

Ephesians 4:1

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called

Once again, I want to start by reminding you that **4:1** is the launching point for how we practically apply the truths which were spoken over our lives in Chapters 1-3. If you have not reviewed those truths in a while, I encourage you to keep the contents of the envelope you have been handed ready and available with you at all times. It is the truth and you need to bathe your minds in this truth and then choose to believe it to be true about you. You must be willing to bet your life on these truths for everything the Spirit has said is about you and is for you.

In fact, it is these truths that will give you the confidence and courage to open the chambers of your soul and let Jesus into the rooms where all your pain, hurt, fear and insecurity lie so He can heal you, ground you in His love, and fill each room with the fullness of Christ. It is these truths that provide for you a solid unshakable foundation which allows you the freedom and security to live in a manner consistent with the calling to which you have been called.

I feel I am supposed to take a moment here and tell you a personal story which amazingly enough for me ties together all of the concepts we have learned in Chapters 1-3 and these first couple of verses in Chapter 4. Personally, it confirms that as a son of God He created me for good works which He prepared beforehand that I should walk in them and that His wisdom is expressed in unfathomable ways over the details of my life. It further confirms that in His foreknowledge God even

purposely used my failure, and the failure of those in my life, to show me my abject need for Him and teach me that I can rest in Him since nothing, absolutely nothing, which happens to me is a result of a random occurrence of events, but is all according to the counsel of His will and for His good purposes.

So back in 1980 (way back), I was asleep in my dorm room in College and I received a phone call early in the morning from my older brother, Eric, who told me that God had just told him that ***Isaiah 41*** is what God was going to do with my life—specifically the part in ***verses 15-16*** about God making me into a threshing instrument. (By the way Eric received this again on October 17, 2008 but this time with a little adder. God told him that ***Isaiah 41*** is what God was going to do with Steve and ***Isaiah 42*** is what God will do through Steve.)

Anyway, that morning I read the passage but really had only a small idea of what that might mean for my life. Little did I know how serious God was and how quickly He would order the events in my life to bring about the fulfillment of this prophecy. This brings to mind that passage in ***Amos 3:7***, which God used when I knew I was supposed to move to Boulder, “Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.” In this case it was through Eric.

Shortly thereafter I moved to California and met Stacey, the woman I would eventually marry. The events that led up to our meeting would by others seem so random and by chance, but I have learned that it was all according to God’s good plan. She was beautiful, lovely, outgoing, fun, and because she was also deaf there was an element of helplessness or need that I knew I could fill, hence, I was quickly hooked. At that time in my life this was the perfect recipe to get my

attention. However, since I have always lacked an element of discernment when it comes to people, what I did not know was how damaged and wounded she had been and how that would eventually be unleashed upon my life.

One day in the spring of 1983, I was 21 years old, I found myself sitting on the curb asking God if I should marry her (we were already engaged at that time) as both of us were having some reservations. In response I heard Him say in a very soft and quiet voice, “no.” The sound of His voice was intense and clear and honestly I can still hear it today; there is no denying what He said. But being 21, I was looking for something a little louder than just a simple soft sounding “no,” especially if He expected me to pay attention and not do what I clearly wanted to do in the folly of my youth. Well as you might expect, I ignored His voice.

Years later, as God would take me through that horrible storm which I have talked about on many occasions (you know the storm which ripped apart my life and which God used to get me to open up so many of the doors that I had locked shut in the corridors of my soul), I recalled this event and I got enraged at God. I was mad that He did not make Himself more apparent. By that time I had spent over 20 years in a very difficult, painful and destructive marriage and quite frankly I was blaming Him for everything. After all, He knew I was only 21, He knew how easy it was for me to justify what I wanted to do, He knew that there was no one speaking into my life telling me that I was crazy to even consider marriage at my age, He knew that I was being encouraged by practically everyone to marry her, He could have prevented it all from happening and saved me from 22 lonely, painful, and exhausting years; and yet He just softly said, “no.”

I needed some loud crashing cymbals, I needed a roadblock, I needed someone

to lie across the tracks and say they won't move until I changed my mind, I needed something more; and the fact that He did not do it made me feel very unprotected and uncared for. After all, wouldn't a Dad want to tell His kid something as important as this in a way to be sure to get His kid's attention? I would think so; I would want to do that for my child.

