

More than a Building, Ephesians 4:11-16, Building Resilient Disciples, 8/24/25

Last week we started a new series exploring the purpose of the church and our role in it called More than a Building. While we are renovating our physical building, the church is far more than the bricks and mortar...it's people! Last week from Ephesians 2, we were challenged and inspired by Paul's analogy of the church being built, brick by diverse brick through the ministry of each one of us. Remember the legos? Every brick matters! And my challenge to you was not to bury your brick, but make the commitment to use your brick to build up the church for the mission of introducing people to Jesus Christ and helping them follow him. Here's what's so awesome, and what we are so encouraged by- you overwhelmingly responded. We receive 170 new serving responses, not including those who already are serving, in our key areas of need! Praise God. Every one of you should have been contacted this week by a member of our team. And if you didn't- check your junk mail, reach out to us...and please respond! If you missed last Sunday, and you want to serve, we need you! Out at the guest center, you can pick up a serve card and indicate where you would like to serve.

This morning, we are switching metaphors, from bricks to human bodies. The church is so important and vital in how it works that Paul uses more than one metaphor to describe it; just two chapters later in Ephesians 4:11-16 he now uses the imagery of the human body. So today we want to explore the body of Christ, the church, and specifically to answer the question, "What is the goal of the body of Christ?"

A little context, in this chapter Paul begins by drawing our attention to the unity in the body. 8x in 6 verses he uses the word "one"- we have one Lord, one faith, etc. Which makes sense because the body has lots of parts, but it's all one organism working together. Paul says the same thing about the church. It's made up of lots of different people, from different backgrounds, and places in their spiritual life, we are designed to be one spiritual organism working together.

Paul then goes on in verses 7-11 to tell us that Jesus very purposefully designed his church various gifts and abilities so that we each have a vital role to play and he gifted the church specifically with leaders. Look at verse **11** *So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, [Remember last week from Ephesians 2- these were the foundational roles that the church was built on] the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,*

And what is the role of these leaders? **12** *to equip his people for works of service,* The job of leadership is not to do all the work of ministry did you know that? My job as Lead Pastor, and the role of our leadership team is not to get all the work of service done ourselves- to do all the hospital visits and prayer meetings, and clothing the homeless, and sharing Jesus with your neighbor. Our primary role is calling, and motivating, and equipping YOU for the ministry! We should all have name tags that say equipper, and you should all have name tags that say minister.

And all of this unity, all of this gifting, all of this one another serving in the body is leading to one big goal. Anytime you see “so that” in the Bible circle it because it’s the Bible telling us something important about the why, the aim, the goal. *so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God*

and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Our goal is to be built like Jesus!

When I was a kid in the late 80s early 90s, I wanted to be built like Hulk Hogan when I grew up. I was a Hulkamaniac... That’s why I said my prayers and took my vitamins, because the Hulkster told me to so I would grow up and look like him. OK, that was a little misguided. But Paul says, our spiritual goal is that when we grow up we are increasingly more like Jesus- individually and as a church.

At Brandywine, our goal is not to have the best worship music, or coolest children and students ministries... although I think our music and ministries are pretty great and cool. It’s that each of us and collectively as a church increasingly mature into little “Christs” that’s what the word Christian means... that we increasingly think like Jesus, make decisions like Jesus, pray like Jesus, have a heart like Jesus, display character like Jesus, serve like Jesus, love like Jesus. All- this isn’t just for a few super-spiritual people, it’s the goal for all of us whether we are 50 years following Jesus or 50 days into following Jesus. We should all be striving for this together.

