**The Purpose of the Pastor-Teacher Gift, No. 4 – BD08-02**

We have come now to the purpose of the pastor-teacher gift, part 4. Will you turn to Ephesians 4:12? This is the basic verse in the Word of God that explains to us the relationship of the pastor-teacher to the local church. It explains the divine provision that God has made for the protection of the individual believer in the church age against statement.

There are three purposes in this verse. The first purpose is introduced by the word “for.” This word appears three times in this verse. The first “for” says, “for the perfecting of the saints.” This declares that the pastor-teacher is preparing them members of the local congregation for spiritual combat. That’s what the word “perfecting” means. The second “for” is “for the work of the ministry. We learned last week that this had to do with the production of divine good by the members of the local congregation which God then rewards in heaven.

This morning we come to the final “for.” The third purpose is the erecting of a spiritual maturity structure in the Christian soul. We will be going into this structure in considerable detail in the Sunday mornings ahead of us. We remind you again that the second and third purposes expressed in this verse are dependent upon the first purpose. If the pastor-teacher does not do his work for perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry, the Greek text indicates that it is not possible for the work of the ministry to be done, which means that the Christian cannot produce divine good; nor can there be the edifying of the body of Christ, there can be no developing of spiritual maturity on the part of the individual believer.

So all is dependent, we have said and say again, that never in the history of spiritual conflict has so much been owed by so many to so solitary a figure as the pastor-teacher. If he breaks down, the congregation is hopelessly adrift and at sea, and they will experience what the rest of this chapter in the immediately following verses describe as those who are “tossed to and fro (verse 14) and carried about by every wind of doctrine and by the slight of men (that means they’re easily conned) and cunning craftiness by them which lie in wait to deceive.”

The professional ministry, even those who know the Word, is full of smoothies—full of people who know how to con the people of God in a very subtle way to gain and to advance personal ends and ends that they think are desirable but which are in conflict with the Word of God. Many a Christian gets burned badly because he cannot discern that he’s dealing with somebody that may be a nice person and may be a nice individual but he’s a professional smoothie, and therefore he has a slight-of-hand trick that he pulls and the people jump. He has a little conning that he presents and the people jump. There is a whole contingent of people, including some in churches, that have a common ground of comradery in a common deception that is being placed upon them. So it’s important to know your ground. If you’ve ever understood any verse of Scripture, I want to be sure you understand this one.

We indicated in detail what human good consisted of and what divine good consisted of. We summarized those doctrines. We touched upon the doctrine of morality and I want to briefly review that a little more in detail than we did at the end of our last session.

The Christian who is under control of the Holy Spirit through the filling of the Holy Spirit as a result of confession of his known sins is the Christian who produces divine good in his service. The Christian who is under control of the old sin nature because he has unconfessed known sins produces human good in the service which he does. They may both be performing the identical acts. One is rewarded by God and one is burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ and rejected.

**Morality**

Now here’s the summary of the doctrine of morality. Let’s just read Romans 13 once more to give you the background. Romans 13:4-5 says, “For he (civil authority) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God and avenger to execute wrath on those who doeth evil (those who bread the moral standards). Wherefore he must needs be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience sake.”

Point number one: Morality is necessary for the function and perpetuation of the human race. Now morality, you must understand, applies to the believer and to the unbeliever. That’s why we said last week, “Don’t confuse morality with human good.” God rejects human good but God expects everybody to be subject to His moral laws. Whether you are a Christian or a non-Christian makes no difference in the basic moral code: stealing, killing, morality, and all the rest are applicable to Christian and non-Christian alike. It’s necessary for the operation of the divine institutions. Without the protection of the moral laws, there could be no consistent application of the institution of marriage, of family, of nation, and of church.