But my wisdom is not His wisdom. He had plans for my life that needed to be fulfilled; plans that He revealed to His servants the prophets. As a Dad He knew exactly what I really needed because He knew that I would never be content until He fulfilled the plan that He had personally crafted for my life and I actually fulfilled the work that he had prepared beforehand that I should walk in it (**2:10**).

Of course, in His foreknowledge, He knew that I would ignore His voice, but in His amazing wisdom He worked all things according to the counsel of His will (**1:11**). Honestly, it has only been over the past couple of weeks as we have been studying this issue of our wounds and the ways we keep God out of our lives that I came to understand, in this area of my life, how perfect His wisdom was and what an amazing Dad He has always been to me.

So I have always asked the question, why Stacey. If she was going to wreak bloody havoc on my life, and the lives of my kids, and then just leave us wounded and damaged, then why did He let it happen? How could that be good, loving or even ok with God? Then it all started to click last week when I was talking to my dad (not God) about the girls' progress on the Appalachian Trail. He made a comment about how the girls had such amazing strength, tenacity and endurance and how they got it from me. And for some reason, I said that I think they actually got it all from their mother. He said it was probably both of us and probably so,

but this got me thinking about Stacey and I suddenly realized that she was the perfect tool that was needed because of who I was.

God made me tenacious, he made me a fighter, I don't generally back down, I don't retreat when I am convicted of something, and I have an intense ability to endure pain and difficult circumstances. But the problem is that wrapped around those character attributes was not my trusting in God but my trusting in me and my abilities. This fortress of misplaced trust would have to be demolished brick by brick if God was going to accomplish what He purposed for my life in *Isaiah 41* and if I was ever to going to be able to live out what God said He would do through me in *Isaiah 42*. My fortress of trust had to be disassembled brick by brick by an instrument that was stronger than me. It only makes sense, you can't use a wooden stick to break brick; you have to have something harder and stronger than the brick.

And that brings me back to Stacey. As strong as I can be, I have to admit she has proved that she is stronger, she is more tenacious, more of a fighter, she won't ever back down, she simply will not retreat, and her ability to endure pain and difficulty is beyond anything I have ever encountered. The strength in that woman is nothing short of amazing, but like me it was all wrapped around her trust in herself and not in surrendering to God. I have seen her stand in defiance even when God spoke to her and told her to "do this" or else. To her it did not matter what might happen, she was intent on having God bend His will to hers (something He never does). And, by the way, the "or else" was beyond horrible; but she did not retreat and did not back down but intentionally and unabashedly chose to rebel (she told me so).

And, yet, in His foreknowledge, God knew exactly what she would chose and how she would respond to Him; therefore, He knew exactly what would be unleashed on my life. It took 22 years of dismantling of my fortress of trust by this amazing instrument and that was just the prep for the storm that God would unleash which would demolish and throw down everything that she was unable to move.

But what is so beautiful is that same time that each brick of self-trust was being obliterated God was preparing a granite brick that He would put in its place. So He did not just leave me demolished (although it felt like it), but He slowly rebuilt me according to the wisdom of His grace. This was illustrated one day in a vision that He gave my friend Linda. She saw this huge granite structure that she said was amazing. As she entered she said it was so beautiful although it contained no pictures and no furniture. As she walked through the structure it was cool and refreshing to her feet. She saw layers and layers (floors) and each one was unique and fascinating. God told her that He had built each of those layers Himself and all the while she somehow knew that she was being shown a picture of how God sees me.

So you see, His wisdom is so far beyond anything we can imagine. He is so much bigger and far reaching than we tend to let Him be. We always try and put God in a box that we can understand, a box that makes us feel that we can master the system. But there is no box that can contain His wisdom and His reach. In humility, I now understand, "why Stacey." In the counsel of His wisdom He knew exactly what was needed to effect His purposes in my life. As a result, the plan of **Isaiah 41**, which He spoke over my life way back in 1980, and **Isaiah 42**, which He

spoke over my life in 2008, is finally able to be played out in my life into your lives. It is a beautiful tale of God's mastery and how He works all things out according to the wisdom of His will. And what's best is that it all this was not just for me, but it was also for you so you would have a living breathing example of why you can trust yourself to God's faithfulness and walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called

So enough of my story, what does it mean for you to live in a manner worthy of your calling? It means that you live by faith by continually trusting yourself to Jesus every moment of every day. It means you continually provide Him access to the chambers of your soul because 1) He is faithful, 2) He will always do exactly as He has said, and 3) His wisdom for your life is beyond anything you could ever think or ask.

