JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

THE CHURCH THAT WORKS

Here We Grow, Part 1

> A full building is not the same as a church that works. The apostolic and prophetic gifts give a church its foundation, bring fresh revelation, and release every ministry gift to build up the body.

MAIN TEXT
Ephesians 4:11-16

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SERIES
Here We Grow, Week 1 of 3

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. A church can be full and still not work: the marker of a church that works is theological groundedness, being known in its area, developing people, reproducing into other churches, and being big enough to sustain ministry
2. The fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11 is five gifts to the body, not a hierarchy, and the apostolic and prophetic are the two the church has handled so carefully that it has effectively dropped them
3. The apostolic and prophetic provide foundation, taking the gospel and building an organization from it and around it so the church is more than an organization with churchy trimmings
4. The apostolic and prophetic bring revelation, which is Holy Ghost inspired vision that keeps mission and activity congruent, and fresh bread rather than reheated material
5. The apostolic and prophetic empower every ministry gift to fulfill its designed purpose, producing unity, maturity and stability in doctrine, and without them chaos and peripheral nonsense fill the church
6. Saraland Church is entering growing pains on purpose, and the foundation being laid means growth will not repeat the anonymity and stagnation people felt in other large churches



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READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/here-we-grow-part-1

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message opens a three-week series called Here We Grow, framed as a church-wide staff meeting. In a staff meeting the pastor does three things: teach, share where we are going, and say what he needs from the team. This week is the teaching week.

The subject is the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11, with a focus on the two gifts many Pentecostal churches handle most nervously: apostles and prophets. Name the nervousness, then go straight to the text. The three points come from the three places Ephesians pairs apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11).

Much of this message speaks to leaders and preachers. Let it. Then bring it home in the close: the church is growing, and growing pains are coming. The final section is specific to this church's season. Adapt the dates, numbers and plans to your own church.

Introduction

> EPHESIANS 4:11-16 ESV
>
> 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 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, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Some Bibles say "pastors" in verse 11; the ESV says "shepherds." Either way, these are gifts given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Our series is called **Here We Grow.** You can say it two ways: "Here we grow!" or, with a sigh, "Here… we grow." You can feel the growing pains already: someone is in your favorite seat, your parking place is gone, and the air conditioners are struggling to keep up with a full room.

A CHURCH-WIDE STAFF MEETING

For the next three weeks, this is a church-wide staff meeting. When I meet with our staff, I do three things:

- I teach.
- I share where we are going.
- I tell them what I need from them.

We will take one each week. Today, I am teaching: **The Church That Works.**

That phrase is *polyvalent*: it can mean different things depending on how you use it.

- **A church where everyone works.** Everybody does their part. We need that. We are growing, and we need more people doing more things. Join the team.
- **A church that objectively works.** You look at it and say, "Whatever's happening there, it's working." What it does meets the goal it has. **That is what we are talking about today.**

When Church Doesn't Work

Have you ever been in a church and thought, "This doesn't seem to work"? Something is not connecting.

A lot of churches get stuck in the muck of **filling a building.** You might think that is aimed at big churches, but it is actually worse in small ones.

Illustration: "Probably about 10,000." A friend in Michigan toured a church with a building that seated thousands. He asked one staff member how many they were running. "Probably about 10,000." The other staff member said, "It's probably closer to 7." My friend said, "If I lost 3,000 people, I think I'd know it." In a large church, a few hundred people can come and go without moving the needle. Small churches feel every seat, and they can get stuck in the routine of just keeping the building filled.

There is nothing wrong with a full building. I want one. The issue is **how** a church fills it and keeps it filled.

THE HOBBY HUB

People like to say churches are country clubs, run by a handful of rich people. I have worked in churches all across America, and that is rare. I do not worry much about the country club. I worry about **the garden club, the book club and the baking club.** When churches get worried about filling the building, they turn into **the Hobby Hub.**

Have you ever wondered why the music in so many churches is so bad? This is why. Everybody gets to do their little hobby, so you lose excellence and you lose the edge. We stop doing it unto the Lord and start doing it unto ourselves: "It makes me feel good. It's my thing."

So four or five people mosey through the songs, nobody is any good, everybody knows it, and nobody is upset. Why? Because the stage reflects the whole church. Maw Maw is not upset because she runs the book club. Hector does not mind because he is over the barbecue ministry. Everybody has their own little thing. There are people in the building, but nobody is getting saved, and the church is not working.