So morality preserves the human race to the conclusion of the divine conflict of Satan. If Satan had his way, he’d kill every person on the face of the earth. It is morality that keeps the interrelationship between human beings on such a level that they do not slaughter themselves. They will come to the point in the tribulation period where morality will come to such a low level that they will be on the verge of mutual self-destruction all over the face of the earth. The Bible says that if Jesus Christ did not advance His coming a little bit earlier, there would not be anybody left alive on the earth. At that point, morality will have reached a level of practically a non-existence in human society. So morality is necessary for the functioning and for the preservation of the human race.

Number two: Christian is not a morality but a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This relationship with God we have described as positional sanctification, and you should know that doctrine now, and some of the points that deal with your position in Christ and what that means both to you now and in eternity. Secondly, this morality is a byproduct of Christianity, but it is not Christianity itself.

Number three: Morality has no power for its execution. The power for Christianity is in the spirit-filled life. Christianity makes supernatural demands upon us. Therefore it requires a supernatural means for its execution. Now the old sin nature can only imitate phases of the spirit-filled living for short periods of time. So you can get people who are not Christians who look more like Christians that Christians do. That’s morality operating in short spurts under the influence and the power of the old sin nature. But morality has no power for its long-range observation and execution.

Number four: Morality has two sources—the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the function of the human conscience in reference to divine laws. Human conscience accepts the moral laws of God, and morality stems from that conscience in an unsaved person. In a saved person, it stems from the filling of the Holy Spirit which guides his conscience.

Number five: Morality without spirituality tends to produce self-righteousness, legalism, religion, and hypocrisy. So morality is acceptable and desirable and has a place in human society, but it is not the same as human good. So we don’t reject morality though we recognize that it has no power for its performance, and though we recognize that it is not Christianity, and though we recognized that morality is not the equivalent of being saved and does not get you into heaven. That’s why you can be the most moral person on earth and you’re not going to heaven because of that.

So we come to this third reason in Ephesians 4:12 for the work of the pastor-teacher. In order to explain this, it is necessary for us to look at some descriptive words. “For the edifying of the body of Christ.” Here’s a word that you are acquainted with: the word “edification.” In the Bible, it is used in three ways. The first way is as we have it used here in Ephesians 4:12. It’s three related Greek words. The first is “oikodome.” “oikodome” means the act of building something. Here in Ephesians 4:12, God is saying that the work of the pastor-teacher is to result in something being built in the body of Christ within the believers. The body of Christ refers to the Christians. What it is referring to is a building that we may call a spiritual maturity structure.

So edification first of all is something that’s being built into your soul. The act of building is made possible because God has provided you the grace system of perception. God has provided you the “GSP,” the grace system of perception, a system whereby you can enter to understand spiritual things apart from the human IQ. It’s the pastor-teacher who supplies the information to this. While God has provided you a system for you to learn spiritual things, for you to hear, to grasp them in your mind, to go positive toward them, and thereby to store them in your human spirit from whence God uses them for building this spiritual maturity structure in your life, you have to have information for the whole thing to work. And that information is Bible doctrine. If you don’t have that information then this cannot be done. There can be no structure of spiritual maturity erected in your soul.

Alright, this word “edification” is used in a second way—this time as “oikodomia.” “oikodomia” means the result of the process of construction; that is, the building itself. The Bible uses the word, in speaking of our responsibility to seek edification, in this respect. James 1:4 uses it in this way. James 1:4 says, “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.” What James is speaking about here is this spiritual maturity structure in the soul—this building. This is the building that we are seeking to erect within our souls. He describes this in James 1:4 with the word “perfect,” which is the Greek word “teleios.” The word “teleios” means fully developed or brought to completion. So God is interested in you doing something in your soul in the way of a construction project that comes to a fully developed mature structure that you have built within your soul.

There’s a third way that the Bible speaks of edification. All of these tell us something about this problem that we’re facing. The third word is “oikodomos,” and that’s the builder. This refers to the builder. The builder here is God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit is building in our souls as a result of information which the pastor-teacher gave us so that our grace system for perception can operate, so that we can erect a building which is a spiritual maturity structure within our souls.