Because here’s what happens if we aren’t making that the focus. *14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there*

by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

This is a powerful image. Have you been to the beach and seen a little toddler sneak away a bit from his parents who aren’t paying attention for a second, and this little guy just starts running into the water... and then a wave hits him and the poor kid gets tossed. And comes up gasping and crying... it’s dangerous! Paul says, this is what it looks like when a baby Christian, a Christian whose spiritual growth is stunted, or when a Christian is out on their own separated from the community. An immature Christian, especially on their own, is susceptible to false teaching like the Prosperity Gospel, or a works based gospel, or a political gospel. A baby Christian is susceptible to getting tossed by cultural trends, and worldviews, and persuasive influencers with YouTube channels that aren’t Biblical. It’s dangerous. So what do we do about it?

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him

who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 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. Paul says this is why it is so critical for Christians to help one another grow. We need spiritual

parents, older brothers and sisters in the faith watching out for us, spiritual life guards so that we aren't getting tossed. And here's what that means, we cannot continue to grow, we will stagnate and revert into spiritual immaturity like toddlers apart from this vital one another ministry in community in the church. That's why the analogy that Paul uses isn't a device like an iPhone...we don't just buy it plug it in and it comes fully equipped with everything you need. The analogy is a human. Humans are messy...they need lots of love, teaching, and training and nurturing to grow. And the specific practice of this growth, the key to maturity Paul gives us is in these vital relationships speaking the truth in love. We will not grow, I will not grow unless we are plunged into a group of people that are doing this in your life regularly.

I am so thankful for the many teachers, and mentors, and older spiritual brothers and sisters, parents, and pastors, and friends who have helped me grow up spiritually, speaking the truth in love to me. Like a mentor of mine Dave Young who looked me in the eye and said, Nate you have been given many external gifts that people can see, but if you don't slow down and work on your internal character, you are in danger of either burning out, or failing out of ministry.

So- This is what we are after for you, this is the goal of everything we do as a church- becoming more like Jesus. Who is surrounding you? Who is close enough to you to speak the truth in love? Who is helping you grow increasingly in Christ-likeness? If you don't know, we want to help you with that.

So what I want to do with the rest of our time is cast some vision about how specifically we are pursuing this goal, and what next steps you can take personally. One of our three key ON THE MOVE initiatives over the next several years is **building resilient disciples of Jesus in an increasingly post-Christian culture.**

Over the past couple of years of prayer, dialogue and study together among our Ministry Leadership Team, we formulated a paradigm for Resilient Discipleship based off of Jesus' words to his disciples just before he went to the Cross. **John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** Give short gospel.

In this powerful little verse Jesus describes himself with three clear phrases- **the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE.** He could have used lots of words, but there is something very intentional and distinct about these terms that help us articulate and form our paradigm for resilient discipleship to Jesus as we move forward together.

Following Jesus as the Way [Way Slide]

The word "way" in Scripture is used to describe a pattern or way of life. Becoming like Jesus means following the patterns and practices of Jesus. As you examine Jesus' way of life in the gospels, four themes of resilient discipleship emerge: **Rhythms: spiritual practices** such as prayer & solitude, Scripture reading, fasting and rest. **Calling: living on a mission** to make disciples and discerning your distinct call for service to Him **Grit: learning to reject our pursuit of comfort** and what the world tells us is the good life and embracing suffering for Christ when it comes and **Community: living out the one another** for our spiritual progress.

WAY SLIDE Over the next 6-9 months, we will be creating a few key training classes and short-term groups for us to learn together how to follow the ways of Jesus. Our hope is that over the next couple of years, every person who calls Brandywine their church home would go through these short-term groups so that together we are increasingly following the ways of Jesus.

Following Jesus as the Truth [Truth Slide]

Becoming a resilient disciple means that we look to Jesus who is the Word of God in the flesh. He redefines the ultimate reality of God, ourselves, our world and salvation. Resilient disciples therefore must have a strong grasp of **The Gospel**: the faith and practice of the gospel in everyday life, **The Bible**: reading, understanding and applying the Scriptures, **Doctrine Essentials**: clarity and conviction on the core beliefs of God, sin, salvation, the church and the afterlife and **Biblical Worldview**: discerning truth in the midst of competing narratives in our world.