"Well, that's just how they worship." No, it is not.

Illustration: the drummer. In Michigan, I had a drummer who had played at the church for about 20 years, and he was not good. I also had two kids who could play the paint off the wall. Eventually I had to make a decision, and I took him off the team. He left the church, but not because he was not allowed to worship. He left because he decided to leave his wife for a girlfriend he had been seeing for years that nobody knew about. He had been playing church so he could keep playing the drums. It was a pretense.

The Hobby Hub is dangerous to the mission. It can happen in small churches and large ones. A church can do all the right things to grow and still not be the church. **The goal is to do both: grow a church and be the church.**

THE MARKERS OF A CHURCH THAT WORKS

It is easy to recognize a church that does not work, as long as you are not seduced by it. Here is what a church that works looks like:

- **Theologically grounded.** If not perfect accuracy, at least real conviction.
- **Known.** People in the area are aware of it.
- **Develops people.** It is much less important to me that we launch ministries than that we launch people. Ministries and programs are means, not ends. The end is always developed people.
- **Reproducing into other churches.** Something it does is being adopted by other churches. (Our media team is already getting calls from churches around the nation asking how we do it.)
- **Big enough to sustain ministry,** growing or thriving. People say "healthy things grow," but cancer grows too. We need to grow; we have not arrived. But there is a point where a church may not be growing and is still thriving.

The Fivefold Ministry

So what takes a church from not working to working? **The fivefold ministry.**

We do not hear much about this in the Assemblies of God. We are the most evangelical corner of the Pentecostal world, which means we have the most safety protocols. One caution we have taken is to handle the fivefold ministry so carefully that we never really honor it or release it in our churches. Have you ever handled something so carefully that you dropped it? Today we are just going with what the Bible says.

You can count the fivefold ministry on one hand:

- **The evangelist (middle finger): the longest reach.** Evangelists reach people far from the Lord, far from church and far from a church lifestyle. They walk into a Chili's, never preach a sermon, and somehow the waitress gets saved.
- **The pastor (ring finger): married to the community.** Pastors love the people. They are at every birthday party and every reception. (I have said it before: I am *the* pastor, but I am not a pastor gift.)

- **The teacher (pinky finger): small enough to get into your ear.** Teachers take big concepts and make them understandable. They are the least celebrated, but they have a powerful ministry.
- **The prophet (pointer finger): points the way.** Prophets see what is coming in the culture and sense direction. It is not always specific or predictive. Often prophets operate by sensing.
- **The apostle (thumb): pioneers and governs.** The apostle says, "We can do that." It does not reach out as far as the other gifts, but it touches every one of them and releases them into the fullness of their anointing.

These are not a hierarchy. They are gifts to the body. A church has an authority structure, and it has gifts, and those are two different things. An apostle can serve under the authority of a pastor; a prophet can serve under a teacher. The gifts can operate in people without a ministry title, though most often they show up in those leading the church. (The authority structure is a teaching for another day.)

Since the Reformation, church leadership has tended to be pastor-focused. Everyone became a "pastor": youth pastor, kids pastor, senior pastor, lead pastor, associate pastor, executive pastor. We still use "evangelist" and "teacher," because they are safe words. But "apostle" and "prophet" sound scary. Scary enough to make a Baptist crawl under the pew.

It may be a scary word, but it is a Bible word. In Ephesians, evangelists, pastors and teachers are mentioned once. **Apostles and prophets are mentioned together three times** (Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11). Let's look at those three mentions and see what makes a church work.

1. The Apostolic and Prophetic Provide Foundation

> EPHESIANS 2:19-22 ESV
>
> [19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The household of God is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

"Wait, I thought Jesus was the foundation." He is: "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus is the foundation of the believer's life and of our faith. But when it comes to the church as an organized body, the foundation is set by its leaders: apostles and prophets.

This foundation is able to take the gospel and build an organization from it and around it. It is one thing to build an organization. It is something entirely different to build a church. You can build an organization with all the trimmings of a church (the songs, the messages, the offering, the announcements, the kids'

program, the outreach) and still never do what a church has to do. The one I notice most often: **people are not developed.**

This passage gives the markers of a church rather than just an organization. A church is:

- **Being joined together:** that is for all people.
- **Growing into a holy temple:** that is Spirit-filled.
- **Being built in Him:** that is building on Jesus.

