

Ephesians 4:7–13 | “Gift Wrapped Grace”
Preached on August 10, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians 4, and we will be in verses 7–13, so Ephesians 4:7–13 today. *[pauseeee]*

This morning, we are going to learn about some of the gifts that Christ has given to us. *[pause]*

Have you ever known a great gift giver? Or maybe *you* are that great gift giver. *[pause]*

A great gift giver is someone who knows exactly what you need or want and gives it to you as a present. *[pause]*

Their gifts continually delight you time and time again with how they just intuitively know what you would like.

Their gifts please and make you happy every time. *[pauseeee]*

Also, a great gift giver gives gifts that have meaning and significance. *[pause]*

You can tell that they put thought into the gift—it is no slapdash, last-minute, hurried purchase, but one that took time and thought. *[pauseeee]*

And a great gift giver gives gifts normally right on time. *[pause]*

They do not miss your birthday or Christmas, but they also give that gift at that moment when you were down and needed to be uplifted.

It came right at the time that you needed it. *[pauseeee]*

We all like great gift givers, and would all love to be great gift givers, but this morning we will learn about the greatest gift giver: Jesus. *[pause]*

His gifts are just what we need, they have utmost importance, and they come right when we need them. *[pause]*

Let's READ the passage this morning, and be on the lookout for the words 'gave' or 'given'. *[READ 7–13]*

At the beginning of Ephesians 4, Paul called us to live in a manner worthy of our calling, and explained what that looks like...

It looks like humility, gentleness, patience, love, and unity. *[pause]*

He then went on to expound on how we can have unity, for we are one in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Now all of that “oneness” can bring up a question: “Does this oneness mean that there is no diversity among us at all? Like, are we all just supposed to look like and function like clones?”
[pause]

Actually, no. There is unity in the church, but that doesn’t mean uniformity in every single way.
[pauseeee]

We are called to the same core beliefs, the same faith, to follow the same Lord, but amidst that unity, there is great diversity in gifts.

For after mentioning all of the things where we find our “oneness,” Paul says, “*but* grace was given to each one of us.” [pauseee]

Though we are one in Christ, that doesn’t mean that we have identical roles and giftings in the church.

And actually, that diversity works beautifully and beneficially in the church. [pauseeeee]

My wife, Kate, told me about this cooking book that she’s been reading which explains how good-tasting food works. [pause]

Food tastes better when you have these different flavors that bring out or balance each other.

So something salty can balance out something that is bitter, and things like that. [pauseeee]

So also, our diversity of gifts work together to make something beautiful, as we are one in Christ.

Therefore, as we seek to maintain unity in the church, we must remember that we all have different gifts to use for the good of the church. [pauseeee]

It’s these gifts of grace that Paul points out first, and so point #1 is...

I. The grace of spiritual gifts.

Paul says in verse 7, “But *grace* was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” [pause]

What we hear is that grace was given, and concretely, what Paul means is the spiritual gifts that we have been given.

That’s why when he quotes the Old Testament passage in verse 8, it says about giving *gifts* to men. [pauseeee]

To give a gift to someone is to give them grace, so the spiritual gifts that we have received from the Lord are gifts of grace! [pauseeee]

Now what are spiritual gifts?

There are many listed throughout the Bible, but here are some of them...

Service, teaching, discernment, helping, contributing, leadership, and acts of mercy.¹ *[pause]*

Peter gives two categories for spiritual gifts that give us a helpful summary, as he talks about speaking gifts and serving gifts.² *[pause]*

So God gives some people the gifting to encourage or exhort well with His truth, and He gives others more hands-on gifting of acts of mercy, serving behind-the-scenes, organizing things, etc. *[pauseeee]*

So those are some of the gifts, but what is the purpose of these gifts? *[pause]*

They are used for the common good to serve one another and so build up the church.³

Therefore, these spiritual gifts aren't to be used to promote yourself and your glory or to flaunt.

But on the other hand, these gifts aren't meant to sit idle and not be used, either. *[pause]*

We are to *use them*, knowing they are used for the good of others, but also, knowing that God has given them to us by grace. *[pauseeee]*

Do you see the spiritual gift that God has given to you as a *gift of grace*? *[pause]*

To ignore or neglect your spiritual gift is to ignore God's grace shown to you.

It's like to receive an amazing gift and then never open it, nor use it. *[pauseeee]*

Some of you aren't stepping up and using the gift of grace that God has given to you—it's sitting idle in your life, but you need to use it! *[pause]*

Don't know what spiritual gift you have?

