

HOW TO BUILD UP A HEALTHY CHURCH

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:16)

Ephesians Bible study opened our eyes to the meaning of the church. We were overwhelmed by God’s great plan for the church. We asked ourselves, “What is the church?” “What is the identity of UBF? Do we have a clear identity as a church? If so, how do we know that UBF is a church?” Many bible scholars commented, “UBF is healthy in terms of faith, morals, transparency in material matters, and more, but is weak in terms of a biblical view of the church.” Why did they say that UBF is weak in terms of a biblical view of the church? In fact, in the past, we didn’t have a clear identity as a church. We were identified as a mission organization like CCC, IVF, and Navigators. And we identified ourselves as a para-church. Now we have a clear identity as a church.¹ Nevertheless, some are wondering, “Is my single-family ministry really a church?” It is definitely a church! If a single family goes to a Muslim country as missionaries are they not a church? Jesus said, “...where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Mt 18:20). Many a single family is very faithful to have a regular Sunday worship service, preaching the word of God and praying. Some families have a Bible study worship service. They obey God’s word and share it with others. If a single-family ministry is fruitful, it can function as a church well. Even though it does not bear fruit for a long period of time, it is still a church. But it is not easy to function as a church. In those cases, we need to prayerfully seek God’s guidance about how to partner with another ministry. Still, some people have a negative view of the church, saying that we should not be like a church. Especially many young people hate the church, saying, “I love Jesus

¹ “UBF is an international evangelical church and network of house churches dedicated to Christ and his kingdom. Our main focus is to study the Bible, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and live according to his teachings. We especially pray to reach college students and help them grow as his lifelong disciples. Our goal is to obey our Lord’s commands to love one another and to go and make disciples of all nations (Jn 13:34; Mt 28:18-20). We pray that God may continue to call and raise lay missionaries through us and send them to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8). (UBF North America Local Chapter Guidelines.)

but I don't like church." The interesting thing is that if you hate the church, you are hating the body of Jesus. We understand why they have a negative view of the church because they had a bad experience in the church. Nevertheless, we need a Biblical view of the church.

When we studied Ephesians, we realized that we had a negative view of the church, which needed to be corrected. In the past, we used the word "church" in a derogatory manner without understanding the Biblical view of the church. For example, when someone did not receive training well, we said, "Okay, go to the church." It meant that UBF was superior to the church. This was our pride. We deeply repented. In any case, we should not have a negative view of the church. Rather, we should have more positive view of the church because she is a divine institution, the bride of Christ. We desired to understand the Biblical meaning of the church. We read some books about the church. The church is a very complex subject. We cannot cover this subject exhaustively in this presentation. Mainly we want to have a right, Biblical view of the church. One of the most influential Christian leaders, John Stott, said, "We are not only Christian people; we are also church people. We are not only committed to Christ, we are also committed to the body of Christ. ... The church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God's new community."² As another scholar, Kuiper, has said, "The church is not a temporary substitute for something better, it constitutes the very heart of the eternal plan of God."³

In light of this problem awareness, we would like to present "How to build up a healthy church" based on Ephesians. We will be looking at: 1. Church metaphors in Ephesians. 2. The identifying marks of the church. 3. A gospel-centered church. 4. An overview of Ephesians. 5. How we can build up a healthy church.

² John R. W. Stott 2007: 19.

³ R. B. Kuiper 2015: 24. "According to dispensationalism the church did not exist before Pentecost, and even when the Son of God came to earth it did not. He came to establish a kingdom, but when the Jewish people rejected him as king he decided to postpone the kingdom until his second coming and in the interim to establish a church. This makes the "church-age" seem relatively insignificant, a mere parenthesis. But the truth is that the church was founded already in Eden and will continue to the end of time for ever and ever."