We did not pull our vision off Google and paint it on a wall. We believe this is the foundation for a church that works.

The mission of a local church can quickly drift into **sustaining operations.** Big bills come in, and it is easy to start thinking only about keeping the train on the tracks. (I just looked at a $4,700 Alabama Power bill. After 45 minutes in the fetal position, I got up and prayed in the Holy Ghost.)

But **we can't confuse keeping the doors open with opening the doors. We can't confuse running the air conditioner with keeping a fire burning in the house of God.**

An apostolic foundation anchors the machine in the mission. Some of what we do keeps the machine running. But if we ever have good church and are not developing better people, we have missed the mark. God forbid we be a church that is growing but not a church that is working.

2. The Apostolic and Prophetic Bring Revelation

> EPHESIANS 3:4-5 ESV
>
> [4] When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

The mystery of Christ "has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5).

REVELATION IS HOLY GHOST-INSPIRED VISION

Without an apostolic and prophetic foundation, churches end up with a mission statement that sounds like word salad and a vision that cannot be measured.

Part of why a church can feel like it is not working is a **gross incongruence between what is printed in big letters on the wall and all the activity in the church.** I have walked past giant lettered statements in churches of 10,000 that never showed up anywhere else in the building. Revelation makes the vision and mission congruent with what the church actually does.

Illustration: "Do everything." I recently came across a pastor sharing his church's vision: "Save the lost, disciple the saved, send the discipled." It sounds awesome. But that is like saying, "We're here to do

everything." A denomination, maybe. A local church of 400? **Broadness can be synonymous with vagueness.** You can be so broad that everything you do feels like it is moving in that direction while it is actually moving nowhere.

Here is the reality check: **if you do everything, you end up doing nothing.** Churches cannot be the center for everything.

Baptism is a great example. Baptism is part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). We baptize people here. And yet Paul writes, "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17). He baptized only a handful (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Even the apostle Paul said he could not do everything. It is reasonable for a local church to say, "We can't do everything. What is our part in the mission of the church universal?"

The apostolic and prophetic identify a church's specific role in the kingdom.

REVELATION IS FRESH BREAD

Illustration: fried rice syndrome. You are generally told to reheat leftovers only once. Reheat, put it back in the fridge, reheat again, and so on, and you are asking for trouble. Heat kills many bacteria, but some leave behind toxins that heat does not destroy, and every round of cooling and reheating gives them more time to build up. You cannot smell or taste it; the food seems fine. It is common enough with leftover rice that it has a name: fried rice syndrome. You think you are having leftovers, and you are actually prepping for a trip to the ER.

Preachers, everything we preach is not wholly original. We all hear things and pick them up: phrases, quotes, ideas. But some messages have been reheated and put back in the fridge so many times that a preacher can stand up with no fresh word from God and actually release toxins into the church.

Preachers get upset when someone steals their stories, but treat borrowing someone else's points like it is no big deal. Why are we not more concerned that we did not dig out the meat of the Word for ourselves? I can listen to many preachers and not only know they did not come up with it, but know the source.

Illustration: Ashleigh's phone. When our youngest, Ali, was born at 24 weeks, Ashleigh stayed with her in the hospital most Sundays and started watching a preacher online. Years later, we were sitting in another church when the preacher began, and Ashleigh handed me her phone. She had already heard that exact sermon online.

I do not want to borrow other people's sermons and call it manna, when we know manna spoils by the next morning. Kept overnight, "it bred worms and stank" (Exodus 16:20). **We need fresh bread. We need fresh revelation.**

That is why we need the apostolic and prophetic released in the church: through them revelation comes. They see, sense, hear and receive. My messages do not come from a sermon book or the internet. They come from the secret place.

And revelation is not just novel or fun. Paul prays that believers would "be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). **Revelation makes a church work.**

3. The Apostolic and Prophetic Empower Every Ministry Gift to Fulfill Its Designed Purpose

Go back to where we started.

