

United in Service (Eph 4:15-16)

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[0 : 00] Happy New Year again. Yeah, all right. Anyone know this guy? Arnold Schwarzenegger. I think he's kind of beyond your time. It was my time. And he was arguably the best body form in his time.

Well, I said, now we see a lot bigger, bulkier bodies around. But he was, at that time, an interesting fellow, right? Billy, you know him, eh?

Yeah, he doesn't know you, but you know. You heard of him, right? I mean, he became a famous actor. And he also became the governor of California.

Right? And now, you know, famous movie, The Terminator. Right? And now he's about in his 70s now. Even the best body was flat.

[1 : 02] You Google and have a look at his body right now. I mean, obviously, some good bodies around here. You know, some boys. Boys that you could train hard in gym. I won't ask Isaac or Ivan to take your shirts off and have a look.

You know, what is it like? Oh, Gary, you're not bad yourself, right? I was actually selling bodybuilding equipment when I was studying.

And yeah, I was selling barbells and stuff. And the owner said, you train yourself. Otherwise, if you don't look at it, people won't be convinced. You know, so I had a bit of training too as well.

It wasn't bad. Look at me now. By the way, did you know that one of our own pastors, Pastor Andrew, he was actually, I think it was the first or second runner-up of a bodybuilding contest in Hong Kong?

He was bulky. You should see the photos, right? Yeah. But I tell you what, God has a bodybuilding program too. Did you know?

[2 : 09] All right. Yeah. Yeah, he's going to build a church, the body. Right? That is what the passage we just read. And this is going to be better and it lasts forever.

It only gets better. It won't flap. And he allows you and me to participate in this bodybuilding program.

And how are we going to participate? Let's look at this passage. Now, this passage, Paul stressed that the church is submitted to her head, the body, right?

The head and we are the body. That is Christ. Jesus is the head. And each is connected as bodily parts to connect to one another for function and for growth.

And what does it mean for us today? I believe that PCBC, just like any churches that belongs to Jesus in this world, in our differences, we are different.

[3 : 19] All right? We have some Kiwis with us. And we have a married brother. All right? Even though we have an Indian friend. No, a brother now. Right? And even though we, majority of us are Chinese, but they are, you know what, Kiwi friends?

Not all Chinese are the same. Right? Taiwanese Chinese, very different to mainland Chinese. Very different to Hong Kong Chinese. And very different to local born Chinese.

Right? Right? In our differences, we are to live, to grow, and to serve together because we belong to him. We are his body.

So let's have a look at this passage. I want to share in four characteristics of this particular bodybuilding program.

And let us reflect. How are we doing ourselves? We have four 80s. Okay? Four 80s. What is 80? You Google it and you find out what is 80.

[4 : 25] Actually, it means some fabrics. All right? What are they made up of? What is this bodybuilding made up of? Four 80s. Non-conformity, maturity, diversity, and unity.

It's from the word. It's not from me. Well, glory to God. Okay. Let's have a look at that.

Non-conformity.

Right? The passage we just read, those two verses, right? Ephesians 4, 15 to 16. But we actually should read the whole chapter. Or in fact, we should have read the whole book of Ephesians in order to understand what Paul was saying.

But in verse 15, it says that speaking the truth in love. And he reminded the church.

He said the church actually belongs to Christ, who is the head. So what does it mean as a church?

[5 : 32] We speak the truth. We don't just speak. Actually, in Chinese, this translation can be very misleading. In Chinese, it says, We can misunderstand.

It means, oh, we speak honesty, but with love. No, we're not speaking honesty. We're speaking the truth. What is truth?

The gospel. Right? And actually, the grammar in itself, in this word, speaking the truth, it really means truthing.

Right? What does it mean? It means we speak, we do, we demonstrate truth. So it's not just speaking. What I speak to you, I believe, I'm convinced, I walk in truth.

So when you hear me, it's not just hearing my words. You look at me. Am I convinced? Am I being conformed or transformed by truth?

[6 : 40] So that, you know, church, we're not just an ordinary organization, which gather in some place, sometimes, and happens to be in Pekaranga.

We are unique. We are distinct. Not organization, but organism. Because we are a living body.