1. Church Metaphors in Ephesians

Though the Bible describes the church by using many metaphors, in the book of Ephesians, we can see three church metaphors: a household, a building, and a body (1:23; 2:19-20; 4:12,15-16). The household metaphor is more clearly developed in *1 Timothy 3:15*: *“God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”* Here Paul emphasized the truthfulness of the church. But in Ephesians, he emphasizes God’s great love by which he adopts us to sonship in Christ (1:5). God is our Father, and we are his children. We have an intimate love relationship with God, calling him “Father.” At the same time, we have a glorious inheritance in the heavenly realms (1:14,18). There is no discrimination or hierarchy. We are all members of God’s household (2:19).

Paul also uses the building metaphor, saying, *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”* (2:20). The building metaphor was also used in 1 Peter 2:4-7. Jesus is the living **Stone** and we, Christians, are living **stones**. God does not make living stones as decorations. Rather, he uses them to build a huge spiritual house. Jesus is the chief cornerstone of this house, which is the main part of the foundation. Upon it, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (2:21). We are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (2:22).

In Ephesians, Paul mainly uses the body metaphor. The word “body” appears 13 times. Among them, ten times it refers to Jesus’ body: “his body” (1:23; 5:23,30), “one body” (2:16; 3:6; 4:4), “the body of Christ” (4:12), “mature body of him” (4:15). Since we are one body, Paul urges us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (4:3). The foundation of this unity is the Triune God (4:4-6). This unity is not uniformity but is expressed through diverse gifts, given by Christ to equip his people for works of service. The purpose is to build up his body (4:7-12). Christ is the head of his body (1:22-23; 5:23). He governs and sustains all the members of his body so that they may grow to maturity (4:13). From Christ, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work (4:16). In this

way, the body becomes mature, strong and healthy enough to fulfill God's plan and vision. Without Christ, who is the head, all the members of his body are nothing. Each member should submit to Christ. Christ must dwell in our inner being through faith (3:17). We must be rooted and built up in Christ's multi-dimensional love (3:17b-18).

When we think of the nature of the church, one thing is clear: the church is living and dynamic. It is not a static organization, but a living organism that is building itself up and growing like the human body. The human body consists of various kinds of cells, estimated to be 37.2 trillion in number. There are more cells in the human body than galaxies in the universe. The cells vary in volume, surface area and type: skin, blood, internal organs, etc. These cells constantly reproduce, grow and develop. Otherwise, they will all die. In the same way, the church must constantly grow and develop. This is possible because Christ is living and he is the head. As each member submits to him and is nourished by him, the body grows and becomes healthy and strong.

Thus far, we have studied the metaphors of the church in Ephesians. Now we need to consider how the church has been understood historically in terms of her identifying marks.

2. The Identifying Marks of the Church

Through the ancient church council of Nicea,⁴ the church has been defined by four key words: 1) one, 2) holy, 3) universal, and 4) apostolic. These four marks have been used to summarize biblical teaching on the church. The church reflects the character of God. The church is one, holy, universal, and apostolic as a reflection of God's unity, holiness, immensity, eternity, and truthfulness.⁵ What is the meaning of these marks?

⁴ The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, commonly known as the "Nicene Creed," was formed by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

⁵ Mark Dever 2012: 15

One: The church is one. The oneness of the church signifies its inherent unity. There can be only one true church which was founded by Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul explained why the church must be one in *Ephesians 4:4-6*: *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”* In Galatians 3:28, Paul said that Christians are all one in Christ, regardless of ethnicity, social status or gender. Paul’s teaching reflects Jesus’ teaching that there is one flock under one good shepherd Jesus (Jn 10:16). Jesus prayed for those who will believe in him to be one: *“... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...” (Jn 17:20-21a).*

The unity of the church is a unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph 4:13). It is a unity where people come together because of a common commitment to the gospel of truth.⁶ This unity is not visible at the organizational level; it is a spiritual reality, consisting in the fellowship of all true believers sharing in the Holy Spirit. It becomes visible when believers share the same baptism, partake of the Lord’s Supper, and look forward to sharing one heavenly city. The church on earth experiences this unity only as its members are united in God’s truth as it is revealed in Scripture.⁷

