

A LIVING CHURCH FOR A DYING WORLD

May 3rd & 4th Devotional

BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST

Devotional Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-16

Study and Reflection:

The challenge of the Lord Jesus to us in Matthew, launched us on what seems to many to be an impossible journey. He declared that His Church would become this phenomenal organism, unique, strong, powerful, resilient, contagious, that by its call, anointing, and nature, would represent Him effectively and bring health, wholeness, and healing to those who would dare walk together by faith. This would be done through the Body of Christ, with Jesus as its' HEAD!

Please note that this passage Ephesians 4:1-16, is foundational and essential for us to be effective. *I urge you to read it every day this week*, so that you become more familiar with it, and it begins to saturate and transform your spirit and soul to who we are and how we must be in order to be changed as a local body and how God desires us to be and function in order to be effective to a dying world.

For the next two days, I want you to give thought, prayer, and reflection to the nature of His Body, and the overall expectation that Christ Jesus has for us. The opening verses alert us again, that this is not a job, or a position, or a religious designation or title...we are CALLED and must learn to 'walk worthy!' Live in a manner that measures up to and justifies the vocation or calling upon our lives. The 'spirit' or nature of the Body is outlined in verse 2, with all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love!

The next 14 verses characterize for us the unity, gifts, diversity, interdependence, structure and dynamic attitude of those He has called to *Function* as His Body!

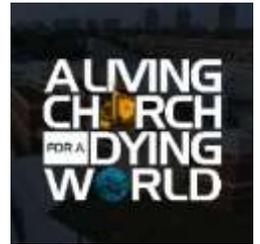
Action Items:

For these two days personally focus on what it means for you to be a part of the Body of Christ. I urge you to reflect and write down where you are as pertains to being a part that is connected, and committed in the manner the scripture outlines. Don't be afraid to be brutally honest. Remember we are on a long journey together and are empowered to become more and more like Him as we commit to honestly opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

Involving Others:

It is essential that you share your thoughts and reflections with others in your group. Carve out time these next two days to interact with them and be transparent in your sharing. Make sure you are ready to 'listen' without being defensive. Identify goals, individual and group, and pray together, with a plan of accountability to ensure group success.

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May 5, 2021 Devotional

BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST: BIRTHED IN THE MIND OF GOD

Devotional Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-16; Ephesians 1

Study and Reflection:

I trust that your study and reflection of the first part of Ephesians 4, has filled your mind and heart with inspiration and wonder. It is in chapter 4 that the Body of Christ is presented Full-Force with its character, makeup, and function. It is going to lead us to new discoveries of the Purpose and Function of God's Church, at work in the earth. It should provoke us to new and innovative ministries and applications of the Body in this present age.

However, to be prepared for such a study, we must give real attention to the first three chapters. Chapters 1-3 compose the Mind of God regarding His spiritual purposes, reasons, and plans for this glorious Body of Christ. They form the foundational understanding of the church that should direct its mission.

Chapter 1 is a favorite study of mine, in part because it was the favorite chapter I believe of the entire Bible of my 2nd pastor and mentor, the late, great, Bishop Arthur M. Brazier. I cannot begin to tell you how many times, as I was blessed to spend time and travel with him that he would share with me individually, in a small minister's groups, or as he preached in some tremendous church or conference, and use the spiritual jewels of chapter 1 of Ephesians as his text.

It is in chapter 1 that the highest truths regarding the Church are put forth by the Apostle Paul. It is here that we learn that God has endowed the CHURCH with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (v3). Here we learn in v 4-5, that we were Chosen in Him before the world began, chosen to be holy, special, set apart, He having predestined, marked us out beforehand, to be His instrument of Glory in the earth. In the succeeding verses we learn we were chosen in order to bring about His eternal purposes and will.

Paul teaches us that because of what was in the Mind of God from the beginning for the church, he prays that God would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, opening up our understanding and arming us with the knowledge of the great power God has invested in His Church so that we could carry out His will in the face of any and every opposition.

The final point of chapter 1 may be the most important: **The Church will fulfill every purpose and desire of the Lord, as long as we remember that our guaranteed success will manifest as we remember and rely on Jesus as the HEAD OF THE BODY!!**

Action Items:

I challenge you to embrace with bold faith, the teachings and promises contained in Ephesians chapter 1. *Read them and verbally confess them to your own spirit.* It takes bold faith, in combination with the operation of the Holy Spirit, for us to embrace and be constantly renewed with these tremendous, essential, Biblical understandings. Do this, and get ready for the new heights the Lord has always had for you, before the world began.

Involving Others:

Remember we are studying the CHURCH, the BODY OF CHRIST. Discuss and share with your small group and with others what you have learned. Together, with them, work out how you are going to be better, armed with knowing better, what God has always had in Him Mind for His Church. Perhaps as a group project, write down for future reference what you have learned and are committed to do!