If you open up those doors (and believe me doing it volitionally is far easier than God doing it for you), you will be filled with the fullness of Christ (**3:19**). His grace will then work through you to others and through Him you will be gentle, humble, patient and tolerant in love, preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In addition, you will become so secure in His love that you will be able to serve others according to the measure of the grace which He has given to you.

Ephesians 4:7-16

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this expression, "He ascended,"

what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Before we get into the main theme of this passage, which is the way that God has gifted us for the building up of the body, I want to address the parenthetical: "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) First of all, the quoted passage is a personal application, by the Spirit of God, of **Psalm 68:18** to Jesus.

Psalm 68:18

You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men

The Spirit takes this passage, makes a few changes (“you” to “He,” “you led a host of captives” to “He led captive a host of captives,” and “you received gifts from people” to “He gave gifts to men”) so we can know that David was actually writing about none other than Son of God. But what is fascinating is the way this quote brings clarity to ***Matthew 8:11*** and ***Matthew 22:32***.

Matthew 8:11

I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 22:32-33

I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

In making these statements, Jesus let us know that our living hope of eternity with Christ is real as He is the God of the living. Therefore, when we die we do not just cease to exist or come back to earth as someone or something else. But we

are uniquely ourselves and recognizable in the same way that Moses and Elijah were recognizable at Jesus' transfiguration in **Matthew 17:3**. Further, it speaks to the fact that the OT saints have a part with us at the table in the kingdom of God; which indicates that like us they too have been redeemed and born again.

The question then must be asked as to when did they become born again (remember no one can enter the kingdom unless they are born again of the Spirit of God—**John 3:5-8**). This takes us into some very interesting Biblical territory. First of all we have to start with this one truth: people have always been saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is the only way by which God approves of any man or woman (**Hebrews 11:6 and Romans 3:21-31; 4:3, 13, Ephesians 2:9**). But that raises the obvious question. What about the OT saints who lived before Jesus died on the cross? Well they were saved in exactly the same way.

Romans 4:3 says that Abraham was approved by God because He believed in Him. Sure at that time He did not know that the object of His faith was the Son, but He believed God and was therefore approved. His faith had the effect of setting him aside as holy unto the Lord. So when he died he went to Sheol, or in Hebrew the all demanding world—the place of the departed spirits [**Diagram 1**].

Prior to the cross, everyone who died went to Sheol. The reason is that since Jesus had not yet atoned for sin no one, even those who were approved by their faith, could enter into the presence of God as they had not yet been cleansed of their sin. But they were set apart unto the Lord and therefore protected as Sheol was divided into two parts: the bosom of Abraham and Abbadon, or Hades. The Bosom of Abraham was a place of comfort and rest where those who had faith in God went whereas Hades was a place of torment for all those who did not believe

in the one true God. We see this in the parable Jesus told of a man named Lazarus in **Luke 16:19-30**. Although the Bosom of Abraham and Hades were a part of Sheol, there was a gulf that separated the two parts and no one could venture from one side to the other.

Strangely enough the Bible seems to indicate that Sheol is physically in the center of the earth which is where we get our notion that if you are bad you will go “down.” This idea comes from a couple of places. First, in **Numbers 16:30** where Moses says that if the earth opens up and swallows Dathan and household and all their belongings and they go down alive into Sheol, then everyone will know that they despised the Lord (and that is exactly what happened the earth opened up and swallowed them all). Second, in **Job 26:5** we are told that the dead tremble in their place beneath the waters as Sheol is naked in God’s presence and there is no cover (or protection) in the place of destruction.