Holy: The church is holy. When we hear the word “holy,” most of us think of purity or moral perfection. To be sure, the Bible uses the word this way. But the primary meaning of *holy* is “separate,” “different or set apart.” The Greek word “church” is *“ekklesia.”* It is a combination of the prefix, *ek*, which means “from” or “out of,” and *kaleo* which means “to call.” The church is the company of people who have been called out of the world by God. After God called us out of the world, he wants us to live a holy life. God’s call to holiness is a call to godliness, to a different pattern, standard, or manner of living from that of the world (Ro 12:1-2). Peter said: *“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1Pe 1:15).* To live a holy life is God’s will for us (1Thess 4:3-4; Eph 5:3).

⁶ R. C. Sproul 2013: 15.

⁷ Ibid., 16

God's holiness is also transcendent. God is so far above and beyond us.⁸ God is supreme, great, majestic and awesome. The amazing thing is that the holy God makes the things that are set apart holy. *God said, "...I am the Lord, who makes you holy" (Lev 20:8; 21:8,15,23; 22:9,16,32).* The word "holy" was applied to earthly things, such as the holy ground (Ex 3:5), a holy nation (Ex 19:6), a holy city (Is 48:2), holy furnishings (Nu 4:15), and so on. When things have been consecrated to the Lord, they become holy. Only God can sanctify something else. This gives us great hope. Though we are totally unholy God makes us holy.

The church is called holy because its members are in the process of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-6). That's why Paul addressed believers as saints though they were unholy. From a human perspective, Corinthian believers were terrible in many ways. They tolerated the sin of incest; they were divided based on human leadership, and more. It's hard to say that they were holy. Yet Paul called them the church of God, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people (1Co 1:2). Many people criticize that the church is filled with hypocrites. Nevertheless, believers are called saints because we are in the process of being sanctified. The Bible refers to Christ as a "bridegroom" and the church as "the bride of Christ." Right now, the bride's gown is stained. It has blemishes, spots, and wrinkles. But Christ is molding his church into holiness. Christ will remove every spot, every blemish, and every wrinkle so that in the last day he will present his bride to the Father in the full splendor of perfect holiness (Eph 5:26-27). Wow! How beautiful, wonderful and glorious we will be!

Universal (Catholic): The church is universal.⁹ It is universal because God is the "Lord of all the earth" and "King of the ages."¹⁰ The church of Christ is found all across the world, made up of people from every language, tongue, and nation throughout the generations (Rev 7:9).¹¹

⁸ R. C. Sproul 1998: 38.

⁹ In the "Nicene Creed" the Greek word *katholicain*, which means catholic, was originally used. The word "catholic" doesn't refer to the Roman Catholic Church. Rather it means universal.

¹⁰ Mark Dever 2012: 17.

¹¹ R. C. Sproul 2013: 42.

Apostolic: The church is apostolic. This means it is founded on the Word of God given through the apostles. This describes the church's origin and beliefs as rooted and continuing in the living tradition of the Apostles of Jesus. Apostle Paul tells the Ephesian believers that they had been *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”* (Eph 2:20). Only with the apostles’ teaching is the church *“the pillar and foundation of the truth”* (1Ti 3:15).

These four marks have long been used to express the Bible’s teaching about the church. Donald G. Bloesch summarized well:

The church is already one, but it must become more visibly one through the efforts of church people across denominational lines to draw closer together--in faith and practice. The church is already holy in its source and foundation, but it must strive to produce fruits of holiness in its sojourn in the world. The church is already catholic, but it must seek a fuller measure of catholicity...The church is already apostolic, but it must become more consciously apostolic by allowing the gospel to reform it.¹²

When we think of these marks of the church, they seem to be doctrinal and dry. The church is more than these. According to Jesus’ word, love is a mark of the church. Indeed, love is the most important one.