Pray about it, ask others what they see, get involved in ministry, and it will become more apparent. *[pauseeee]*

Spiritual gifts are grace given to us by Christ, and they are given *to each of us*. *[pause]*

Every believer has a spiritual gift, there are no exceptions, for Paul says, "grace was given to each one of us." *[pause]*

No one can be like a little kid, who says, "I didn't get anything!" when every other kid got something.

No, each of us receives at least one spiritual gift. *[pause]*

¹ These come from Romans 12:7–8 & 1 Corinthians 12:9–10, 28.

² 1 Peter 4:10–11.

³ See 1 Cor. 12:7, 1 Cor. 14:12, 1 Peter 4:10.

It may feel like you didn't get one, but that may be because you don't recognize it yet. *[pauseeee]*

Some of you are gifted with acts of mercy, for when someone is in need, your heart breaks for them, and you can't help but think of ways to help them. *[pause]*

Some of you have a spiritual gift of generosity, where you give generously above and beyond—it's like generosity just flows out of you. *[pause]*

Others of you are encouragers, you come alongside others and encourage them through calls, visits, cards, and words. *[pause]*

Still others of you are hands-on servers, who just love doing the behind-the-scenes service that no one even sees or knows about...

You set up tables, fix things, cook meals, and help in many different areas. *[pause]*

Some are organizers, leaders, teachers, and more.

We are all given gifts, and these gifts have been apportioned out by Christ Himself! *[pauseeee]*

Paul says that we were given gifts, "according to the measure of Christ's gift." *[pause]*

In His infinite wisdom, Christ has measured out the gift (or gifts) that we are to receive.

So we each have a role to play—a gift to use! *[pauseeee]*

We are not to be jealous of someone else's gift, nor upset over the gift that we received, for Christ has portioned out gifts exactly as He wants.

And don't you think that He knows perfectly what each person should have? *[pause]*

So let's not be jealous or upset—let's be grateful to our Lord!

Let's cherish, value, and use the gift or gifts that Christ has given to us. *[pauseeee]*

After explaining that Christ has given to each of us the grace of spiritual gifts, Paul quotes an Old Testament verse to back it up. *[pause]*

He quotes from Psalm 68, which is about the triumphal victory of the Lord, who defeats His enemies and saves His people.

And so the question is—why is Paul quoting it? *[pause]*

He's showing us that Jesus fulfills that psalm, securing victory for His people and defeating their enemies. *[pause]*

He quotes the verse as saying, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." *[pause]*

So Christ died, rose again, and ascended on high conquering sin, death, and Satan, and then once He ascended on high, He bestowed the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit upon His people. *[pause]*

He ascended and then gave gifts to men!

This shows us that spiritual gifts are really the result of Christ's victory and ascension on high. *[pauseeee]*

Our spiritual gifts are the results of the victory of Jesus—they are evidence that we are on the side of victory! *[pause]*

Jesus in His exaltation doesn't hoard everything for Himself, but dishes out the goods upon His followers.

Like the Israelites, who plundered the Egyptians, as they were redeemed,⁴ so we were given so much by Christ, as He set us free through His redemptive work. *[pauseeeee]*

To think that He who ascended, first descended to us, is a wonder. *[pause]*

In humility and service, He descended to be God with us, and then in power and glory, He ascended on high.

And He did this in order to fill all things. *[pause]*

His rule now extends over all, He is in all of us through the Spirit, and gives us the spiritual gifting that we need. *[pauseeeee]*

Since we serve and follow this Christ, who triumphed, don't you think He's able to give us what we need to serve Him in this world? *[pauseeee]*

We have been given grace by Christ through the spiritual gifts that He has given to us. *[pause]*

If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't be able to do the work of ministry, and it all goes back to grace—we need Jesus Christ's gifting to do anything. *[pause]*

Generally, we need His gifts of life, health, and brains to function in life.

But then specifically, we need His spiritual gifts and empowerment to function in the church. *[pause]*

We are utterly reliant upon our grace-giving Savior. *[pauseeeee]*

So we find the grace of spiritual gifts first, but what else do we see in this passage?...

II. The grace of leaders and teachers.

⁴ A reference to Exodus 12:35–36.

In the workplace, we sometimes say, “You are a gift to this company,” due to someone’s great work on behalf of the company. *[pause]*

Sometimes we say to someone we love, “You are a gift to me,” or we say that our children are precious gifts from God. *[pauseeee]*

Well how often do you view your church leaders and teachers as gifts from God?

For that’s really what Paul points out next, for some examples of gifts given to the church are mentioned as gifted people. *[pause]*

Notice what he says in verses 11–12...

“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.” *[pauseeee]*

So Christ has given the church its leaders and teachers as *gifts*. *[pause]*

This makes sense because leaders and teachers are so vital and important for a church.

