

Palmetto Baptist Church: October 25, 2020
The Manifestation of Unity: Ephesians 4:12-16

Take your Bible and turn to Ephesians 4:12-16. It has been exactly one month since we studied the book of Ephesians together. *In the last month we had a quarterly business meeting with a challenge on the importance of church membership. We celebrated our 10 Year Anniversary with sermons from our two church planters (John Marino and Heston Blake). Last week, Pastor Josh reminded us of the supremacy of Christ from Colossians 1!*

This morning, I want to jump back into the middle of the first paragraph in Ephesians 4 and follow up on our study of Ephesians 4:11. As a quick recap, each of the gifts mentioned in Eph. 4:11 refer to offices in the church held by actual people. I tried to show you that out of the four gifts listed, the first two helped lay the foundation of the church (Apostles and prophets), the third gift helped recruit people to join the church, and the fourth gift helps care for and feed the church. Out of the four gifts (offices held by actual people) only the last one (shepherd/teacher) continues today. In other words, the first three gifts were no longer needed after the church received the completed canon of Scripture (I Corinthians 13:10).

Therefore, our task this morning is to understand how the person with the gift of shepherd/teacher can best promote UNITY IN THE CHURCH.

- Help believers get restored as image bearers of God. (12)
- Help believers get inspired to pursue Christlikeness. (13)
- Help believers get committed to develop discernment. (14-16)

The goal of every pastor is to help believers get restored as image bearers of God. (12)

¹² **to equip the saints** for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

- Equip (*Katartismos*)
 - To furnish completely
 - To cause to be fully qualified
 - To restore something to its original purpose
- Genesis 1-2

Creation Mission: (*Also known as creation mandate or cultural mandate*)

Question: "What is the creation mandate / cultural mandate?" ¹

Answer: The terms *creation mandate* and *cultural mandate* can be used in various contexts with subtly different meanings. It's important to clearly define which of these definitions is at hand in any particular discussion.

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/creation-mandate-cultural.html>

The term *creation mandate* refers to the idea that God's original intent for creation infused mankind with supreme earthly authority, along with specific responsibilities. Among these privileges are the rights to freely use all of earth's animals, plants, and resources for the benefit of humankind. The creation mandate is expressed most directly in [Genesis 1:28](#), "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" The Hebrew term for "[rule over](#)" (*radah*) implies an absolute sovereignty of man over the rest of the earth.

This creation mandate also implies responsibilities to which mankind is bound. As the God-appointed ruler, mankind is prohibited from abusing or wasting those aspects of Earth he controls; since creation ultimately belongs to God, misusing it would be an act of disrespect and irresponsibility. Likewise, God's command includes an expectation that man will "multiply," obligating man to adhere to God's intended plan for human sexuality: heterosexual [monogamy](#) ([Genesis 1:27](#); [2:24](#); [Mark 10:5-9](#)).

In short, the creation mandate says that man is sovereign over the rest of the earth, man is obligated to responsibly use what God has placed under his control, and man is expected to reproduce according to God's intended design.

The term *cultural mandate* is far more flexible, implying a wider range of topics than the term *creation mandate*. There are three primary versions of the idea of a cultural mandate. The first is essentially the same as the creation mandate. The second connects God's command in [Genesis 1:28](#) with Christ's Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)), implying divine authority over all social and political matters. The third places the Great Commission *within* the creation mandate, requiring political and social matters to be forcibly brought under Christian control.

The first definition of the phrase *cultural mandate* is mostly used in references to sexuality and marriage. There, it's just an emphasis on God's ordained plan for procreation and male-female relationships.

The second way in which *cultural mandate* is used is in pairing the creation mandate with the [Great Commission](#). In this sense, the cultural mandate implies that part of our "good stewardship" of the earth includes making an effort to influence culture and politics toward attitudes that reflect God's will. That is, everything—including our personal lives and interactions with government and society—should be seen as part of our responsibility to enact the will of God. This view of the cultural mandate acknowledges that the "submission" implied in [Genesis 1:28](#) is that of the earth to man—not of man to other men. This definition seems to be the most in keeping with the Bible's perspective on government and society.

The third use of the term *cultural mandate* is the most controversial, and for good reason. Under this approach, the Great Commission is seen as a further explanation of the creation mandate. In other words, man has an obligation to apply Christian concepts *formally* and *forcibly*—through government and law, among other means. In this approach, government is required to mandate adherence to Christian ideals, on civil, social, and personal levels. This view of the cultural mandate implies that the "subdue" command of [Genesis 1:28](#) includes other men, under the auspices of government. Those who take this view of the cultural mandate, such as those who hold to [Kingdom Now theology](#), believe that laws and governments should be explicitly Christian, as a matter of necessity.

This third approach is not easily harmonized with Scripture. One reason God warned Israel about taking on a king ([1 Samuel 8](#)) was that human government is always—by definition—subject to human flaws. Even in the New Testament, Christians are called on to consider their obedience to God as something separate from—and higher than—their loyalty to earthly rulers ([Acts 5:29](#); [Matthew 22:21](#)).