Right? And Paul says, because we all belong to Christ, who is the head. Now, in verse 1 to verse 16, he said quite a bit of stuff about the church.

He said, I am the prisoner for the Lord. He was in prison, yes. But he was not in prison because of what the wrong he has done for the sake of the gospel.

And he knows that he was called to be God's apostles, to spread the gospel to the Gentiles.

Gentiles. And he says that the church, with all the people called by God, it was one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one Father of all.

[7 : 53] And who's above all, through all, and in all. So all these marks the difference from the organism of church, of Christ's body, apart from any other groups or organizations in the secular world.

We stand, we hold on to the truth, we preach the truth, we live on the truth. Just like the song we have sung, Jesus is the center of it all.

Not just in the church program. Not just in the church activities. But we as church, whether we walk in different times in a week, in a different calling that God has placed us in this society, this is where we stand on.

And this is how we preach. This is how we witness, right? And in verse 8 and 14, they all say about the uniqueness about the church.

Alright? We serve with different gifts, but the gifts are given by Christ, who was the victorious, the king who has won the war.

[9 : 27] Right? So, he distributes gifts to us. We don't use our talents or experiences to serve. Even though God can use that.

But God, specifically in Christ, he gives us gifts so that we can serve. So, it all adds up and tells us that church is different from any other organizations in this world.

Let's think. My mentality about my attitude towards church. Is it just any other groupings?

It happens, I was kind of, my parents was in this church, I was brought up in this church, and that's why I come to this church. Or, do we really think, understand, that church is called, redeemed, and gathered by one Lord, Jesus.

And we, we stand on, we are convinced, and we preach the one true gospel. That makes church non-conforming to others in this society.

[10 : 56] And secondly, maturity. We need to grow. Yes, I know we belong to Jesus. Yes, I know the facts. But if it doesn't, doesn't cause my life to grow, and the church, if all these times just being stagnant, we all just know something, it won't take us anywhere.

Right? As a people, as a body, if we don't grow, we die. Well, we don't die straight away, but we gradually disintegrate.

Right? And, yeah, 15, 16, I highlight those, underline those words. We speak the truth, yet truth will cause us to what?

To grow. Okay? And to become every respect, the mature body. Yes, Christ is the head, but we are his body.

And, the head is supreme. But, if we're connected to the head, we will need to grow. And, growth is from God. Right?

[12:06] And, it's a natural thing. But, the important thing is, we need to be connected to him. And, we are to be fed on the word of God, the truth of God.

And, when we do that, when we understand, when we read the Bible, when we walk in this truth, when we pray, we will just grow. We don't need to force ourselves.

Right? And, you look at the little babies. You know. My little granddaughter, right? Last time I spoke to you, she was about three, four weeks old. Now, she's about three and a half months old.

She grew. Oh man, she's getting heavy. Fat, fat girl. Right? Yeah, she eats a lot. Right? And, what do you do?

She eats, she sleeps, she eats, she sleeps. You get fat. Right? But, this is a sign, it's a sign of growth. Right? And, and, in verse 16, Paul used quite a bit of technical words.

[13:09] Doctors will know. All right? And, Paul wasn't a doctor, but he had a doctor friend, Luke. I'm sure he consulted him with a lot of bodily kind of expression. All right?

And, he wanted to express something that this body needs to grow and to be built up. And, this growth is from within.

It's not from outside. Otherwise, if we don't grow, and actually in verse 13, it says something like, if we, if the body doesn't grow, in verse 14, then we'll be like infants.

Okay? If we are, we are, we don't grow, we'll be tossed back and forth by the waves, by the, by the, blown here and there, by every kind of teaching, and by the cunning and the craftiness of people in the deceitful scheming.

Childish and childlike. They're both child, but very different. Right? Jesus taught us to be childlike.

[14:21] We are to have childlike faith. Simplicity in trusting Jesus. don't need to analyze too much. Don't need to think too, you know, too deep in order to, to just put our trust and our faith in Him.

Simple, childlike faith. But not to be childish. If we don't grow, if, if, you know, if I was, I became Christian 10 years ago, and 10 years later, my, my, my spiritual condition is the same as 10 years ago.