Love: This “love” is God’s holy love, which is “agape.” It is unconditional, taking the initiative, self-sacrificing, life-giving and forgiving. Before knowing Christ, no one knows this agape. Though the word “love” is very popular, most people only know “eros,” which is carnal. At best people know “phileo,” which is brotherly love. People say that love is a feeling. As such, it can change based on the situation. Everyone wants to be loved and to love others. But when we pursue “eros,” we hurt others and are hurt by others. We can never be satisfied with this love. Rather, it further complicates our sin problem. Still, people desperately seek genuine love. We can experience

¹² Donald G. Bloesch 2002: 103.

genuine love only through Christ (1 Jn 3:16a). God loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son Jesus to die for our sins. When we accept God's love, we can be truly satisfied and happy.

Out of this overflowing love, we can love others genuinely. *Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:34-35).* Jesus wants us to practice God's love toward one another and toward all kinds of marginalized people (Mt 5:46). God's love must be a distinctive mark of Jesus' church.

We have thought about the identifying marks of an authentic, living and true church. What is it that makes a church like this? Simply speaking, it is the gospel. Let's think about this in more detail.

3. A Gospel-Centered Church

The gospel-centered nature of the church can be found in both the Biblical view, and the traditional Protestant view of the church.

1. Biblical view: We can find this view in *Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

(1) The apostles' teaching: The apostles' teachings became the Bible (Eph 2:19-20). So, the phrase "*they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching*" means that they loved the Bible and studied the Bible diligently. Bible study was the source of their spirit-filled lives.

(2) The fellowship: Fellowship is the Greek word *koinonia* which expresses our common Christian life, what we share as believers. The word *koinonia* also implies witness. *Koinonia* means what we share in together and what we share out together, taking care of needy people (2:44).¹³

¹³ John R. W. Stott 2007:26.

(3) The breaking of bread and prayer: “The breaking of bread” refers to the Lord’s Supper, which was regularly observed by the early Christians (Ac 20:7; 1Co 11:20). “Prayer” is not private, but public prayer in worship service.

(4) Evangelism: *Acts 2:47* says, “... praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” This verse implies that they were engaged in evangelism. In fact, the early church was actively engaged in evangelism. When a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Ac 8:1,4). In this way, the Antioch Church was born (Ac 11:19-21).

John Stott summarized:

First, they were related to the apostles. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. A living church is apostolic. Second, they were related to each other. They loved each other. A living church is a caring and sharing church. Third, they were related to God. They worshiped God in the breaking of bread and in prayers, with joy and with reverence. A living church is a worshiping church. Fourth, they were related to the world outside. They reached out in witness. A living church is an evangelizing church.¹⁴

2. Protestant view: In the past, the Roman Catholic Church said that where the bishop is, there is the church. But the Protestant Church has had a different view. First, a church is a true church when the gospel is preached. Second, a true church is one where the sacraments are rightly administered. Third, a true church practices authentic discipline.

(1) Preaching the gospel: this is the most essential task of the church. As the members of the church gather regularly, the focus of their meeting should be proclaiming and responding to the gospel message as it is found in the

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott 2007: 32-33.

Bible. The message should be Bible believing, Christ-centered and Spirit-filled. Through this the members should grow in faith in Jesus and to be like him. If the message contents deviate from the Bible to become philosophical or psychological, it cannot be a true church. If the purpose of gathering is mainly to carry out business, socialize, or improve one's life in this world, it cannot be a true church. Apostle Paul said to Timothy, *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching"* (1Ti 4:13). He also gave a serious charge: *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season..."* (2Ti 4:1b-2a).

