

## **A Disciple is Equipped to Serve**

We are going through a series together on discipleship. If you have your Bibles, I'd like you to turn with me if you would today to Ephesians Chapter 4. Today we're gonna be looking at the fact that disciples are equipped to serve.

You know, we've been doing this discipleship thing for a while both in Brentwood and also in Antioch. I just want to give a greeting to all the folks down there today. Thank you for all you're doing to serve the Lord. I hope you're not getting tired of these discipling principles because these have been a wonderful review for me, and I'm feeling very challenged by them. But sometimes when you see or hear things too much we kinda tune them out.

I was reading about four guys, one from Idaho, one from Nebraska, one from Florida, one from New York, and they were traveling together across country when all of a sudden the guy from Idaho opens the window, reaches in his bag and starts throwing potatoes out. The guy from Nebraska goes, "What are you doing?"

He said, "Man, we've got so many of these in Idaho. I'm sick of looking at them." So he threw the potatoes out the window.

Well, lo and behold the guy from Nebraska opens his backpack, and he starts throwing ears of corn out. The guy from Florida says, "What are you doing?"

He says, "Man, we got so many of these in Nebraska. I'm sick of looking at them."

To which the guy from Florida then opened the door and threw the New Yorker out.

Anyway, so I hope you don't get so tired of hearing about discipleship you just start to throw this stuff out. In this discipling series we're learning a lot about our purpose. Not just our purpose here at Golden Hills, but our purpose as believers. Our purpose is to glorify God by making disciples, reproducing followers, who will impact every area of the world for Christ. That's why God saved us. That's why we're here.

If disciples are really to be made, not just people who believe in Jesus, but people who really live for him. If they are to be made, there is to be a process to do it. In our process we believe disciples are best made when they worship, grow, and serve in the context of a Christian community.

The service part is very essential. We've talked a lot about worship. We've talked a lot about growing and the opportunities that are available for that. But many times the service part is overlooked. When Paul was writing to the Ephesian church, a church that was extremely strategic in the spread of the gospel across the Roman Empire -- and as we know later around the world -- he made sure to address to them the importance of being equipped to serve. The church will only be as strong as each member that makes it up. So Paul was encouraging these believers to live out their Christianity living worthy

of the Lord by employing the gifts God gave and being equipped to actually serve him in strategic ways.

When Paul writes about that, this is the way he puts it in Ephesians 4 verse 7:

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he led captives in his train  
and gave gifts to men.”

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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 men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> 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.

Let’s pray together.

*Father, I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of a church that has so many people engaged in worshiping, growing, and serving. But if there’s an area of ministry that can help us to grow that’s being most neglected, it’s this area of service. I’m praying today, God, that you’ll speak to all of us, beginning with me, that I might every day be engaged in the joy of doing the very things you have called and designed me to do. May that be true for all of us. We’ll thank you, God, for how you’ll use that service to grow us and to impact the world. We thank you for all that you’ll show us today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

This summer Karla, Kimmie and I got a chance to go back East. Whenever we get there, I always try to get to New England. I went to my old hometown downtown, which isn’t much of a downtown in this little village, but it was fun to see that all the buildings are the same. They haven’t built any new ones and they haven’t torn down any old ones. They’re still the same. Their uses are different. Instead of Grace’s Candy Kitchen it’s now a pizza place. Instead of the grocery store it’s Hoffman’s Hardware. Instead of Rowberge Shoe Shop that I went to as a kid, it’s now a Yankee Peddler, an antiques and collectibles place. The floor in this place hasn’t changed. It’s still that thin, little slat board, worn down floor I remember when I was kid, but everything in there is different.

Karla and I went in. There was a lady behind the counter who looked vaguely familiar to me. I went to her, and I knew there was a connection there somewhere, so I said to her, “Do you know Dr. Markwald?”

“How do you know Dr. Markwald?” she said.

I said, “Everybody that grew up in this town knows Dr. Markwald.”

She goes, “I’m his daughter.”

I said, “I thought you looked vaguely familiar.” We got caught up a little bit, and we shared a lot of stories. She is still living in Dr. Markwald’s old house who was our old country doctor there, made house calls, brought us into the world, mended our problems, and fixed our ailments. He was the guy you went to for your school physicals and everything else. She told me that he doctored into his 90s; he was still there serving that community.

You know, it made me think about going back to visits in his office, and I asked her if they still had somewhere that little plastic pegboard we used to use as kids as we waited to go in. She said, “Yup, still there.”

I said, “I have so many fond memories.”