I'm childish. And because I'm childish, I, I'll be easily be deceived by all these cunning ways in this world.

And surely, Satan will, truly can deceive us. about two months ago, there was a lot of these guys, Shen Jiongji people, very courageous, came to seek for the pastor, try to, try to beat the pastor, you know, so once you get the shepherd, we'll get the flocks, you know.

This, they came in twice. I'm sure Pastor William told us about. First time, there was two people, second time, it was four people. I don't know how many is going to have a whole trip, come, come to our church next time.

[15:56] And they're very active, very active. They actually started the, the, the, the, the, activities around actually 215 in Auckland U and AUT.

Some of our people actually got deceived and, praise God, they got out of it. And some, I heard, I've heard some in a very, very dire condition.

I was in Napier last week and when we talked about these people, now don't, don't, don't, don't, don't just think, oh, they're Koreans, you know. No, they would just get anybody. And those who came, they were not Koreans, right?

But they came, when they, they, if they were not Chinese, they come to a Chinese church, it was obvious, oh, okay, we could identify. But if our church is not Chinese or if it's multi-ethnicity, they just come and people wouldn't be able to find out.

We were talking about this in a Napier church. One of the leaders told us that they, his daughter had a friend who was a GP, a girl, a lady, who had a good prospect, you know, working well, going to get her GP license and start practicing.

[17:17] And somehow she got sucked in and because they're very famous, like, you know, let's come to our Bible studies. All right? So be careful when people told you about, oh, we're going to

start a Bible studies group and just come to join us.

You know, you better find out what they believe, what do they actually proclaim, all right? And it started about once a week and then it was twice a week and then three times a week and then it was every day.

And then this girl, he started to just ease back and just practicing part-time. And a couple months later, no one is able to find her.

She just dropped her professional together. And it's very hard to pull her back now. So we need to grow, we need to be mature enough as individuals and as a church.

We are able to identify. Otherwise, we'd be tossed and thrown by all these deceitful schemes.

Plenty of them around, I tell you.

[18:29] Easier to identify Mormons or J-dubs now because they have their labels, right? but very hard to identify all these different things around.

So please, church, we need to grow. We cannot afford to be childish. Know our truth. Stay close to Jesus.

Then, we know we'll be growing and maturing. thirdly, diversity. We're different.

All right? Now, I said that Paul used quite a bit of physical terms for describing the body. All right?

Joined in, joined and held together.

These are long, Greek words. Yeah, it's complicated words. as the Greek physicians used.

[19:34] It was like, with all these veins and ligaments, muscles, tendons, kind of all interrelated.

Right? And each cannot do without one another. And you know, and each are very different. All right?

Very different. different. And in RSV, I like this translation. He said, from whom the whole body joined and knitted together by every joint which is supplied with each part is working properly.

We're all different. Right? No one is exactly the same. And praise God, we're different. different.

Some can play piano, some can sing, some serve the snacks much better than others, some will look after the careful people.

We are all different. It would be boring if everybody would be like me, just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, right? You need people not just talking, you need people doing, caring, doing a lot of stuff that nobody noticed and those are the ones that really, really holding the body together.

[21:03] Right? This is something like this, right? I asked a radiologist to find something for me because I don't know how to find the best picture.

It's similar to what Paul was saying, you know? You see, every of these bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, everything very, very complex but very sophisticatedly joined together.

If just a little bit, an inch moved away, I'm going to have nerve pain. You know, some of the elderly folks would tell us, just a tiny little off position of the tiny little bit of my back bone thing, you're going to have real problem.

And the church is very skillfully, very wonderfully placed by God, by Christ, who's the head. He's chosen you, he's chosen me, with different gifting, different abilities, different experiences.

Jesus, he put us together. English service, Saturday, Sunday, even though we don't meet all the time, but we are part of his body.

[22:29] And earlier in chapter 4, in verse 11, Paul was saying that God has given the gifts and each gift could be different. Some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers.

We're all different, right? Not all apostles. Certainly, I'm not an apostle. Apostle is something who starts something new, who's courageous enough to break new grounds.

I'm not. I'm more a pastor. I know my limitations. But apostles, you can't, if all were apostles, then everyone would break new grounds.