(2) Sacraments (Baptism and Communion): The Roman Catholic Church says that there are seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, unction (anointing of the sick and dying), holy orders, and marriage. Protestants believe that only baptism and the Lord's Supper are supported by Biblical evidence (Mt 28:19; Lk 22:19; 1Co 11:26). We believe that these two sacraments, instituted by Christ and accepted in faith, are enough to have Christ's perfect righteousness and holiness.¹⁵ The sacraments are signs, divine actions, and means of divine presence. They symbolize the gospel and teach us authoritatively what the gospel is. They teach us not by words, but by actions. In baptism, not only do we hear about cleansing from sin, but we see and feel it, depicted dramatically. In the Lord's Supper, not only do we hear about Jesus' death for us, but we see his body given for us, and we taste, smell, and touch it.¹⁶ Practicing baptism and the Lord's Supper demonstrates obedience to Christ, and they are intended to complement by visible sign and symbol the audible preaching of the gospel...They are also the outward signs, or visible boundaries, which distinguish a particular people from the world.¹⁷

The sacraments are not absolutely necessary for salvation, since Scripture binds salvation only to faith. It is not deprivation of, but contempt for, the sacrament that makes a person guilty before God. However, the sacraments are valuable for reinforcing faith, joining believers together, and

¹⁵ Herman Bavinck 2008: 463.

¹⁶ John M. Frame 2010: 265.

¹⁷ Mark Dever 2012:28-29.

setting believers apart from the world as a witness.¹⁸ Jesus commanded us, “...go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them...” (Mt 28:19), “Do this (**communion**) in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19b). In any case, we must obey Jesus’ command.

(3) Church Discipline: Among Protestants, not everyone agrees that church discipline is a mark of the church. It is because, in the name of discipline, terrible things have been done, including abuses of power in the Spanish Inquisition and witch hunts. However, these abuses should not prohibit us from practicing what the Bible clearly teaches about dealing with sin. Jesus strongly warned against causing little ones to sin (Mt 18:6-9). When someone sins, it must be dealt with very carefully. Jesus gave us a process to follow, in which the church is the final authority (Mt 18:15-17). The purpose of discipline is to redeem and restore; it is not merely punitive.

When we think of the two views of the church, it is clear that preaching the gospel, both in words and actions, is the main task of the church. When the gospel is preached the church is established. But gospel preaching should not stop there. It must be done continually as the main focus of the church. Then the church grows. The gospel is not static, but it is dynamic, grows, and bears fruit (Col 1:6). The gospel contains not only the “abc’s” of Christian faith, but it is also the “xyz” of faith. The gospel is not just for beginners. All believers need to grow and mature in gospel faith. It is in the church that the gospel is to be lived out by believers.

Many people think that they can live as Christians without belonging to a local church. They want to avoid conflicts and problems in the church. To become a member of the church seems to be an undesirable option that they live without. In addition, many young people generally hesitate to make any kind of serious commitment. It is because they cannot trust institutions and leaders who have disappointed them. We can understand this. Nevertheless, commitment to a local church is not an option for a Christian. Cyprian of Carthage said, “No one can have God for his Father, who does not have the Church for his mother.”¹⁹ This means that if we call God our Father,

¹⁸ Herman Bavinck 2008: 463.

¹⁹ Cyprian of Carthage (died 258 A.D.) in his treatise: “On the Unity of the Church”

we must belong to a local church. Without commitment to a local church, no one can grow. We need to help young people to commit themselves to a local church so that they may grow in faith in Jesus. Every one of us is a saint in isolation. It is in the church that our real weaknesses, flaws and sins are exposed.²⁰ As this happens, we can recognize our need, come to Jesus and be transformed. That is why we need the Christian community, the church. We can experience the transforming power of the gospel in the church.

Another important task of the church is to preach the gospel to the world. The church should be a missional community. Preaching the gospel is a natural overflow of the gospel's renewing work in us. In fact, all Christians are missionaries. Being part of God's family means we are sent to others with the good news of salvation from sin and death. We are called to share the gospel with our neighbors. Some of us are called to share the gospel with people who don't know Jesus across the cultures and countries. All Christians are sent by Jesus to bring the gospel to the broken world.²¹ Jesus said, "*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*" (Jn 20:21). To sum up, the church must preach the gospel, experience the power of the gospel, and preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

When we consider the identifying marks and gospel-centered nature of the church, we can be confident that we are indeed a church in the true sense of the word. Most UBF local churches are strongly focused on gospel preaching and practicing the sacraments. But some small house churches do not seem to observe communion. As a church, we should observe communion at least once a year. By doing this, we can remember God's saving grace, reinforce our faith, and have a distinctive Christian identity.

