal is a mature, active body—not dependent listeners.

A Church shaped by this understanding begins to take on a different look.

It becomes a place where:

- people are equipped, not just instructed
- voices are valued, not silenced
- growth is shared, not centralized
- the body strengthens itself in love

This kind of Church is not chaotic—it is alive.

It is ordered, but not rigid.

It is led, but not limited to one direction.

And in this kind of environment, people can really grow—not only in knowledge, but in confidence, purpose, and faith.

Takeaway:

The Church is built up as each member plays their part. From the souls of the feet to the tips of fingers to the top of the head, every part is essential and *belongs* to the rest in such a special way. The body is meant to have one one focus—Christ, the Head. But, ministry is not meant to flow in only one direction—it flows through the whole body as we teach, encourage, and strengthen one another in Christ.

Questions to ponder:

Have I felt welcome to contribute to the building up of the Church, or more encouraged to be a loyal spectator?

What gifts, insights, or encouragement might God be calling me to share with others?

Am I open to being both taught *and* used by God to help strengthen someone else?

How do I care for my own body, and how might that translate to this metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ?

Coming next...

◆ **PART 7 — The Church Goes Outward**