Now whether it is somehow in the literal center of the earth or whether “down there” is a place where the spiritual dimension intersects with the physical we don’t know and I guess it really does not matter since it does not make a hill of beans difference other than for fun speculation. But if you want to study the scriptures on Sheol, in addition to the ones I have quoted, go look up: **Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 11:18, 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 27:20; Revelation 9:1-12; 1 Peter 3:19; 4:6.**

But getting back to the passage in Ephesians, the Spirit says that Jesus descended into the “lower” or “lowest” parts of the earth and when He ascended from that place He led captive a host of captives. So let’s connect the dots and get a little help from Peter. When did Jesus descend to the lower parts of the earth? I

believe this was during the 3-days and 3 nights between His physical death and His physical resurrection—after sin was fully atoned for. I say that because after the ascension Jesus is lifted above all and seated at the right hand of the Father and we are told that He will be there until His second coming. Further, in **1 Peter 4:6** we are told that the Good News was preached to those who had died—so that while their bodies were punished with death, they could still live in the spirit as God does. Jesus foreshadowed this when He said: “for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (**Matthew 12:40**)—which is presumably Sheol.

Therefore, I believe that Jesus went to the “lower” parts of the earth and preached the Good News to those who, because of their faith, had been set aside as holy unto the Lord—those in the Bosom of Abraham. He let them know that He was their provision, He was the object of their faith, and He provided atonement for their sins; and when He ascended He led the spirits of those who now believed in Him, as a result of the preaching, into the presence of God. He led those who were captives in Sheol captive to the living God and one day they will join us at the marriage supper of the Lamb (**Matthew 8:11; Revelation 19:9**). Yes, we will get to meet all our heroes of faith. How cool will that be?

Now just to clarify, since Jesus has atoned for our sins the dead in Christ no longer go to Sheol but enter immediately into the presence of God (**2 Corinthians 5:8**). However, those who do not believe still descend into the lower parts of the earth as their spirits are assigned a place in Hades. But one day even Hades will no longer be of use as the earth will be destroyed and Hades will be thrown into the

Lake of Fire—the place of eternal horror to which even Hades cannot hold a flame (*Revelation 20:14-15; 21:1*).

Now you might be asking why the Spirit took us on this seemingly random parenthetical given the main thrust of this passage is on the gifts that God gives to us for the building up of the body. Well, in the same manner that our ability to deal with each other in humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance in love, living together in unity being bound together in His peace requires us to trust ourselves more and more to Jesus and let Him into all the areas of our soul where we hide behind closed doors of pain, fear and insecurity, so does the utilization of the gifts that we have been given. The Spirit knows that we are weak in our faith and that we need reasons to know why we can bet our lives on the character and nature of Jesus; reasons why we can give ourselves to people who just might hurt us, use us, take advantage of us, abandon us, and so on. So He speaks to us of God's triumph and faithfulness to all those who ever believed in times past so we will become convinced that He will always be faithful to us in our here and now.

The picture we are given is of great triumph. Jesus busted the captives out of their prison and led them as His captives to the presence of God and then He celebrated His triumph by giving gifts to men. This was demonstrated for us in an awesome story in **1 Samuel 30:1-30** through an episode in David's life. David was out of town dealing with the Philistines when the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negev where his family and the family of his army lived. The Amalekites took everyone (all the women and children) and everything (vast amounts of plunder), but for some reason they did not kill anyone—no one was lost.

When David discovered what happened he took 600 of his men and went in

pursuit of the Amalekites; however, on the journey 200 men had become so exhausted that they could not make the trip. So they stayed behind at a brook while the rest of David's troops went on. When they caught up with the Amalekites, who were indulging themselves in the plunder, David and his men rushed them and the slaughter was great. David got back everything the Amalekites had taken; nothing was missing: small or great, son or daughter, nor anything else that had been taken. And David brought everything back with him and led captive, to his care and protection, the captives.

It must have been a glorious sight to see David return as a hero with everyone and everything. But when David arrived back at the brook where he had left the 200, the men who went with him to fight complained and said that they should receive none of the plunder since they stayed behind. But David said: "no my brothers! Don't be selfish with what the Lord has given us. He has kept us safe and helped us defeat the enemy...We share and share alike—those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment." Like Jesus, David returned from the place of captivity and led a host of captives free and he returned bearing gifts to those men who were not involved in the fight.

So this parenthetical is actually a proclamation of God's faithfulness and is intended to help us walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which we have been called. If God did not lose a single person who ever believed in Him, then our future—our living hope—is guaranteed. Thus, we can stop worrying about what's to come and begin living in the now being fully convinced that, because He is faithful and because His word is backed by His glory (**1:6, 12, 14**), everything that He has spoken over our lives is true and is to be taken literally and personally.