> **EPHESIANS 4:11-16** ESV
>
> 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 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, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Pause on verse 14: "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). That is urgent right now. Many people get their theology from one- and two-minute clips online. Something can sound convincing in two minutes and be false, misleading, even heresy. We need an apostolic and prophetic foundation in our local churches so people are not led astray.

Where there is apostolic and prophetic foundation and revelation, all the ministry gifts start working together to build up the body, "when each part is working properly" (Ephesians 4:16).

We talk a lot about "equipping the saints," and sometimes pastors use it to get out of ministry: "I don't come to the hospital; my job is to equip you." (If I do not come see you in the hospital, it is because I did not know or something else was going on. It is not because your pastor does not love you.)

But the point of the passage is that the body gets built up with **unity, maturity and stability in doctrine.** The benefit to the body is that you mature: you take the Word, stand on the Word, live the Word, and see results in your life. You operate in real power.

When the apostolic and prophetic gifts do not operate in a church, chaos ensues, and there is peripheral nonsense in every corner of the church. Big churches are often the most guilty: almost anything can go on under the banner of a small group.

Illustration: the barcode guy. At one church I was new on staff, and a man cornered me to explain that barcodes are the mark of the beast. Every time you buy Oreos, you are participating in the world system. The pastoral staff rolled their eyes behind his back: "He's off on the barcode thing again." But they let him teach a small group, let him lead a ministry, and eventually hired him to the maintenance staff. With no apostolic and prophetic foundation, nobody was willing to say, "This isn't going to fly."

That is not how you lead a church that works. I am hyper-aware of what is taught in this church. We will not have a small group off in the corner teaching nonsense, and the nonsense always seems to involve a chart. We are going to honor the Word.

- **Without the apostolic, pastors let people run wild.** Pastors can love people so much that they will not hold them accountable or build any structure.
- **Without the prophetic, evangelists host philanthropic outreaches where nobody gets saved.** People get food, but there is never a point where they might encounter the gospel. The prophetic holds that accountable.

We need the fivefold ministry. We need a release of the apostolic and the prophetic.

Conclusion

WHY PREACH THIS?

I do not like to make decisions and leave you in the dark. Many leaders just lead and hope they can massage their way into it later. For the last year, I have been honest with you. I tell you what we are going to do, we do it, we get the results we said we would, and you have responded well every time.

So when does this release of the apostolic and prophetic start? It started 364 days ago. When we came in, we took control of some things, and some of you felt that. Why? **To build a foundation,** and to make sure we could tell what was revelation and what was nonsense. Now we are starting to see the fruit.

GROWING PAINS

We are already in some growing pains. One example: we cannot do any more one-on-one Coffee with the Pastor meetings. They take too much time, so we are moving to meeting with people in groups.

In those meetings, we keep hearing that people came here because the churches they tried in the area were too big. Hear me: **this church is going to be big.** In fact, we are already a big church; we are just a big little church. We do not do things the way little churches do.

Some of you have been in big churches and felt yourself slip through the cracks. Five years in, coming and serving, you felt like you had not grown at all. **We are not going to have those problems,** because we are not just growing an organization. We are not going to be the Hobby Hub. We are building on an apostolic and prophetic foundation, with revelation coming forward, so pastors, evangelists and teachers will be equipped and the work of the body will be fruitful, whether there are 100 people or 10,000.

So buckle up, hang on and enjoy the process. Do not say, “This church is getting too big.” It is getting just right. Some of what we are doing right now reaches beyond our ability, and we are going for it anyway. We are running like a church of 350 on Sundays, while on Monday I am sitting in the office by myself.

We are building on an apostolic foundation and a prophetic foundation. Revelation is being released in this house. We are leading from the Word, and God is going to do a great work in this church.

WHAT'S NEXT

- **Next week:** where we are going, including some things coming toward January.
- **The week after:** some very direct things we need to see happen in our church. A very transparent message.
- **Then:** Back to Church Sunday. Invite everyone.

OPTIONAL: A FRESH WIND FOR THE REGION

This close is in the original notes but was not preached on August 2, 2026. Use it if time allows.

People are coming to our church, and we keep hearing, "It's different." That difference is the flow of apostolic and prophetic anointing. Mobile County has churches coming out of its ears. The last thing it needs is another church. But it could use a fresh wind of the Spirit to blow through this region and shift the current: fewer churchy people, and more people consecrated to the name of the Most High God.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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