

**Ephesians on the Air: The Apprentice**  
**Eph. 4: 11 – 13**  
**August 8, 2010**

*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace. Eph. 4:1-3*

For six weeks this summer we are walking through the Book of Ephesians. Each week we read a chapter. On Sunday I use a television show to lift up a lesson or theme from that chapter. I have to admit that I cannot cover everything that is presented in Ephesians. This week we are on the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter. My main focus will be on what Marlies read for our scripture lesson.

I shared the beginning of the chapter because I wanted us to hear those words. “Lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” Every morning when we wake up a good thought to have, a good prayer to say, would be “Lord you have called me, may I make you proud today.”

Another worthy goal for each day is to be patient, especially with other people. How many times have we become impatient, even angry at someone for something that really was not that important? The place where my impatience gets to me is in my car. Getting there a few minutes later is really ok!

As for keeping us united, this admonition is certainly timely given the divisiveness in our society. Whether its Republican verses Democrat in our politics or Liberal verses Conservative in our faith, there is a lot of anger and mistrust out there. Rather than being a place of conflict, the church should model peaceful unity.

There is one other sentence in those 3 verses I just shared. “Be humble and gentle”. I find some irony in those words given the television show I am focusing in on this morning is “The Apprentice”. Are you all aware of the

show? If not, it is a show about 15 men and women who are assigned various tasks. These assignments are meant to help identify the person with the best leadership abilities. Each week one person is eliminated. The winner gets a one year position to lead a company. His or her salary for the year will be \$250,000.

Who is the main person in this show? (Donald Trump) If you win, you help run one of Donald Trump's companies. Would you say "The Donald" exemplifies humility and gentleness? Of course not! He is the opposite of humble and gentle. So why use his show in this series?

I did it for two reasons.

The first reason has to do with the concept of an apprentice. What does it mean to be an apprentice? As one is learning a trade, he or she spends time with one more experienced in that field. If you want to be a plumber, you not only need to read the books and get the knowledge, you also have to work alongside a seasoned plumber to get the experience.

Our scripture lesson mentioned a number of positions within the church. In that list there are apostle, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Though God gives individuals the gift to be perform these various roles, they still must be trained how to do them.

One of the roles of a leader is to help nurture and train future leaders. I can tell you from experience that this is one area that churches struggle with. Though the intentions are there, you don't often find an organized process to identify, train and then utilize new leaders. Many times leaders fall into the role because there was a void. How much better it would be for them and the church if there was a time to be an apprentice!

I know this is one area we can do better at. I will try my best to help facilitate that. The one thing I do ask is that we all be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. By that I mean, if others see in you certain skills, you will be open to be trained to utilize them for God and the church.

I have known folks that had great gifts for the church, but declined any invitation to utilize them. Time is valuable. I get that! I know folks are pushed in many directions. I also know God gives us certain skills that are

to be used with in the body of Christ. In the end it is about priorities and choices.

In “The Apprentice” the winner get a \$250,000 salary. If our gifts are identified and we are mentored as to how to use them, our personal joy and satisfaction will be priceless. Just ask those who have found their calling. They will tell you how wonderful it is to take their God given gifts and use them to build God’s Kingdom.

One person that is using her talents on behalf of the church is Ang Hart. Ang works for our Detroit Annual Conference as an Associate Council Director. Her ministry focus is with youth and young adults.

Last year Ken Dowell and I talked with Ang about how our church could do a better job reaching out to young adults. Should we develop a separate service that is geared to a younger audience? Given the age of most of our members would any young adults want to be part of such a congregation?

As for the separate service, Ang felt persons of her generation did not want a worship experience with just young persons attending. They are with their contemporaries all the time. They are looking for multi-generational social experiences.

As for older members, Ang thought these members could be an asset while reaching out to young adults. The key here is how our mature members view themselves. If they see themselves as mentors, eager and willing to connect with a young person, then young people will want to join the church.

Ang felt many in her generation are interested in God but unsure about various aspects of faith. If they could apprentice with a seasoned Christian, how great that would be. My challenge to those of you that are seasoned Christians is that you be intentional about reaching out to younger members.

I guess we could try doing that institutionally, by that I mean we set in place a process where persons wishing mentors and persons willing to be mentors would sign up and be matched. I don’t know if we want to be that involved. Maybe just a willingness on the part of those “mature” in the faith to take on an apprentice would do wonders.

Speaking of the apprentice, as I was planning this message I had originally intended to go in a different direction. Instead of the verses you heard read I was going to begin at verse 14.

*We must stop acting like children. We must not let deceitful people trick us by their false teachings, which are like the winds that toss us around from place to place. Love should always make us tell the truth. Eph. 4:14 & 15*

Love should always make us tell the truth.

Those that are even vaguely familiar with the TV show “The Apprentice” are aware of its famous phrase. There at the end of each episode Donald Trump looks at one of his hopeful executives and says: “You’re Fired”. (Video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddgmAD2aNJQ> )

What comes before those words are usually an explanation of why that person is leaving the competition. Though the words are not spoken in love, there is a truthfulness in them. Sure it might be overly theatrical, but Mr. Trump knows what works in business. It may not be easy to hear the truth, but most times it is what we need to receive.

In the church we should strive to tell the truth. Last week I talked about small groups. It is in those small fellowships that we can speak truthfully to each other. As I said, if we see someone heading down a questionable path, we should voice our concern. It may or may not change the direction the person is headed, but at least we did what we could.

Another way this admonishment impacts the church is by our social stances. When we are aware of an injustice, it is important for us to point it out. Saying nothing is just as bad as condoning the action. When the church does this it may not be popular. But did Jesus really care about winning popularity contests?

When we do speak the truth it is out of love? Throwing stones with angry motivations hurts the faith. We love the sinner but hate the sin. Many outside the church have negative views of the church because of the nasty things done and said to others by Christians.

Mr. Trump is a very successful businessman. His brash style may work for him but it won't work in the church. It is Jesus we follow. Jesus was humble and gentle. Jesus recruited average folks and mentored them to be disciples. In that mentoring he told his followers the truth. It may have been hard to take, but it was for their best interest.

The reality is that we are all apprentices to Christ. We all are learning and growing. The awesome thing about Christ is that we will never hear the words "you're fired". We try our best and Christ will love us. On Christ's team we are promised an eternal reward. Nothing Donald Trump can give us compares to that.