Now there are several facets to this structure. That’s the next question. How do I know that I’m a spiritually mature Christian? What should be reflected in me? What should I be able to look at myself and see existing and see that I’ve come to a point of spiritual maturity? Do you want to trust your thinking so that you’re stable and you know that you’re going right down the line and you’re cutting the thing the way God cuts it? This is what you have to have. Do you want to trust your emotions so that you’re forever not flitting off having feelings about somebody or something that are way out of line with God’s feeling? You have to have this. Do you want to be able to make choices and say, “Now this is the right choice?” Do you want to be able to make decisions with confidence and know that you’re lining up with God’s decisions? You’ve got to have this. Without this you cannot trust your thinking, you cannot trust your feelings, and you cannot trust your choices. And God says that He has come to make us totally trustworthy; to make us perfect; to make us “teleios,” totally developed and reliable. Now that’s almost unbelievable.

Listen to what it says: “But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire lacking nothing.” Now that’s an awfully big order and that’s exactly what God says He has come to provide.

So you see, getting back to Ephesians 4:12, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” will result in verse 13: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man (there you’ve got our word again—fully mature developed) and unto the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ.” “The stature and fullness of Christ.”

Now is it unbelievable to you to think that you can, in your soul, respond perfectly to Jesus Christ? That your mind can be His mind? That your feelings are His feelings? That your choices are His choices? That’s what it’s talking about. And verse 12 tells you how to do it. The result will be verse 13. And if you don’t do it, the result will be verse 14. We are everybody’s patsy when it comes to spiritual and other things.

Now you’re not going to find this phrase “spiritual maturity structure” in the Bible, but you will find several other phrases that we’re going to look at now that speak of this very thing—“spiritual maturity structure,” but in other words. One is “light.” You have this in several passages: Psalm 119:130, Psalm 43:3, Ephesians 5:8-9, 13, 1 John 2:8, 11. Let’s read Ephesians 5:8-9: “For we were once darkness but now are ye light in the Lord,” illuminated in all aspects of your soul. This is spiritual maturity. “Walk as children of light for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”

Verse 13 says, “But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light.” All things that are reproved, all things that God objects to are revealed by the light, or revealed by your spiritual maturity structure. If you have this, you have light. Therefore you know what God disapproves. “For whatever doth make manifest is light.” And that’s what maturity does. It illuminates your being.

As a matter of fact, this word “light” is used in the sense of being reflected glory of God. Angels have the reflected glory of God and they wear it as clothing. We have the reflected glory of god and it’s in our souls. This is what Ephesians 4:24 means when it speaks about putting on the new man, “that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” This is the new man, the spiritual maturity structure. This is something that Satan can never duplicate in your soul. This is something he can never imitate—the reflected glory of God.

We use the phrase, “We do all to the Lord’s glory… A life lived to the Lord’s glory.” And you’re going to find several phrases now as we mention these things that are totally meaningless to you. If you’re honest with yourself, you’ll say, “Well they’re nice phrases and I can’t object to them. I’d like to reflect the glory of God. I’d like to live to the Lord’s glory,” but you don’t know what that means. Well here’s what it means. If you’re going to reflect the glory of God, it means that there is a spiritual maturity structure built in your soul as a result of what your local church has done for you.

Another expression that means the same thing is “glory of God.” The glory of God itself. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, “For a man in need ought not to cover his head for as much as he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man.” Just as the right woman is the glory for her right man and for him alone, so the believer who has a spiritual maturity structure in his soul is the glory of God. This is the glory of God in us. Ephesians 1:17 speaks about the father of glory which means that God is the source of this spiritual maturity.

Another expression in Ephesians 3:19 is “the fullness of God.” What does the fullness of God mean? Well you’re going to learn in some detail what that fullness means. It means this building of maturity in your soul. Ephesians 3:19 says, “And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” There’s our word “filled” again, that “pleroo,” which means making up our spiritual deficiency. It’s made up with all that constitutes spiritual maturity from God.

Number four: Another expression that is used is to be “followers,” or the Greek says “imitators” of God. Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children.” What is an imitator of God? Somebody that has this structure in him.