Yes, because He is faithful, we can have the confidence to open the doors within the corridors of our heart and let Jesus address every single wound and injury we have ever incurred. His intent is to enable us with His grace; thus, He will bring us healing so that we can be in relationship with other believers in the freedom of His love verses the prison of our pain and 1) deal with each other in humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance in love; 2) preserve our unity in the Spirit, being bound together with His peace; and 3) freely serve one another, without fear, **with the gifts** which God has given us.

Ephesians 4:7, 11-12

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift...And He gave gifts to men...And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

To each one, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Previously, in **3:7-10**, this reference to grace was similarly used to describe the way God had gifted Paul and used him in the life of other believers: "...the gospel of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for

ages has been hidden in God who created all things.”

As with all things, it does not matter what you can do for God; it only matters what He has done for you. Therefore, it makes no difference if you are a warrior, one who guards the equipment, or the least of all the saints, like Paul, God has uniquely gifted you for a very specific purpose and you are free to serve others in proportion to the grace or the enablement that God has given you, no more and no less.

And because your gifting is in accordance with the measure which Christ determined, you don't have to ever look at how God has gifted or is using another; you can rest in knowing that He has gifted you and enabled you exactly as He wanted according to the wisdom of His grace (**1 Corinthians 12:7**). You also don't ever need to carry the burden that you have to serve, serve, serve, and then serve some more. You have to only serve as God desires, when He desires, in proportion to your enablement. If you ever try to do anything beyond that you will find that His grace is not in it and eventually you will end up burned up and burned out.

In addition, the little phrase **“to each one”** is so important. Since God's grace (His power and enablement for serving others) is given to each one of us then we can conclude that we are all on the same level in terms of exercising our gifts. Thus, there is no distinction in God's eyes between “clergy” and “laity” – the professionals and the ordinary church folk. Each person is gifted and each person has their own vital role to play in the health of the body regardless of whether or not they get paid for it.

Sadly, a separation between “those who minister” and “those who don't” has

been widely perpetuated in our religious history. I believe it is largely rooted in the imprint that is in all of humanity; an imprint that I believe goes all the way back to the garden. There was a time when man walked with God and his soul was filled being in the presence of one who was greater and most powerful. This imprint seems to have followed us throughout history; hence our overwhelming desires for kings and heroes and our willingness to adulate and adore anyone who we think is greater and more powerful than ourselves (even sports stars, musicians, actors and actresses, and so on). It is something that is part of our makeup. Sadly, we even make heroes out of those who God uses to speak into our lives and we tend to lift them up to a place that God has never intended.

This is not helped by the fact that most religious organizations have a very pyramid like structure, just like most businesses, and they are dependent on the ability of those at the top to control [Diagram 2] and the willingness of those beneath to submit [Diagram 3]. Thus, this structure preys on this imprint in our souls and too often leads to an unhealthy and inappropriate adulation and exaltation of those who are given charge of administering the functioning of a body.

However, this is not what I see when I read the word of God. The mere fact that this grace has been given to all of us means that our fellowship should look more like a circle where everyone has their part and their vital role to play and faith, not control, is the key to its success [Diagram 4]. In this picture, even the Pastor is just one of those who have been gifted to serve. Sure the pastor has a very prominent and visibly active role, but in God's economy the pastor is not above any other person that He has sent to a body. Everyone is vital and everyone is needed!

For example, I know that in order for me to do what I do, I need each of you to do what God has asked you to do in this body. I need Ian to be about building this temple, I need Taylor to be about supporting those and encouraging those who are building, I need Sarah's discernment as it protects me and gives me wisdom that I would otherwise not have, I need Lesley to be able to help you though the process of opening the doors in order for you to deal with the wounds that God wants to heal, I need the Watchmen and Tabitha to pray and cover me and protect this body, I need the words that God speaks through Linda, I need the encouragement and friendship that so many of you bring into my life, and I need the way that you take care, build up, instruct, and encourage each other as there is no way I can do all that or be all of that for everyone.

And all of that is necessary just for me to be able to do what I do which, by the way, is a part of what you need to do what you need to do as part of this body. You need the way that God speaks and leads through me in order for you to do your part. In this circle we have mutual dependency which interestingly enough develops a natural relational accountability to one another because of how integrated we are into each other's lives. There is unbelievable safety, security, and strength in this kind of mutual dependency.