I’ve shared with you before that it was this country doctor that used to ask me questions. He didn’t have a lot of fancy equipment. He had jars of cotton balls, and he had a thing you looked in your ear, things he’d rap on your knee, he’d listen to your heart, and he’d tap on this and that, but he didn’t have a lot of fancy equipment. But in a physical or every time you went to see him he would ask you those things I’ve shared with you before, “Are you eating good? Are you getting enough rest? Are you exercising?”

It’s interesting today when I go for my physicals they’re asking me the same things. The reason is that good food, good rest, good exercise are the basic building blocks of a healthy physical body, and they are also the same building blocks for a healthy spiritual body. The food of the Spirit is the word of God. That’s why last week we looked at the importance of being trained in God’s word. We need to be self-feeding Christians. Rest is where our bodies are restored and nurtured in the Spirit. That’s the strength we gain from praying and fellowship with God and the strength we gain from fellowshiping with one another. That’s why we need to be connected with God and worshipping connected to each other in a body, the body Christ.

But the exercise of the Spirit is serving. Many people do not recognize the importance of serving. Not only important to the church, but also to their own spiritual health. You see, when you exercise, your appetite is better and you rest better. It’s why when people say, “I’m struggling reading the Bible,” or “I can’t find time to pray.” I often understand that the real problem may be spiritual lethargy. Maybe what they need to do is get out and exercise a bit.

So I always ask them, “Are you meaningfully serving somewhere using what God gave you to advance his kingdom to be challenged where you have to depend upon God for him to show up, where you’re being stretched and grown, where you’re actually getting stronger?” Serving is so important to our spiritual health that Jesus not only taught his disciples to serve, he modeled it for them in their humanity.

You remember in Mark Chapter 10 the disciples are arguing about who is gonna be the greatest in the new kingdom? James and John are arguing about who is gonna be President and Secretary of State, and Jesus reminds them, “The ones who are great in

this kingdom are the ones who serve.” In fact he called them together and said in Mark 10 verse 42:

Jesus called them together and said, **“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**“If you want to be great in this kingdom,”** he said, **“If you really want to be a disciple then we need to become servants engaged in building up the church and expanding God’s kingdom.”** That’s why the apostle Paul taught that principle so clearly to those who sought to be disciples.

The book of Ephesians is a book of real applied Christianity. The first three chapters talk about what a real Christian is, that they are saints, they have Christ living in them, and they are set apart in faithfulness to God. That’s what Christian is. “They are people who live for the praise of his glory,” Paul said. They are people who are dead to sin and alive to God. They are people being filled to all the measure of the fullness of Christ. It’s very hard to read those first three chapters and not know whether or not you’re really a Christian. This book will knock you off the fence. You either are or you’re not. There’s no marginal room here.

Then in Ephesians Chapter 4, it’s the application section. If this is what a real Christian is, this is how real Christians live. In Chapter 4 it begins in verse 1, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

It’s interesting that one of the first things he talks about is service, being equipped to serve because Jesus has called his disciples to be equipped for a life of service. What has God given us to equip us for this? He’s given us spiritual gifts, and he’s given us gifted people. God has equipped us to serve by giving each follower of Jesus spiritual gifts.

Here’s the way Paul put it verse 7:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he led captives in his train  
and gave gifts to men.”

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Any of you guys ever watch that PBS show “This Old House.” Yeah, it’s a very discouraging television program to watch this thing. They take old houses and fix them up, and in the second half of the hour they have “Ask This Old House” where you call in, you know. You got all these things, and they show you how to fix them. What’s discouraging about it is they teach you how to do it. The problem is they gotta go in his wall, let’s say, and they’ve got to cut out this stud but they don’t want to ruin the



sheetrock. So the guy says, "Oh, I got this tool. It goes in behind the studs, got this camera on it, it'll cut out that piece you want, pull it back through, and you won't even see the hole."

I'm standing there going, "Okay, now, if I do that I have to start by tearing the entire wall out or I can't get to the stud." You see, the problem is they've got multimillion dollars in tool companies supplying them all these gadgets that the rest of us don't have. I watch this thing and I think, "I gotta spend a hundred thousand dollars get that stud out," and I get discouraged because I don't have the tools.

I was sharing with a friend of mine, Jack, who has done car work for years. I said, "Jack, you do much of it anymore?"

He says, "Nah, not so much. I'd need \$175,000 in tools just to get current."