Number five: Another one is “that Christ may dwell,” and the Greek says “to be at home,” in your hearts. Ephesians 3:17 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love.” “That Christ may dwell (be at home) in your hearts by faith.” That’s how you get the truth down there, by believing it. How does Christ dwell in your hearts by faith? What good is it for you to go around telling people, “Now you know you should let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith?” Does that mean anything to you? Do you go home and say, “Now here’s how I can have Christ dwelling in my heart by faith?” Not unless you understand what this. If you understand what this spiritual maturity structure is, then you’ll understand how Christ can dwell in your heart by faith.

Number six: Another expression in Scripture is “Christ be formed” in you (Galatians 4:19). Now how is Christ going to be formed in you? Through this maturity building. Galatians 4:19 says, “My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” Incidentally, you’re not born with this into the Christian life. When you’re born into the Christian life, you are a baby spiritually. We’re talking about something that has to be developed.

Another expression for this is “the new man.” What is the new man? This spiritual building of maturity. Ephesians 4:24 says, “And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Then another expression is “obeying the truth.” 1 Peter 1:22 says, “Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit.” You notice you can’t obey the Word of God except through the spirit, through being filled with the spirit. “Unto unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” The emphasis here, “seeing that ye have purified your soul in obeying the truth through the spirit” emphasizes this grace system for perceiving spiritual things.

One more, number nine: The Bible uses the phrase “perfect work.” James 1:4 says, “Let patience have her perfect work,” and her perfect work is this spiritual maturity.

Now let’s look at some examples of what we’re talking about. What kind of a building is this? We’ll see some actual examples of it in Scripture. We’ve been studying Ephesians 4:11-12. Here these verses have given us that there are certain gifts for communication: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. We have been studying what the pastor-teacher gift is particularly for. The concept here is erecting the spiritual maturity structure. The spiritual well-being of the church as a whole and of the individual members exists to the degree that the believers have this spiritual maturity. When you find a snarling, fighting, contending church, you may be sure that you are dealing with people who have never erected this structure.

They had to do this: They had to proceed to build, and they had to produce a building by means of the builder, the Holy Spirit. These three Greek words indicated to us how edification is brought about. You have to build it. You have to use information to erect a building, and God the Holy Spirit does it. But when you find a church of a contentious nature, you know that some place along the line, this chain of relationship has been broken, and you have been dealing with people who do not have a spiritual structure. They don’t know what it is to be light. They are not reflecting the glory of God. They have not the fullness of God, and so on down the line.

What a church should be is nicely summed up for us in the book of Acts. Acts 9:31 says, “Then had the churches rest through all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified.” And there is your word. Here it is again. They were mature spiritually. “Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit were multiplied.” Now that’s what local church business is all about. Right here. This and this alone: creating structures of maturity within the believers.

Another example of edification is in 1 Corinthians 14. Here’s the passage that deals with speaking in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:3-4 says, “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men for edification.” Before the Bible was written God spoke through prophets who delivered God’s information. “He speaketh to edification and to exhortation and to comfort. And he that speaketh in an unknown tongue (that is unknown to himself—a foreign language) edifieth himself, but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

Verse 12 says, “Even so, ye forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” Verse 26 says, “How is it then brethren when ye come together every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

Now this is the great chapter which is giving guidance to the New Testament church at a time in the history of the church when speaking in foreign languages under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was a legitimate and proper spiritual gift. It was legitimately function, it was no fakery, and it was the real things. And yet throughout this passage, Paul is stressing that the big business of the local church is not getting up, and those of you who don’t know how to speak German getting up and speaking fluent German. Or those of you who don’t know how to speak Hindustani getting up and rolling it off your tongue like a real pro. That’s not the object of the local church. The object of the local church is edification, edification, edification, and developing a spiritual maturity structure. The word keeps cropping up in this chapter.

