Unity and Maturity

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, July 13, 2025
PASSAGES	Ephesians 4; Ephesians 5; 1 Corinthians 13
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:12:26 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Standing in front of the Lord of glory, no one will have to be told to worship — it will come out of you. Matt's argument is that the commands of Ephesians 4 are that same response, started early. Love is shown, not declared, and we do not have to wait until the new Jerusalem to begin showing it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Start with the end in mind. What a thing is ultimately *for* determines how you build it — in blueprints, in art, in relationships, and in a life.
- Worship in God's presence will not be an obligation. It will be the most natural reaction you have ever had, and no one will need to prompt it.
- Faith, hope and love are active. Patience is shown when it costs you; kindness is a choice, not a self-description. You cannot simply declare yourself gentle.
- God demonstrated his love rather than announcing it. He gave his life and he stays with his church — no Hallmark card from a busy Savior.
- Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers are callings Jesus actively gives, not personality types you were born into. The prophets in scripture are nothing alike.
- Ministry gifts exist to equip the saints, and Jesus himself is the one joining, equipping and growing the body. It is his project, and we are the beneficiaries.
- Repentance is an action, not an apology. The thief does not just stop stealing — he works so he has something to give away.

- Christianity is not a well-marketed twelve-step program. It is a relational faith with a real love at its core.

▶ 1:12:26

Hope has been working through Ephesians, and Matt opened by recommending you read the whole letter out loud in one sitting — slower, but your eyes and ears are both in it. Last week's ground was Paul's prayer: that the Spirit would strengthen them powerfully, that Christ would dwell in their hearts, that they would be rooted and grounded in love with strength to comprehend it, and that they would be filled with the fullness of God. Paul measures three things in a congregation — faith, hope and love — and the Ephesians' faith and love were already noteworthy. What he wanted to stir was their hope, which is why he keeps returning to the end goal.

1. What is this all going toward?

▶ 1:14:05

Matt's illustration came from a Ronald McDonald House his mother's friend helped build: cabinets hung so high you couldn't reach the bottom shelf, electrical outlets placed exactly where the bathroom mirror goes. All of it had to be redone. The purpose of a cabinet is to put things in. The purpose of an outlet is to plug things in. If you are only slapping something together you can forget that; if you are actually going to use the building, you cannot.

So when Paul turns from that prayer to talk about good works, it looks like a pivot and is not one. It is the same subject, approached from the destination.

2. Worship will not need to be commanded

▶ 1:16:06

Picture the new Jerusalem, resurrected in power, standing before the Lord of glory — and an angel patrolling with a bat: *all right, worship him, it's been five minutes.* Matt's parallel was a high school principal assembling the boys in the gym to inform them they are morally obligated to develop a crush this year. You could try to stop that. It is not going to stop.

"You hang out with him with relational depth, you'll find him so beautiful, funny," Matt said. He will show you every place he intervened in your life, and put on display what it meant for him to disarm the rulers and powers. "You could have some angels try to hold you back from worshiping. It's not going to

work.” Sports fans do not cheer out of duty; they lose their minds. In a kung fu movie you spend two hours waiting for the villain to get it in the face, and when he does, the joy is not an obligation.

> “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
>
> PSALM 16:11 ↗

We love because he first loved us — not as a cascading chain of obligation like the drive-through line where everyone feels stuck buying for the car behind them.

3. Love is an action, not a vibe

▶ 1:20:52

Faith, hope and love are shown. You hope actively in a person; you show faith with your choices; you show love with verbs.

> “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”
>
> JOHN 15:13 ↗

Peak love is sacrificial action. And the wedding passage — 1 Corinthians 13, written in context about the gifts of the Spirit — reads as a list of decisions once you notice it. Patience has to be shown when longsuffering is required, or it is only a self-description. Kindness given when everyone is already nice to you is not kindness. Not envying, not boasting, not insisting on its own way, not being irritable or resentful, bearing all things, enduring all things: “You show these things. You don’t just declare it.” You do not, as Matt put it, decide that patience is a vibe and hashtag it.

▶ 1:22:28

God works the same way. Imagine arriving in glory and being handed a scribbled card — *“Hey, welcome. Thanks. Love, Jesus”* — because he is busy, he has a lunch, he has a conference call tomorrow. He does not phone it in. He gave his life and he maintains and stays with his church.

▶ 1:24:03

Which brings the third point back around to the first: you can begin tasting and seeing that he is good now. His love does not wait for the resurrection, and neither does ours. In a world Matt called the dark outer regions of despair and ignorance, relationship with God is usually sold as a crushing obligation.

But there is no angel on patrol in the new Jerusalem making sure you love him back. You are simply going to want to.

4. Walking worthy — Ephesians 4

▶ 1:25:47

> "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call."
>
> EPHESIANS 4:1–4 ↗

The "therefore" reaches back to the God who does far more abundantly than all we ask or think. Matt described what he expects at that meeting: ugly crying, being held, and being reminded of the times when darkness looked more powerful and he showed allegiance anyway. "I will be so happy he noticed — and I'll be wishing I had been able to do that more." Even the crown you are given for those things you will hand straight back. What else did you bring to heaven? What does he need?