While making scriptural laws into civil laws sounds fine in theory, we find that the human beings who have to enforce those rules are not so infallible. Attempting to force people to adhere to Christian ideas when

they have no personal relationship with Christ is futile ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)). Worse, it leads to abuses and excesses that are then blamed on the Bible rather than on fallible people. History makes the reality of this problem abundantly clear.

In blunt terms, claiming that a “cultural mandate” requires civil government to be explicitly Christian is contrary to Christ’s own teaching on the nature of His kingdom, which He said is “not of this world” ([John 18:36](#)).

The phrases *creation mandate* and *cultural mandate* should be used with common sense. Of particular importance is being sure that these ideas are used in the correct context and with the right biblical perspective. The creation mandate most simply refers to man’s authority over the earth and his responsibility to follow God’s design for stewardship and sexuality. The cultural mandate, in its most biblical sense, is our personal obligation to submit all of our lives to God’s will, specifically including the way we interact with others through government and society. As the salt of the earth ([Matthew 5:13](#)), we influence the culture for good.

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make manⁱⁿ in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- Exercise dominion over creation (1:26)
- Enjoy community (1:27)
- Experience productivity (regarding number of children and extent of control over creation) (1:28)
- To work and watch over the garden (2:15)
- To name the species of animals (2:20)
- To create families and model oversight (2:24-25)

¹² to equip the saints **for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ,
• *Diakonias*: Assimilation into service

¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **for building up the body of Christ**,
• *Oikodomen*: Edification of one another

PROBLEM: THE FALL OF MAN (Genesis 3:1-6)

SOLUTION: JESUS CHRIST (Genesis 3:15)

The goal of every pastor is to help believers get restored as image bearers of God. (12)

The goal of every pastor is to help believers get inspired to pursue Christlikeness. (13) – WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?)

¹³ until we all attain (1) to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, (2) to mature manhood, (3) to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

- ***Katantaō***: To reach a condition or goal

I John 3:1-3

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears^[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

(1) to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

- Unity is the main theme of Ephesians 4
 - **The exhortation for unity (vs. 1-3)** – Paul URGED the church to walk in unity
 - **The illustration of unity (vs. 4-6)** – the Trinity (equal but different in economy)
 - **The motivation behind unity. (vs. 7-10)** – the Person and Work of Jesus
 - **The manifestation of unity (vs. 11)** – the four gifts (offices given to the church)
- Of the faith: “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5)

[BNTC] Is it faith in the objective sense, a body of truth, creed [Acts 6:7; Gal.1:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; Jude3 and frequently in the Pastoral Epistles: *1 Tim 3:9; 4:1, 6*], or it is faith in the subjective sense, reliance on our Lord Jesus Christ and on his promises? **I believe it refers to faith (subjective) in an objective body of truth or creed.**

- And of the knowledge of the Son of God
 - ***Epignōsis***: Full knowledge (2 Peter 1:8)
 - Read the Gospel of John and ask 2 primary questions: (1) Who is Jesus? (2) What does He mean to me?
 - First 3 chapters of Ephesians
 - Jesus blessed us with every spiritual blessing (1:3)
 - Jesus made adoption into the family of God possible (1:5)
 - Jesus redeemed us from our sins (1:7)
 - Jesus modeled and provided resurrection power for every believer (1:19-20)

- Jesus made us alive together with Him (2:5)
- Jesus gave us a position in the heavenlies (2:6)
- Jesus brought together Jews and Gentiles into one new body... the church (2:11-22)
- Jesus dwells in your heart (3:17)
- Jesus loves you (3:19)
- Jesus is able to do far more abundantly than all that you ask or think! (3:20)

(2) to mature manhood,

- A full-grown man!

I Corinthians 13:11

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. [FOCUS]

I Corinthians 16:13

¹³Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. [CONFIDENCE]

Hebrews 5:14

¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. [APPETITE]

(3) to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

- The fullness of Christ is only experienced by Christ!
 - We are to strive for the *measure of the stature* of the fullness of Christ.
 - We won't ultimately experience the complete fullness until we reach eternity. (I John 3:1-3)
 - The goal is to measure the level of our fullness through reflecting Christlike love, care, and compassion to others (chapters 1-3) which is manifested primarily through the members of a local church (Eph. 2:23) and experienced personally in the life of each believer (3:19).

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From Child...

- 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.

Illustration:

[Why your church shouldn't sing Bethel or Hillsong music by Justin Peters and Todd Friel.](#)

[Bethel, Hillsong and Elevation? Should Christians Listen to their music? By Allen Parr](#)

To adolescent (teen)...

- ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,
 - Speak
 - Speak the truth
 - Speak the truth in love

To adult...

- 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.
 - NOTE THE SUBMISSION THAT IS ULTIMATELY UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTICED BY MATURE ADULTS.

APPLICATION:

- **Seek restoration into the image of God.**
 - Embrace your responsibility as members to do the work of the ministry.
 - Invite someone to your home for the purpose of building them up.
- **Pursue Christlikeness**
 - Recommit to the disciplines of grace.
 - <http://biblicalspirituality.org/biography/>
- **Ask God to help us mature spiritually.**
 - Acknowledge the fact that you are a work in progress and belong to a church who is in progress.