Thus far, we have thought about the nature and purpose of the church. Now we want to think about how to build up a healthy church. This is the emphasis of the book of Ephesians, which we will study in this conference. Let's begin with an overview of Ephesians.

²⁰ Robert H. Thune and Will Walker 2013: 17.

²¹ Robert H. Thune and Will Walker 2013: 87.

4. An Overview of Ephesians

We can summarize the book of Ephesians with four words: “God’s great plan,” “God’s great love,” “God’s great wisdom,” and “God’s great power.”

God’s great plan was to establish the church, and through it bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (1:10). God’s plan is not just to redeem people from their sins, but to restore his reign and fulfill his original purpose in creation. God’s plan is not merely for a part of the world, but for all creation—everything in heaven and on earth. Through Christ, God reconciles all things to himself (1Co 15:25; 2Co 5:19). This is a perfect plan without any flaw.

The motive of this plan is *God’s great love*, which he lavished on us (1:4b,8). We were dead in our transgressions and sins, and we were by nature deserving of wrath (2:1,3). But because of his great love for us, God has freely given his glorious grace and made us alive with Christ (1:6b; 2:4-5a). The life-source of the church is God’s great love (1:4b,6b,8; 2:4; 4:2). Therefore, we should be rooted and established in Christ’s multi-dimensional love. Everything should function out of love. We should “bear with one another in love” (4:2), “*speaking the truth in love*” (4:15), “*grow and build ourselves up in love*” (4:16), and “*walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*” (5:2). “Husbands” should love their own wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her (5:25).

God designed his plan and carries it out with *great wisdom*. With all wisdom and understanding, God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ (1:8b-9). It is “*manifold wisdom*” which means it is marked by diversity or rich variety (3:10). Through the church the “*manifold wisdom*” of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

Though one has a great plan, and wisdom and love, without power, the plan cannot be carried out. God has *great power*. God created all things (3:9b). He is over all and through all and in all (4:6). God exerted this power

when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (1:20). God also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (2:6). God's incomparably great power is at work in us who believe (1:19). God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (3:20). His power demolishes the devil's schemes and his strongholds (6:10-13). Then, what is God's purpose in creating the church? It is for the praise of his glory (1:6,12,14).

5. How Can We Build Up a Healthy Church?

In chapters 1-3, we learned that God's great plan was to establish the church, and through it to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (1:10). God created a new humanity (the church), through Christ, who is our peace. God has a vision for his church that all believers may become one in Christ. In chapters 4-6, Paul teaches us how to realize this great vision practically. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received (4:1). He stresses the importance of being completely humble, gentle, patient and of bearing with one another in love, being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit (4:2-3). Humility is the first virtue mentioned. Humility is the foundation of all virtue, and it is most essential for unity. Behind all division and conflict there is pride. "Be completely humble" means "all humility" which is humble about all things, not just some things, but all things, and not just one time, but all the time. It is only possible when we try to imitate Jesus' humility (Php 2:6-8). When we do so, the body of Christ can be built up and grows to maturity (4:13-16).

In the body metaphor, Christ is the head and each member is a part of his body. Christ is perfect and he supplies everything his body needs. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life (2Pe 1:3). Jesus is the source of life who enables us to bear good fruit (Jn 15:5). Jesus fills everything in every way (Eph 1:22-23). The head has no problem at all. But the body must be built up. We are all members of his body (4:25b; 5:30). Each member is responsible for building up the body.