God knows that we can't fulfill our calling to be disciples without the right tools. God knows that. That's why he gives each of us divine abilities, tools called spiritual gifts, so that we're able to serve him. That's what Paul was reminding these Ephesians of. You know it's nothing more frustrating than to be called a follower of Jesus, reproduce his life that he produces in us, and to go out and to serve him if we don't think we have the tools to do it.

God said, "**I'll give you the tools.**" In fact, that's why Paul said in verse 7:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

To each of us God gives the grace to be able to do the service he's called us to do. Paul told them, "You don't do this kind of service naturally. You don't have the abilities to do it. You have natural talents and things, and God can use those, but God's grace has called you and is now giving you gifts to use in his service. Verse 8:

That's why it says:

"When he ascended on high,  
he led captives in his train  
and gave gifts to men."

Paul is quoting from Psalm 68:18. If you go back and read Psalm 68:18, it's gonna say that God received gifts from men. People say, "Well, if the Psalm said he received gifts from men, why does he now, Paul is quoted here saying, "He gave gifts to men"? Because Paul is quoting from an ancient Aramaic translation called the Targums which were used by the Jews in all of their worship.

Psalm 68:18 in the Targums is about giving gifts to men. You see, this Psalm 68 celebrates God's triumphal ascent to Mount Zion in Jerusalem after delivering his people from bondage through his earthly King David. Paul rightly sees Jesus as the ultimate king from David's line who vanquished his enemies at the cross and triumphed over them in the resurrection. Now exalted to the right hand of God, he now understands that it's God who is giving the gifts to men. And so when he quotes from that passage in Psalm 68 he rightly says, "It is now Jesus exalted to the right hand of God who is apportioning out to each of you these gifts to be used in the service of the King." That's what he's describing. This is why Paul wrote as he did the Corinthian church.

You know, the Corinthian church is a great study in the use of the gifts. In fact, if we understand the writing of that letter, every spiritual gift that was known was available or operational in that church. The problem was they were being misused for selfish attention and for their own benefit, not the service of Christ. So Paul writes to them, telling them that the neglect or the misuse of the gifts was evidence of their lack of maturity. That's why he tells them in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 11, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me."

Paul said, "I can't be a child anymore. I can't think the church is there to serve me. I can't think it's all about me. I've grown up now. I understand I have a part to play. I'm matured. I have to give back. It's not about what the church does for me, it's that I am the church, and now it will be what I am. So I gotta grow up," he said. We all have to grow up spiritually, so he taught them about the use of spiritual gifts.

These aren't for you, they're for God, and God intends them to be used for his service. That's why he said 1 Corinthians 12 verse 1:

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant.

1 Corinthians 12 verse 4:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."

Verse 7:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

See it? Christ apportions it.

<sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

It's why Paul said, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." "When he ascended on high now he gives these gifts to men." And then he reminds them that they are all part of a new body, and each has a purpose and function by the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 12:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The gifts are diverse, some are greater than others, but all are useful. These gifts of which each believer receives one or more are given to serve Christ in his church, and the Spirit of God gives the gifts to each one as Christ chooses to give them. The focus

is that you'll be equipped in those gifts and use them. Each church will only be as strong as each member who makes it up. A body with missing or non-utilized parts cannot be as strong as a body with all the parts functioning.

This explains why the church of Jesus Christ is not more of a force in the world. People may come to church, but the vast majority do not give. In the research that Barna Group has done, each year the statistics rarely move. They report 92% of professing believers do not tithe, meaning most believers cannot trust God even with 10% of what they're given financially. Most believers who come to church do not pray or witness regularly or meaningfully. In fact, in the research Barna has done and the surveys they've done, 93-94% have weak or nonexistent prayer lives and have never meaningfully shared Christ with an unbeliever. When they did those surveys on service, it was estimated that 80% of church attenders are sitting on their hands doing little or nothing to meaningfully use their God-given gifts to serve Jesus, his mission, or his church.

Folks, if 80-90% of professing Christians don't give, don't pray, don't witness, and don't serve, is it any wonder why we see so little of God's purpose to glorify him, making disciples who are impacting the world happening right before our eyes as any church in any community should be demonstrating? Not only is the church's effectiveness and impact hampered by this kind of disobedience, but spiritual lives of individual believers are being hampered as well. Many people are spiritually atrophying because they're not serving Christ the way they have been called to do it. It's time for all of us to stand up and be counted. Time to throw our hat into the ring and say, "Count me in." Time for every follower of Jesus to be a true disciple and to be equipped to serve using their God-given gifts and giving their lives back in this service to the one who gave them the gifts in the first place.