And who's going to do the everyday work, right? Who's going to care for people? And if all can teach, who is going to evangelize? Right?

So, God has given the church different people with different gifts. I'm sure you have a gift that God has given you that is unique.

[23:45] And you can contribute to the church. Don't look down on yourself. Jesus looked at that widow who placed that one cent, two coins, into the offering.

And Jesus said, everyone, you preach the gospel, you need to acknowledge, acknowledge this lady. Right? So, each one, God has given us gifts and unique abilities that we can contribute.

And actually, in the four passages of spiritual gifts, there are all these kind of different gifts. All right? Some would have, we can't have them all. Some would have more than others, than others, but no one would not have any.

So, God has given us different, yeah, we're all different, we're very diverse, but we are to be building the church according to his will.

unity. And lastly, unity. Join together, held together, in love. We are different.

[25 : 09] Right? But if we do, just do our own things, we forget, we ignore other bodily parts, the body will just fall apart. But we are being joined, we are held together, in love.

Now, you realize that in verse 15, speaking the truth, in love. Now, joining and held together, supporting each other, in love. So, whether we're speaking the truth, or we're living out our lives, we're all in love, in God's love.

And in verse 2, in chapter 4, Paul taught the Ephesian Christians, with all loneliness and meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another in love, enduring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

Now, that's something, love, it's not something, I strive hard, I do my best, I'll endure, I'll be patient with you, I don't know how long I can be patient for, but I'll try my best.

It's not just that. We are actually in the bond of the peace that's created by Jesus, in the spirit.

[26 : 34] all right, we are just to keep it, we don't need to create it, it's already being created.

Sometimes, don't you feel, as Christians, somehow in our spirit, in our heart, we have a kind of a family kind of feeling, a type with our fellow Christians.

And we know, oh, whether we go to travel overseas somewhere, and you know, he or she is a Christian, suddenly, you feel you have this kind of a special family type, right?

That's something the spirit reminding us, because we are in the bond of peace, created by the Holy Spirit, and we are just to keep that peace.

And in chapter two, Paul says that when human was in hostility with God, and therefore with hostility to one another, but Christ was the one that threw his cross to break down those walls.

And we are being his people, we are his disciples, we are to do the same. we are different, but we are to be united, despite my feeling.

[28 : 10] I'm going to love my brother, despite he does wrong, or he hurt me, but because he belongs to Christ, and I belong to Christ, I need to imitate my Lord.

I need to love despite my feeling. This is what Paul meant, keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I love this picture, when I came in, Julian showed us, oh, this is what we do, every time before we practice, we try to make this, same thing here.

Right? There's some truth in it. Look, each hand could be different. Some would play piano, or the keyboard, some play guitar, some play bass, some would probably do drums, some would sing, and each are different.

But we are there because of Christ. We are to love. Sometimes it doesn't come natural.

[29 : 31] It's harder to love those unlovables. But this is precisely what God called us to. If it's easy to love, why do we need Christ?

Why do we need the Holy Spirit? I can do it myself. But it's precisely, at times, it's very hard to love those whom I don't like.

And that's why I need to rely on Christ and the Holy Spirit. So, how are we doing? Non-conformity, maturity, diversity, and unity.

You know, this is a long process. It's not just overnight stuff. It's a project that will keep going and going and going until Christ's return.

But I'll tell you what, I've been a pastor since 1989. Two churches, I only had two churches experiences, one in Hong Kong and one here. Yes, at times I get frustrated.

[30 : 38] Yes, at times I get tired. Yes, at times I get hurt. but every time when I pray and I lay my feelings to God and the Holy Spirit just through His Word to remind me, this is my body and I'm building it and I've chosen you to do it with alongside with your different brothers and sisters.

What are you going to do? I couldn't help. I would just submit. And once I do, I did and I do, God just transformed my heart.

Right? And when I come, I just look at God's handiwork amongst different people here. And in one day, He will complete His work.

All right? In Revelation 7, 9 to 10, there will be a celestial, they will sing, they will cry out, they will praise God, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. We'll see that one day. But here, we're still in the making, the bodybuilding is still in the progress, we still need to work hard, but we'll look forward to that perfect body one day.
[32 : 06] Lord, I study a■ a