As they often say, “As the leaders go, so the people go.” *[pause]*

Church leaders are vital to the health of a church, and we have seen examples of churches that have gone downhill because of bad leadership.

And that’s why one of Satan’s tactics is to attack church leadership. *[pause]*

He either tries to bring down church leaders in scandal, or he tries to introduce wolves into the leadership to bring it down. *[pauseeeee]*

So what is Paul making clear here?...

Christ sovereignly chooses, empowers, and gifts leaders and teachers to the church.

This is because the Lord always gives the church what it needs, and it needs good, solid leadership and teaching. *[pauseeee]*

What are these gifts to the church? “The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.” *[pauseeee]*

The apostles are those authoritative, early church leaders that saw the risen Christ and were commissioned by Him...

They are people like Peter, Paul, and others. *[pause]*

They helped set the foundation of the church, and we have their God-breathed writings today in the Scriptures. *[pauseeee]*

The prophets were likewise foundational men in the early church, who spoke a God-given, relevant message to the people. *[pauseeee]*

Earlier in Ephesians, Paul explained that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”⁵

So these were an early-on, foundational, but temporary group of men that helped set the foundation of the early church. *[pause]*

Before the Word of God was completed and compiled together, these men helped give revelation to the church. *[pause]*

Christ knew that the church needed these men, their writings, and leadership, so that it could flourish for years to come.

What a great gift giver the Lord is! *[pauseeee]*

We also find that Christ gave evangelists to the church. *[pause]*

These are people who proclaim the good news of Jesus to various places, usually traveling around to do so. *[pause]*

They are people like the missionaries of our day, who spread the gospel, and help start churches all over the place. *[pauseeee]*

Thank the Lord for evangelists, who endeavor to share the gospel all over the globe! *[pauseeee]*

The Lord also gave shepherds and teachers.

These are the pastors and teachers of our local churches. *[pause]*

A shepherd is really the same term as a pastor, so when you call me “Pastor Matt,” you are really calling me, “Shepherd Matt.” *[pauseee]*

Shepherds lead, feed, and protect the flock from danger, tending the flock of a specific location. *[pause]*

And then teachers could really be linked up with shepherds, as there’s a lot of overlap, but they are focused on teaching God’s Word accurately, so that people learn and grow. *[pauseeee]*

As you consider this list of gifted men given to the church, they are all leaders and teachers. *[pause]*

They help direct, guide, feed, and protect the flock. *[pause]*

They are all under one common authority: the Lord!

⁵ Ephesians 2:20.

And they all have one common message: the Word of God, and it's this Word that they use to equip the saints for the work of ministry. *[pauseeee]*

You see, Paul points out that these leaders and teachers are given *to equip* the saints for the work of ministry. *[pause]*

'To equip' here means that they supply believers with the necessary things that they need to do the work of ministry.

So they prepare, train, outfit, and furnish believers with everything needed to minister. *[pauseeee]*

That means that every believer is called to ministry, not just me. *[pauseeee]*

Commentator John Stott talks about going into a church one time, and on the front cover of the bulletin, he read the names of the ministers of the church. *[pause]*

Right after naming the people on staff, like we would expect, the next line said, "Ministers: the entire congregation."⁶ *[pause]*

That's really the case! Every saint is to be a minister! *[pause]*

You are all called to ministry—not full-time preaching and teaching—but ministry nonetheless. *[pauseeee]*

A big part of my role as your pastor is to equip you to do ministry—to train you and to give you the necessary tools to serve. *[pause]*

What that means is that I shouldn't do every single ministry, I should *equip you* to do the ministry. *[pauseeee]*

Now obviously, I also do the work of the ministry, but crucial to my role is equipping others. *[pause]*

Who should visit someone in the hospital? Isn't that only the pastor's job? *[pause]*

See, there's that thinking. *[pause]*

Of course, I can and I try to make it out to people in the hospital, but why can't other people as well?

That's ministry, isn't it! *[pause]*

Who is supposed to go and visit others from the church in their homes or have them over? The pastor, right? *[pause]*

⁶ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 167–168.

You should be doing that, as well as me. *[pause]*

It doesn't take a special position to do those two examples that I just gave.

Every person has a part in ministry, it involves *everyone*, for who is supposed to do the work of the ministry?

The saints, that is, every Christian. *[pauseeee]*

Do you see how important this point is?...

I must do my part of equipping and you must do your part of doing the work of ministry or else the church isn't being built up.