What, then, should the members do? On the negative side, each one must fight against their own sinful nature, putting off the old self (4:22). Specifically, we must avoid sexual immorality, impurity and greed—even a hint (4:17-19; 5:3-5). We must stop lying and deceiving each other (4:25). We need to stop stealing (4:28). We need to get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice (4:31). We must also remove disobedience from our hearts because God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient (5:6). We should not get drunk on wine (5:18). These things are like cancer. If we find even a small tumor that is cancerous, we need to cut it out right away. Otherwise, it grows and spreads until it destroys the body.

Positively, each one must put on the new self. Particularly, we should be made new in the attitudes of our minds and live in true righteousness and holiness (4:24). As God is holy, we should be holy. We should speak the truth in love (4:15,25), work hard and be a blessing (4:28b,29b), be kind and compassionate toward one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave us (4:32). Especially, we must follow God’s example as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (5:1-2). We are called to live as children of light in this dark world (5:8-9), to find out what pleases the Lord (5:10), to live wisely (5:15-16), and to be filled with the Spirit, singing spiritual songs and giving thanks to God (5:18-20).

To have a healthy church, there should be healthy households, and especially healthy marriages. A family is constituted by a marriage covenant (Gen 2:24; Mal 2:14). The intimacy and unity that should exist between members of a family begin with a husband and wife joined together by covenant in the sight of God through vows.²² For building up a healthy marriage, husbands must love their wives, just as Christ loved the church. Wives must submit to their husbands and respect them, just as the church submits to and respects Christ (5:22-33). Their relationship reflects that of Christ and the church. As husbands learn to love their own wives unconditionally, and wives learn to respect their husbands unconditionally,

²² Ryan M. McGraw and Ryan Speck 2015: 6.

they become one, fruitful and happy. Through their healthy marriages, children learn to obey their parents in the Lord (6:1-3). Parents do not exasperate their children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (6:4).

When we think of Ephesians 4-6, four virtues are important to build up a healthy church. These are “humility,” “holiness,” “truth,” and “love.” These are pillars of building up a healthy church. When we hear these words, we feel very burdensome. In fact, we cannot put these things into practice with our own effort. That is why we need Jesus. Jesus, who is the head, fills us with everything that we need. When we come to Jesus, he helps us to be humble, holy, true. Jesus enables us to love others, especially, forgive others.

The church is made up of all kinds of different people from different backgrounds. Inevitably, conflicts arise. In a church like UBF, made up of many different ethnic groups, these conflicts can be quite complicated. At the same time, the church is made up of all kinds of sinners, at various stages of spiritual maturity. This is also a main cause of conflict. How can we resolve all kinds of conflicts? **Only in the cross of Jesus.** Jesus destroyed the barriers between God and people, and those among people. Jesus himself is our peace (2:14). So, we must come to the cross of Jesus. Each one of us must be crucified with Christ so that he may reign over each of us. We should see each other through the cross of Jesus. The cross of Jesus must be the center of the church. We should be completely humble, speak the truth in love, live sanctified, spirit-filled lives, and forgive each other. Especially, we should walk in the way of love. In a word, we must die to ourselves so that Christ may be exalted in us and among us and through us. The purpose of building up a healthy church is not just for the well-being of its members. It is to shine the light of the gospel to the dark world. “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (5:14).

As Jesus’ church, we are in the world but not of the world. This is why, throughout history, the church has been attacked in many ways by God’s enemies. In Ephesians, Paul especially warns us of the devil’s schemes. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly

realms (Eph 6:11-12). Though our church body is healthy we need to put on the full armor of God to fight against God's enemies. In that sense, the church is militant. The church is also triumphant. The church is the sign of the advancing kingdom. The church is able to engage and overcome the principalities and powers because it is imbued with the hope of the coming triumph of the kingdom of God, which is assured through Christ's resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.²³

The church is glorious not because of us but because of Jesus who is the head. Let us build up a healthy and mature church in which Christ is exalted in and through us.

²³ Donald G. Bloesch 2002: 97.

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