We have a lot of people serving in our church, and I'm very grateful, but there are still far too many that are not. You know what? God's gonna move this church or any church forward with what God gives through the obedience of those who say, "Yes, use me." But imagine what could happen to you and to the work of Christ in the world if every Christian in every church around the world said, "I'm gonna give and pray and witness and serve using my gifts that God has given for the praise of his glory. The foundations of hell itself would be shaken. The glory of Jesus could not be restrained, and the power of the gospel would begin to transform the world.

Not only has God given us spiritual gifts, but God has equipped us to serve by giving us gifted leaders to teach us. In Ephesians 4 it says in verse 11:

It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>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.

Leaders are gifted by God and given as gifts to this church to help people grow and mature and to reproducing disciples.

Last week I was listening to an interview with Rob Gronkowski. Rob Gronkowski is a tight end for the New England Patriots football team. A tight end has multiple roles: pass blocker, run blocker, pass catcher. Rob Gronkowski is considered by some to be the best tight end in the NFL today. Last week as he was being interviewed, I'm listening to

this thing right before the New England Baltimore game, and the interviewer asked him about his seemingly close relationship with Coach Belichick. This is what he said, “Coach and I have a good relationship, but he’s the coach.” Listen to this. “He knows so much more about football and how it should be played than I do. So I do what he tells me, and he’s usually right. He makes me into a better football player.”

Isn’t that what coaches are supposed to do? Help us to be better in using the gifts that God has naturally put into us? People, it’s no different in the church. God gives leaders as his gift to the church to help people to be better equipped to grow and to serve Jesus and his church.

<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles and prophets,” the very ones who would be the foundation of this church who would solidify sound doctrine and who would proclaim God’s word. “They are the foundation,” Ephesians says.

“He gave some to be evangelists,” people who powerfully share the gospel, the good news of salvation in Christ, who call people to salvation and open up new frontiers in mission. “These are the people God gave,” he said to help us to learn how to evangelize, how to learn sound doctrine, how to understand what the church is supposed to be.

“And he gave some to be pastors and teachers,” people who shepherd us and counsel us, but who also teach and equip us to become reproducing, solidly grounded followers of Jesus who go out and serve God in every area to which he leads them.

Pastors and teachers were never intended to carry out the ministry alone. It’s one of the great misnomers in the church. It’s one of the great disservices with this whole clergy thing. God calls certain people, equips them, and trains them to lead in certain areas, but I have no better track to God than anybody in this room. My role is different. That’s the only thing. I have a different role. My role in service is to training and equip and to teach and to fulfill that role that a leader is supposed to do to help people to grow and to mature and to be challenged and to become what God wants them to be. But this whole clergy thing has got it so that people have come to believe that the pastors do the real work of the ministry, and the rest of us pay to enable them to do it. There’s a lot of churches who function like that. I’m very grateful this one doesn’t because hundreds of you understand that you and I are no different. We’ve just been called to a different role, but our service to God is the same.

Pastors and teachers and other leaders have been given “to prepare God’s people for works of service.” The word “prepare” there means “to put right.” It’s a surgical term used to describe setting a broken bone. God gave leaders to help God’s people put their lives and priorities right so they can be trained and equipped to serve God as he intended. There’s no concept of a believer who sits on the sideline doing nothing. That’s not even a concept the Scripture presents or allows.

What's the result when people follow the example of God-given leaders and become equipped to serve as they should? It tells us in verse 12:

They prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> 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 men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> 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.

We move from spiritual infants to mature disciples when we have gifted leaders whom God has equipped to help us to grow. That's the way it's supposed to work. In short, we finally grow up and do what God has called us to do when we become actually engaged in the work he's prepared for us to do. You remember in Ephesians 2 verse 10? "For God created us to do good works which he prepared in advance for us to do."

God knew your spot in the body of Christ before he ever created you. He gave you the talents and the abilities and the spiritual gifts so that when you came to that place in that local church you would then be able to use those things as he has intended from eternity past. Humbling isn't it? To think that God created you with the idea that one day he was going to use you in his body just the way he wanted.

I was reading an article this last week by Elyse Fitzpatrick, a piece that came from a book called *Because He Loves Me*. She said:

A number of years ago, my husband and I had the wonderful opportunity to vacation in Europe. In about 3 ½ weeks we visited 13 different nations. When we would enter a country we'd get our passports stamped, exchange currencies, learn a few key phrases, and then off we'd go to visit the natives. We would wander through outdoor markets, peruse museums, sample the cuisine. We'd exchange a few niceties with the locals, sit on the steps of the cathedrals, watch the life of the town go by, take a picture or two, purchase a little something to remind us of our time there, and then we were off. We had a wonderful vacation. Our hearts weren't changed in any significant way by our little visits, but then they weren't meant to be. We were tourists.