People who are in the tongues movement today are way out of line because this gift ceased in August of 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem and God’s prophetic dealings with Israel came to a stop. Now the tongues gift was evidence to the Jews. There were always Jews present when tongues were used because it was a proof to them that the Mosaic system was indeed set aside and that God was doing a brand new thing in Christianity. But today, this temporary gift—and it was temporary from the beginning. 1 Corinthians 1:8 tells you right off the bat that this is going to pass. It always was a temporary gift but it no longer exists. It is no longer functional.

The big thing here is the example of edification. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 8. Another example: Verse 1 says, “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge.” Now this is that word for knowledge in your head. The Greek calls it “gnosis.” Notice what this will do for you. “Knowledge puffeth up.” What you know of Bible doctrine in your mind but which you have reservations or you sit here indifferently. You sit here because you have an obligation to be in church so you’re kind of tuning yourself out and showing that you’re bored and you’re not going to be influenced. What you have there will puff you up. It will make you arrogant. It will make you proud of what you think you know.

But on the other hand, it says, “Love edifieth.” Now this is the Greek word “agape” for love, the love that only God the Holy Spirit can produce. So what he is talking about here is someone who is filled with the spirit who has that kind of knowledge which is full knowledge, and the Bible calls that “epignosis.”

You can’t make a congregation proud by teaching it too much doctrine. Every now and then somebody comes and says, “Why, he’s going to get those people down there thinking they’re so proud and they’re so good and they’re so much better than all the other churches in town because they know so much doctrine.” Well they know a lot more than all the other churches. That’s true. But if they know it as “epignosis,” if they know it is full knowledge, they’re not going to be proud or arrogant. It’s going to be humbling to them. They’re going to breathe a sigh of relief like a person who learns about the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of election and says, “God chose me.” And you breathe a sigh of relief that He did and you wonder why and you don’t understand, but you’re sure glad He did.

And the same thing about this. You realize “I could be the most ignorant backwards nincompoop in the world when it comes to spiritual things if it hadn’t been for the fact that somehow in the providence of God, God says, “Sam, I’m going to teach you something. And I’m going to put you some place where you can learn.” But Joe—Joe drifts off here, and he sits and he gets inspired in a church and he storms out to do something and he can’t do anything because he’s got no structure of spiritual maturity on which to operate.

So if you’ve got real knowledge, you can just breathe a sense of relief that God brought you to the place where He could teach you. What’s so special about you or me? That He has given you the information that we are getting in this place week after week after week as the spirit of God unfolds to you out of His Word. What’s so special about you? All over this city much larger groups are gathering and they’re going to go home with corn husks and nothing. What’s so special about you? It doesn’t tend to make you proud. It tends to make you breathe a sigh of humble relief.

Look at another example in 2 Corinthians 10:8: “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.” “Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority.” That’s pastor teacher. “Which the Lord hath given us for edification.” That’s the reason he has this pastor-teacher authority. “And not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.” Compare this with Ephesians 4:12, our verse on perfecting the saints—work of the ministry, edifying the body of Christ.

Here Paul says that he is involved in building up, not destroying. When it comes to edifying, there are two spirits involved here. Two spirits are involved in your edification. One is God the Holy Spirit who makes the grace system for perception work. The second is your human spirit in which you store what has come to you from this grace system and toward which you have responded. It’s the Holy Spirit who makes this system work as He fills us (1 Corinthians 2:9-16 and 1 John 2:27). And the whole point of this grace system of spiritual perception is your human spirit which God has activated at the point of salvation, so it’s apart from your IQ, and it’s only the doctrine in your spirit that will bring edification into your soul.

James chapter 1 is another example of this maturity structure edification. James 1:3 says, “Knowing this, that the testing of your faith work with patience.” Verse 4 says, “But let patience her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.” We looked at this verse earlier. You could very rapidly build this structure of spiritual maturity in your soul as the result of taking in doctrine. Verse 3 says, “Knowing this, that the testing of your faith work with patience.” He’s talking about Christians being under pressure.