In addition to Sunday sermons, we have structured environments where we will specifically focus on helping you follow Jesus as the truth and develop in your knowledge of these four themes-starting Sept. 7. **Reminder 3 service schedule**

Adult Christian Education ministry on Sunday mornings at 10am. We have been building a 5 year TRUTH curriculum focused on these key areas and over the past year our gifted teachers have been teaching through these themes. We would encourage you to attend these classes. What many people do is they rotate attending a class and serving in a ministry over seasons.

Following Jesus as the Life [LIFE SLIDE]

Jesus came to give us an abundant life, which comes from nurturing an intimate relationship with Him through the Holy Spirit indwelling us. The four key themes of life in Christ- **Humility**: seeing ourselves accurately before God and others and living transparently. **Surrender**: resisting temptation and following Jesus as Lord. **Fruitfulness**: learning to walk by the Spirit and bear fruit, especially love and **Relationships**: learning to live out the gospel of love by forgiving, accepting, giving grace and showing mercy.

LIFE SLIDE This fall we will be refocusing our groups ministry, calling them Life Groups. In these life groups, we will be training leaders and focusing on these key areas of resilient discipleship with Christ, building tracks for your spiritual growth together in your group.

RESILIENT DISCIPLESHIP SLIDE As part of the process of resilient discipleship we will be creating a helpful assessment and tools to help each of us name our own stage of growth in maturity in Jesus so we can get a better understanding of where we are and a pathway for how we can take the next step in our spiritual journey together.

This is not just something for adults. We are building resilient disciples of the next generation following the same paradigm, we have key environments, relationships, and curriculum for kids and students to help this process. Parents listen up...

Brandywine Kids

Sundays @10am - Sunday School Hour: Focus on building relationships and building a strong biblical foundation in order to become resilient disciples.

Sundays @11:30am - Worship Training Hour: Focus on teaching kids how to worship God and how to follow Jesus. Allows us to dig deeper into topical studies. Elementary students get to experience the first half of the worship service and often have a lesson similar to the sermon. We get it, it's a later day when you are used to getting out before noon- but it's really critical. To help with that- we're adding a snack for elementary kids between these two hours.

Wednesday Nights 6:30pm- Awana

Brandywine Students

On **Sunday mornings at 10am we have Student Quest**. Our Student Ministry has a 7 year curriculum that follows a path of discipleship, tailored for students and the unique challenges they face. On **Wednesday nights for Middle School and Thursday Nights for High School** we have our student groups which focus on life-on-life discipleship with adult mentors who are committed to their spiritual growth, walking with them from 6th grade to graduation, and often beyond. Nathan just graduated, and his leaders Joe Scalia and Willie Mah have been a mentor, teacher, friend and confidant to him since we got here 10 years ago when he was in 3rd grade. He loves those guys. He would tell you outside of his parents...they have had the greatest spiritual influence on his life.

Let me challenge you as parents, guardians, grandparents, as well as kids and students to make these discipleship environments a priority. Three key stats from the research from the National Study of Youth and Religion, and the findings in the landmark book Sticky Faith by Dr. Powell and Clark that's been done in the last few years on what it is that most contributes to a lifelong resilient faith from childhood to adulthood.

Of the key factors- Three are most clear:

#1 Regular attendance at churchwide worship services. More than any other factor, this the most important thing you parents can do is have your kids here, not just in their own kids and students ministry but worshipping, learning, and involved as part of the body of Christ in our worship services.

#2 Regular involvement in kids and students ministry where they are with their peers and able to grow with a group of other students together. That is why we want to encourage you to prioritize two services on a Sunday. More important than getting to sports, or a hobby, or home for a nap or for the Eagles game.

#3 A 5-1 Ratio of Adult Spiritual Influencers in their lives. That's a student pastor, kids ministry teacher, Awana volunteer, a small group mentor, etc. other than their parents. And our student and Kids environment is built on this very core relational principle.

We are on a journey together to build resilient disciples. What is your next step? **Title Slide**