Then she wrote:

It seems to me that what I've just described is very close to many people's understanding of the congregational life of a local church. On any given weekend many tourists can be found in church. They pop in for 45 minutes or an hour. Sing a chorus or two, and exchange niceties with the locals, sample some of the local cuisine. They might purchase a book or CD to remind them of their visit, and then they race to their cars to get to their favorite restaurant before the rush or home before the game. For many people, church is simply about being a tourist, and our land is unfortunately filled with many tourist-friendly churches.

People, the church was never intended to be a tourist-friendly stop. It's a factory farm. A factory farm that's committed to making disciples who will glorify God, make every moment on this planet count, find forgiveness and eternal life and acceptance with God and all the joys and blessings that come with that, but who realize, in this fleeting dash of time on earth, we were to give our lives to serving Christ in every capacity in which he places us.

You know, it's so encouraging this last week, I got a chance to visit with my former roommate and best man and with Ken Hutcherson, who was one of my mentors who led me to Jesus. Sherman is still a coach for the Seattle Seahawks. The thing I love about getting together with him, we spent two minutes talking about football and we spend the rest of time talking about Jesus. You know what he still tells me? "I want be the best coach I can be for these players, but, Larry, this is not about football. It's about serving Jesus." You see, there's a guy who understands. God put him where he is and designed from before the world began that he had a place for him, and he was gonna serve him in his local church and wherever God put him.

It's the same for you and me. The Bible teaches that disciples are best made when they worship, grow, and serve in the context of a Christian community, body of believers to which they belong, a body who understands that they are Christ's physical presence in the world, a body made up of many parts, each called to do their part by serving him. In order for each of us to serve, God has equipped us and continues to equip us for whatever role he's asked of us. So he equips us with spiritual gifts, divine abilities, and tools to be used to build up the body and advance the kingdom. And he gives us gifted leaders to teach us, coach us, and equip us to be better reproducing followers of Jesus.

The question always is, Will we serve him meaningfully? I don't know what God's calling you to do. I just know he's calling all of us to serve him. Many of you are, and I want to say thank you sincerely. For those of you who may not be, there is no time like the present to say, "Yes," to God. "I'm ready, God, to be stretched. I'm ready to be used. I'm ready to be made uncomfortable."

I still remember the Sunday I went forward in church a long time ago. The pastor gave a message like this. I wasn't serving anywhere. I didn't even know I needed to. I got up and went forward. I didn't even know why I went up there. When I got to the front I still remember the man asking me, "Why are you here?"

I said, "I don't know, but I think God is asking me to do something for him."

He said, "That's where it starts. So why don't we pray and ask him what it is."

I started that week by singing in the choir. That didn't work. Then he moved me over to teaching in middle school. The kids were smarter than me and they disciplined me every week by asking questions I couldn't answer. I had to go dig. The point was that I was never fully equipped for any of the things I stepped out in, but as I stepped out and said, "Yes," to God, "I'll try this. I'll do that. Use me here." God met me at that place and equipped me and either showed me, "**This is not where I want you long term,**" or "**I've got you ready through this for something else.**" And by doing that continually throughout my life, God led me to this.

When I became pastor of Golden Hills I wasn't equipped for this either, and I'm still not. That's why every day I have to look to God, "Teach me. Use my gifts. Show me what you want me to do, God, cuz' without you this doesn't happen." It's the most exciting way to live I've ever seen.

God wants a life that worships, grows, and serves, not because we have the ability, but because he has it. He will give to us everything we need to do what he's asked us to do. I'm hoping that our church will not only be a great church that worships and a great church that grows, but we will continue to be a church that really serves for the praise of his glory until the whole world knows.

*Father, I want to thank you today for this reminder. And I want to thank you for this challenge to this great church at Ephesus and to the great church right here at Golden Hills. I pray today, God, that you'll help all of us to rethink where we're serving and how. It's not even always about whether we have the time or the ability. It's whether we're willing. If we'll just say, yes, we'll call the church, we'll step forward, go online and look at the opportunities, start somewhere. It may not be where we end up, but it's a process you'll use to help us grow and to have a life of service that glorifies you.*

*Thank you for the many who are already doing it, and for the many more who are saying, "Yes," to God. Equip us to serve you, Lord. It's why we're here to bring glory to your name and making disciples who will impact the world. And we'll thank you. In your precious name, Amen.*