When people are disoriented and when people are having spiritual trouble and when people’s lives are way off, and they come to the sudden realization that they are offbeat spiritually, then they have to have a crash program of doctrinal instruction. They have to get into some kind of a system whereby on an intensive daily basis they take in doctrine. Somebody who is a new Christian will have to go for about two years before he comes to the point under intensive instructional care, before he comes to the point where he begins to function as an independent Christian, taking things and finding things in the Word of God that are useful and that are operational in his life. Don’t you kid yourself that just because somebody has been born again that they have something to open their mouths about to tell you.

That’s a favorite stunt of organizations who are trying to raise money—to find some famous personality who has become a Christian and then to run a business man’s or some other kind of dinner for them to come and have this famous recently born again personality speak as if he had something to say. But when the greatest personality was born again in the form of the apostle Paul, nobody ran any business man’s banquets for him to come in and make any speeches at. Instead, God closed his mouth and put him out in the Arabian Desert for three years and taught him and taught him and taught him and taught him. Then Paul walked back to Jerusalem and he opened his mouth for his first sermon. So don’t get carried away with people who have something to say who have no spiritual maturity structure from which to say it.

You notice these fantastic words here. It says that you should be perfect, entire, lacking nothing. Now how many of us are ready to stand up this morning and say, “Now that describes my spiritual life—perfect, entire, lacking nothing?” We recoil.

I once was teaching a class in this auditorium and before I knew as much as I needed to know about what it is to be spiritual, I threw out a real cagey question. I said, “Now how many of you would say you’re spiritual here?” I didn’t think anybody would raise their hand, but one fellow who was a missionary there raised hand. He knew about being filled with the spirit real clearly, about being in or out. And it surprised. I though nobody could be that arrogant to say, “Yeah, I’m spiritual.”

There’s something about us that recoils from the idea that we can say that my spiritual life is perfect, entire, lacking nothing. Because you have some reservations on what’s involved in this, you think that you cannot say that. But when you find what it is to be a spiritually mature Christian and how you can build this in your soul, you’ll hit the ceiling with thrill and joy. I won’t have to tell you any funny stories to make your heart happy, to make your heart light-hearted, or to make you rejoice. Like someone told me the other day, “I discovered what it is to be happy and to have enjoyment in the Christian life. It isn’t all this rinky-dink stuff that we get in churches to make us happy, but it is knowing doctrine and knowing God’s thinking. When I’ve got that, I become the happiest person I’ve ever been because I’ve got reality.

One more example: Let’s look at, of all people, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. This example of spiritual maturity is in the book of Luke 2:40. I remind you that while Jesus was God, He was also man, and he had a humanity just as you do. And the humanity of Jesus Christ needed a spiritual maturity structure. It did not have that structure when He was born but this is something that He had to build into His life just as you and I do. Verse 40 says, “And the child (Jesus) grew and He became strong in spirit, He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.”

Now there is a certain folly upon us in churches in reference to youth programs. We have the idea that a church is responsible and it’s going to reach its young people by having recreational and activity programs. But these recreational and activity programs very frequently do not build a spiritual maturity structure in the lives of those young people. When they do not, nothing could be more illegitimate on the church calendar than recreational and activity programs that do not build spiritual maturity. We have kids involved in all kinds of Mickey Mouse competitions with one another under the illusion that we are advancing them spiritually.

I inadvertently discovered in Vacation Bible School, when I was trying to promote interest among the kids there for our summer camps, that I could play this folly of competition with one another to a fantastic degree. The campground is a beautiful campground, and one week the boys come and they move into the cabins. The next week the girls come and they move into the same cabins in the section of the camp that we use. I would give the report of how many boys were going to camp and how many girls were going to camp.

One day, as a lark, the girls were ahead and I said, “And the girls are going to get the best cabins at camp.” They cheered and yelled. Well the next day a couple of guys got out and they signed out and the boys were ahead. And I said, “And today it stands that the boys get the best cabins at summer camp.” And they went crazy and the girls looked sad as they were talking to one another. And pretty soon this thing began to snowball. That’s partly why we got 100 kids in camp. They just went crazy over the misery of having to not be in the best cabins. It never occurred to anybody, except a couple of them at the end began to sit and think, “We’re not even going to be in camp at the same time. How can one have the best cabins over the other?” A couple of smart kids finally figured it out, and I warned them that I had some connections upstairs and they were going to be in a lot of trouble if they let it out.