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May 6, 2021 Devotional

BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST: UNWORTHY RECIPIENTS AND MINISTERS OF SALVATION

Devotional Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-16; Ephesians 2

Study and Reflection:

It is difficult for me to think of any other passage in the Bible that should prepare for us to become the Healthy Church the Lord is looking for in order to function and operate in these last days than Ephesians 2.

The opening words never cease to inspire and remind me of where I was, how worthless and hopeless my life was, and how what HE DID to completely and forever reverse our tragic end!

*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past we all walked (lived), according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom we all had our conversation (life-style), in times past (our past lives), in the lusts (desires) of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (just like everyone else),**BUT GOD!**”*

His Love motivated Him to die for us, take our places, though we were His enemies!

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH.... A FAITH THAT IS ITSELF A GIFT FROM GOD!

We are no longer, strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. We are built together to be a habitation of God, through the Spirit to rescue the world!

Action Items:

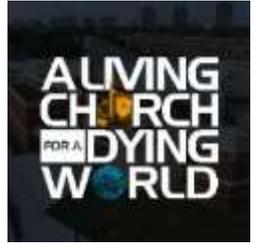
Think and reflect on how hopeless your life and future were, and what it cost the Lord to redeem us. Knowing and embracing this understanding should remind, renew, and reinforce in you your Life-Long obligation, and debt of gratitude you and I OWE HIM, and by His Own Will our obligation and commitment to the Church in **BUILDING HIS KINGDOM!**

Involving Others:

I trust by this time you have obediently and with the input of others, identified a small group with whom you share with in these endeavors and submit to for genuine spiritual accountability and growth. If you have not, do it this week!

Discuss and share with them chapter 2. If there is a lack or spiritual need in your life that has been revealed, *share it with them and allow them to help that need be met.*

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May 7, 2021 Devotional

BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST: A MYSTERY REVEALED AND EMPOWERED

Devotional Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1-16; Ephesians 3

Study and Reflection:

Chapter 3 is the final study, designed to prepare us to become the mature HEALTHY church revealed in chapter 4.

As you study and reflect, I trust you can appreciate what the apostle Paul shares. He reveals that it is the hidden mystery of the church, specifically the mystery that God all along, planned to reveal His tremendous love and grace, by saving in one Body, all who would come and surrender to Christ Jesus by faith. Paul testifies that it is this revelation that the Lord called, saved, and ordained him to ministry.

He further shares that as God uses him to share and bring to pass the manifestation of this redemption miracle, it will be through the CHURCH that the Lord will manifest and demonstrate the ‘manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord!’(v 10-11)

His closing prayer in this regard is this:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:17-20)

This is his prayer of knowledge and comprehension for the Church so that we can become the mature **HEALTHY church, equipped to win a world to Jesus Christ.**

Action Items:

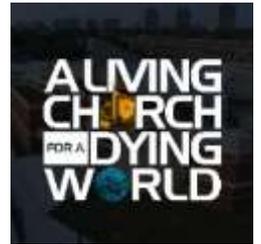
Chapter 3 is a transition passage. Having discovered what was in the mind of God all along regarding His Church, and reminding ourselves of the terrible fate that awaited all of us, except that by His Love, Grace, and Faith He saved us, chapter 3 pushes us to be empowered to now apply His Will and Plan to our lives as individuals in the Body, and ultimately to live together as a corporate Body, fulfilling His Will.

What is your personal commitment to this?

Involving Others:

Now with your small group, discuss the ‘mystery’ that was always in the mind of and continues to be the intent of God, to use His Church to bring about His Kingdom on this earth. Begin to discuss what changes must we make in our thinking and in our carrying out ministry to bring this about?

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May 8, 2021 Devotional

BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST: PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

Devotional Scriptures:

Ephesians 1-3; 4:1-16

Study and Reflection:

I trust, having focused time and attention on the first three chapters of this epistle, along with our core passage in Ephesians 4:1-16, you are informed, inspired, and challenged. Please take the time and review the passages, along with others you may have added to augment your time of personal and corporate devotion.

These teachings were designed to get us ready for embracing some innovative and yet practical ideas and ways of becoming a Healthier Church, using the Intent of God and our understanding of His Plans and Purposes for us. It might be helpful to focus on two or three critical understandings that you may have received after this week's studies.

Action Items:

Make a list of critical concepts and or understandings that you gleaned from this week's study. Challenge yourself in regards to exactly how these new understandings have impacted you and how you intend to incorporate them into your personal walk with God.

Involving Others:

As in the personal action items, *share and discuss what you have learned, listening to the experiences of others*. Again, come to an agreement with your group of no more than two or three items that your group will take responsibility for as we move into implementing what we have discovered.