Our lives here are short — grass in a field, here today and gone tomorrow — and the honor is that in the middle of sorrow and difficulty we can still choose to serve him sacrificially. That is the frame for humility, gentleness and patience, every one of which is an action and none of which can be declared. And the unity Paul is after is not organizational: "Our unity — you, me, others, people we've never met, those who have gone before us, those who come after — our unity is in him."

5. The gifts are callings, not personality types

▶ 1:32:26

> "He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."
>
> EPHESIANS 4:10–11 ↗

Jesus descended to the place of the dead, died for us, and is enthroned now to fill all things — "there will be no part of his kingdom without him," no phoning it in, a very present shepherd. At his ascension he handed out gifts, and Matt went after what he called a sacred cow: those five are not a

personality quiz. Read the prophets and they are obviously not the same man — the hardcore voice in the wilderness, the weeping prophet, the musicians, the desk-job prophets, the aggressive justice prophets, the ones who volunteer and the ones who keep saying no. Same with the apostles: Jesus prayed all night before choosing them, which he would hardly need to do if John and Peter were the same person on the inside.

His objection to the personality-type reading is that it makes God passive — souls dropped like chips on *The Price Is Right*, and whatever slot one lands in becomes the church's governing structure. "No. Jesus is present. He's paying attention. He's choosing people. He's raising them up." Sometimes people you would not expect, because it is his project.

6. Grown up into the head

▶ 1:36:00

> "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
>
> EPHESIANS 4:12–13 ↗

We are not carrying rocks from one side of the yard to the other to stay busy until we die. Matt read the goal line slowly and then made the obvious deduction: if the standard is the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, then we still need apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers — which is to say we still need a very active, present Lord. And the purpose of that maturity is protective, so that we are no longer children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning and deceitful schemes. Ask who the victim is in that verse: us. He is looking out for us.

▶ 1:38:21

Then verse 16, and Matt asked the room to notice the subject of every verb:
Christ is the one joining and holding together every joint, equipping, making each part work properly, making the
He is not seeking balance. He wants health, vibrance and abundance. It is his body.

7. Repentance is a verb

▶ 1:41:34

> "...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."
>
> EPHESIANS 4:22–24 ↗

"This is no lame, heavy-handed bundle of shoulds," Matt said. It is not righteousness by law or by deeds; it is an invitation to freedom, and it means the old self has no power over you — whoever the Son sets free is free indeed. The alternative Paul describes is not a rule you broke but a way of living that wrecks people:
futile minds, darkened understanding, hardness of heart, callousness. God cares that we not walk that way. This is a relational faith with a real Jesus at the center, not the best-marketed twelve-step program available.

So repentance is not the apology. "Repentance might involve confessing your sins or saying sorry, but repentance is not saying sorry. Repentance is not just naming it." You were speaking falsely; God convicts you and sets you free; now you speak the truth with your neighbor. The clearest case is the thief.

> "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."
>
> EPHESIANS 4:28 ↗

Taking what is not yours at other people's expense, turned all the way around into working extra hard so you have something to give away. That is a great deal more than "sorry, I took things I shouldn't have." The same shape governs Ephesians 4:29–32 — corrupting talk replaced with words that build up and give grace, bitterness and slander put away, kindness and tenderheartedness and forgiveness put on, "forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

8. Why do any of it?

▶ 1:44:47

Asking why we should be kind and forgiving, Matt said, is nearly as strange a question as asking why we should worship him when we are standing in front of him. Have you met him? When the love of Christ reigns and we have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness, we tell the truth instead of lying and give instead of stealing because it is right and beautiful and it heals instead of harms.

He was careful not to let that land as a word game — the cheerful "you don't *have* to, you *get* to." It is more than that. Like the principal and the boys: it is happening. Romans 12:1 puts a whole life on the altar, and one of the most beautiful things we can give him is sacrificial service offered here, where it is painful and confusing and draining.

> "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."
>
> EPHESIANS 5:1–2 ↗

Verse two explains verse one. Imitating God means following the Son who took on flesh and gave himself up for us — which we can do now, with actions and choices, walking in light instead of darkness and letting his love run through us to other people. The message closed with Paul's own prayer prayed back: that the Spirit would strengthen the inner person, that Christ would dwell in our hearts, that we would be rooted and grounded in love with strength to comprehend it, and filled with the fullness of God.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Ephesians 4
- Psalm 16:11
- 1 John 4:19
- John 15:13
- 1 Corinthians 13
- Ephesians 4:1–4
- Ephesians 3:20
- Ephesians 4:10–11
- Ephesians 4:12–13
- Ephesians 4:14
- Ephesians 4:15–16
- Ephesians 4:17–19
- Ephesians 4:22–24
- John 8:36
- Ephesians 4:25
- Ephesians 4:28
- Ephesians 4:29–32
- Colossians 1:13
- Romans 12:1
- Ephesians 5:1–2

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where did you first learn to think of obedience to God as an obligation rather than a response? What made it feel that way?
2. Matt said you cannot declare yourself patient or gentle — those are only shown under pressure. Where is yours currently being tested?
3. If Christ is the one joining the body together and making each part work properly, what does that change about how you carry frustrations with the church?
4. Take the thief in Ephesians 4:28. What would the equivalent turnaround look like for something you have already apologized for but not yet reversed?
5. What is one action this week — not a feeling, an action — that would be your love shown back to Christ?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doH9og47x0k&t=4346s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.