But this is the kind of Mickey Mouse competition that we forever are doing in churches, putting one kid against another, and he’s gaining his little points, and now we’re advancing. Aren’t we doing a wonderful spiritual thing? Then once in a while we have a big spiritual binge for a couple of days’ rally or maybe even a two-week rally, then we’re all exhausted and we try to get rested up from that, and we call this a youth program. Entertainment is not going to carry your kids when they have to go out there and face the world. They’re going to fall apart and they’re going to be disoriented on you. If you think that by putting screws on your church saying, “Now here’s the weekend. You should do something for our kids. You should set up some kind of program for our kids to go to,” you are inviting disaster. The thing that’s going to count with that kid is whether he is functioning under the grace system of perception and whether he’s going positive toward what he learns. If he’s learning and going negative, he’s going to be dead no matter how much you entertain him when he faces the world. That’s the thing.

So you beware of these substitutes for doctrine, these gimmickries that a church can get into under the guise of a youth program. We’re not a babysitter and we’re not in a position to have parents put screws on us to play babysitters for their kids.

Now this verse gives us the divine goals here for youth programs. Luke 2:40 says, “The child grew.” The Greek word … is in the imperfect tense which means He kept on maturing physically. “And He became strong in spirit.” That means He developed spiritually and He was filled with wisdom, and there’s our word “filled” again for meeting our spiritual deficiency and giving us God’s divine viewpoint, and Jesus in His human nature had to have God’s divine viewpoint, just as you and I do. And “wisdom” here … the idea is that full knowledge in His human spirit. Jesus grew in “epignosis.” And it’s in present tense which indicates that He continued to grow. It’s passive which means it’s the result of doctrine. He didn’t do it to Himself. It’s what He got. It’s a participle, (meaning that) it’s a principal. “And the grace of God was upon Him” (indicates that) divine viewpoint and divine good production was the paramount thing in His life, and these are the result of grace.

Now look down at verse 52. We have this printed on our youth club checks. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.” Wisdom is doctrine in the human spirit of Jesus Christ. The word “increased” means He cut a path, like you would take a machete and go through the jungle, and you would slice a path and then you would go through it. Now Jesus Christ, in His life, between Himself and His parents, sliced this path—a path that led Him to the development of this spiritual maturity structure in His soul. The result was that He grew in wisdom which was doctrine in his human spirit; He grew in stature, in physical being; and, He grew in favor, and the word is “grace” here in the Greek, with God and man. He grew in favor in his relationships with people and He grew in favor in His relationships with God because He had this spiritual maturity structure built in His soul.

Now this is what a youth program is supposed to be, and the picturing of the maturing of the boy Jesus is the key to how we should go about running youth meetings and what the content should be. The result of this development in the person of our Lord is reflected to us in John 1:14. Because He grew up like this as a boy, this is what He was like as a man: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,” the glory as the only begotten of the Father, “full of grace and truth.” When this boy became a man He was full of the grace of God and He was full of the truth of God, and when He came to be a man He reflected the glory of God. Why? Because He had a spiritual maturity structure in His soul as the result of His functioning under teachers to whom He responded with positive volition.

So let’s tie it up once more. In Ephesians 4:12 the pastor prepares the people for spiritual combat in order that they may perform their ministry of divine good for which God will reward them. And the result of this will be that they will be built up in their souls in spiritual maturity in several specific facet which we shall look at in the future, and which will build up thereby the body of Christ and effectively perform the work of the church. Unless you have this spiritual maturity, you are a patsy for Satan’s attack. You will not resist him; you will not stand up against him; and, you will not be productive. It’s all tied together and it begins with the pastor-teacher.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971