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Title: “A Culture of Growth” (Part 3 of the Church series)

Text: Ephesians 4:11-24

Speaker: Brad Evangelista

Intro: If we’re honest, we know that discipleship is a weak spot in church culture, CrossPointe included. We’ve mistakenly boiled down Christianity to church attendance. But, the Scriptures paint an entirely different picture. God saves us for a reason, to come together collectively as a body, growing together and thus reflecting His glory to a broken world.

Comments on Ephesians 4:11-17

v.11 – Jesus has given the church gifts. Thus, these offices and the role that they fulfill should be taken very seriously, and not treated haphazardly.

v.12 – These gifts to the church (pastors, teachers, etc.) are not given to do all the ministry, but rather to equip ordinary people—the saints—so that they can do the works of the ministry. Sadly, we’ve boiled down ministry to merely the church service portion of our week. Ministry is not merely singing and preaching. That is like saying that the football practice on Thursday is the game

v.13 – growing up in Christ should be the goal of all Christians, not just the “spiritual” among us.

v.14 – there’s a movement in the church today to minimize doctrine. That’s insanity. Doctrine is very important. Churches run into trouble with doctrine though when they major on the minor and minor on the major. Paul makes it clear that doctrine is very important in 1 Timothy 4:6-14. Likewise, Jesus says that the truth is what sets us free (John 8:31-32). However, we should study and teach doctrine with great humility, not desiring to be puffed up with knowledge, but to let the truth of good doctrine move us in love to serve Christ and others more.

v.15 – speaking the truth in love. What would it look like if we were graciously and redemptively honest with one another, for the sake of growth?

Some essentials for a culture of discipleship:

1. An absolute, unflinching commitment to the Word of Truth—the Bible.

The Word is what makes us grow. James 1:21 tells us to that it saves and transforms our souls. Preachers should speak from the Bible, and congregations should demand biblical preaching. Churches that rely on the creativity of men or functional self-help messages will eventually grow self-centered and anemic.

2. Strategic pathways for growth and service.

It’s not enough to just gather to sing and listen. People need pathways for growth. However, we want to be wise as we implement process and pathways. Merely creating a program is not always the best answer. Pray that we wisely and strategically go about establishing a more thorough system and pathway of discipleship for people at CrossPointe.

3. Commitment to connection and relationships.

This is a challenge. We live in an over-informed and under connected culture. Most people live lives that are mile wide and an inch deep. People that call CrossPointe home must resist the urge to be complacent and merely connect with old friends. Our heads should be on a swivel for newcomers. Connection and assimilation is a team sport, not just the staff's job.

4. Repentance, Humility and Servanthood.

A strange arrogance often grips people that have some church history in them. They think they know how it should be done but only offer critique and not support. We should resist this by continually remembering our need for repentance and humility before the Lord and one another.

5. A church wide passion for discipleship (so that the body is built up).

Paul goes on in Ephesians 4:17 to admonish the church to no longer walk like the Gentiles. He insists that they take personal responsibility for their growth. Creating a culture of discipleship and growth in a church must be a cooperative effort between the church corporate and the church individual.