For in this passage, we see that the wonderful result of this set-up is that when the saints are equipped to do the work of ministry, then the church is built up. *[pause]*

It becomes strengthened and it grows, like a building being built. *[pauseeee]*

What's great is that we aren't at a loss at what it looks like for a church to be built up, for Paul tells us in verse 13...

It's when a church continually grows in "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." *[pause]*

So a church being built up is a church unified around the faith and the knowledge of Jesus.

Therefore, a sign of our church being built up is that we are more and more unified around the truth. *[pauseeeee]*

Certainly, disunity doesn't reflect a church being built up, but torn down! *[pause]*

A church that neglects Christ is not a church being built up, but a crumbling church that has turned away from its one true cornerstone. *[pauseeeee]*

Another indicator of a church being built up is that the church is reaching "mature manhood."

That is, the church is growing up and becoming more and more mature in the faith. *[pauseeee]*

Think of a person—they start out as young and immature, but as time goes on, they grow and mature...

They are now reaching full development of mind, body, strength, and wisdom, among other things. *[pause]*

They start acting more and more like they should.

So likewise, a church as it's built up matures to a fuller development of how they ought to act, think, speak, and live.

And what does that maturity look like? Christ. *[pause]*

Paul says that the church is built up, "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." *[pauseeee]*

So a church's maturity is measured by the standard of Christ.

Put another way: our maturity is in the shape of Christ! *[pauseeee]*

Think of Christ as this big outline of a person, and think of the church as starting out as a smaller outline within that Christ outline. *[pause]*

We start small, but then as the church grows and matures, it gets bigger and bigger, filling out that outline with the goal of matching that full outline of Christ. *[pause]*

So when a church matures, it looks more like Christ in His love, grace, mercy, kindness, righteousness, and many other things. *[pause]*

Our goal is Christlikeness, and if we are not looking more like Christ, then we are not maturing in the faith. *[pauseeee]*

Christ has graciously given the church leaders and teachers, who then equip the saints for ministry. *[pause]*

When the people are equipped and doing ministry, the church gets built up more and more to spiritual maturity. *[pauseeeee]*

Truly, we see in this passage that...

In grace, Christ has given the church what it needs to be built up!

After dying, rising, and ascending, Christ gave gifts to men. *[pause]*

In victory, He gave each one of us a spiritual gift or gifts.

Now we can each serve one another in love, and help build up the church. *[pauseeee]*

He also gave gifted church leaders and teachers for this purpose.

All so that the saints could be equipped, and then the saints could minister to one another, and the church be built up. *[pauseeee]*

Church, we have been given everything we need to minister, everything we need to be built up more. *[pauseeeee]*

So how should we respond? First, this should lead us to *thankfulness*. [pause]

We shouldn't ignore nor take it for granted everything that we have, but we should be grateful people. [pause]

Let's give thanks to Christ, who has given us all we need. [pauseeee]

Next, this also means that we should *follow God's blueprint* for ministry. [pause]

He has given us what we need to be built up, but also, this passage shows us how the church is built up...

It's built up when pastors and teachers equip, and then when those believers go out and minister, using the gifts and 'equipping' they have received. [pause]

That means that I must do my job of equipping, but you also must do your job of the work of ministry.

It's not going to work if one or the other of us neglects what we are called to do. [pauseeee]

And so that means thirdly, you must step up and use what Christ has given to you. [pauseeee]

Are you using the gift or gifts that Christ has given to you in the church? [pause]

Are you serving in any way? Are you involved in the work of the ministry?! [pauseeee]

We each have roles in the church and we each have gifts, but we must step up into our roles and use our gifts in ministry. [pause]

We are *never* called to be spectators, but participants, yet isn't it so easy to go into spectator mode?...

To just come, hear a sermon, and go home—week after week. [pause]

But what about participating? What about ministering? What about serving?

That's what God calls each of us to do. [pauseeee]

Our individualistic, consumer-driven culture pushes us to be bystanders, who merely watch and observe.

We go to a movie, concert, or show and don't have to do anything, but show up.

And so we come to church and expect it to be the same, but it's not the same, it never has been. [pauseeee]

We may even come and think, "I don't like that they do this," or, "I don't like that they don't have that."

But what about instead thinking, “How can I help? How can I volunteer to start that, or serve in some way?” *[pauseeee]*

You have an important part in the church. [pause]

When you function and serve as you should, you help the whole church body grow and function better.

So do you serve or spectate? [pauseeee]

God calls every one of us and involves every one of us in the work of the ministry.

And so we do so in great confidence and faith, knowing that—in grace—our ascended, exalted, and victorious Lord has given us everything we need. [pauseeee]

The great gift giver has given you a gift, but will you step up in faith and use it for His glory and the church’s good?