I always laugh when professional religious people ask about to whom I am accountable (usually it's done in an aggressive and challenging manner) and they are either expecting me to say no one or give a normal pyramid paradigm sort of answer. But when I tell them that true accountability does not come from structure or from any system of control but from mutually dependent and integrated relationships they have no idea what I am talking about. Then I explain

that the way you are integrated into my life, and the way we all are integrated into each other's lives, breeds natural accountability. However, they just don't believe it as they have never experienced it.

The pyramid structure does not allow for mutual dependency but it demands an "us/them" mentality [Diagram 5] and despite what forms of accountability you put into place to try and control those who are in control, it is somewhat artificial and rarely works since everyone has bought into the same system of hierarchy and power.

But I have found that it is wonderful as a leader to live with my life open and visible and mutually dependent upon others. Honestly, I love the fact that I don't have to try and pretend or keep up any pastoral fronts—it is way too much work. If I am sad and depressed, I feel the freedom to be sad and depressed and I have no problem calling you and asking you for prayer or encouragement. Besides, I really have a hard time hiding anything anyway, it's always written all over my body. Even when I am stressed out about personal things you see it in my attitude and demeanor and although it may take some time for me to sort through what is happening, eventually God leads me to share. Sometimes it is with only a few, but eventually it seems to flow to everyone anyways—you know how that works. Oh well, that is what it means to be in relationship with a family.

That is also why I love just spending time with you and I consider you to be my friends and family not just someone to whom I need to minister—far from it. The way God uses me in your life and you in mine is just a natural byproduct from our being committed to each other and being in relationship with each other with Jesus at the center.

What we do here on Sundays is just the whip cream and the cherry on top. It is not the substance of what makes up Pathway Fellowship. It is wonderful and is such a blessing for all of us to be able to be with each other and mutually worship the Lord and learn from His word, but this is only just a small part. The real life, the real power, the real experience is found in the integration of our lives in mutually dependent relationships. It is truly a work of beauty and I am privileged to be a part of the whole.

I know that for some of you who are new this is a strange thing and hard to get used to, but each of you has a place in the circle. Each of you has been given a special manifestation of the Spirit for the others. But it is to be known and experienced in the context of mutually dependent relationships and not in any sort of top down authoritative method of dealing with people. However, this means that you have to be willing to play and you have to be willing to set aside all those old notions of power, authority, hierarchy, submission, and control for they don't work in this body. "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

We will pick up in **4:12** next week.

Let's Pray

Diagram 1

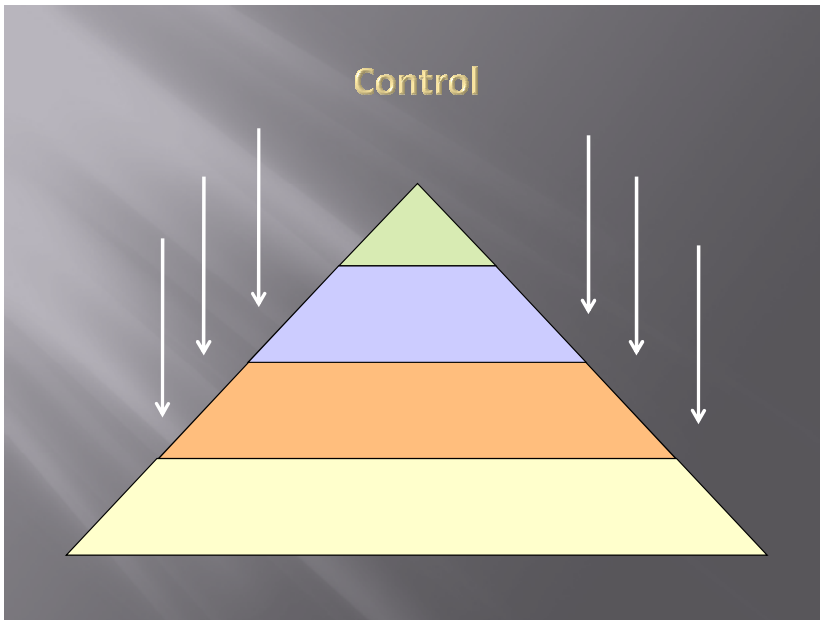


Diagram 2

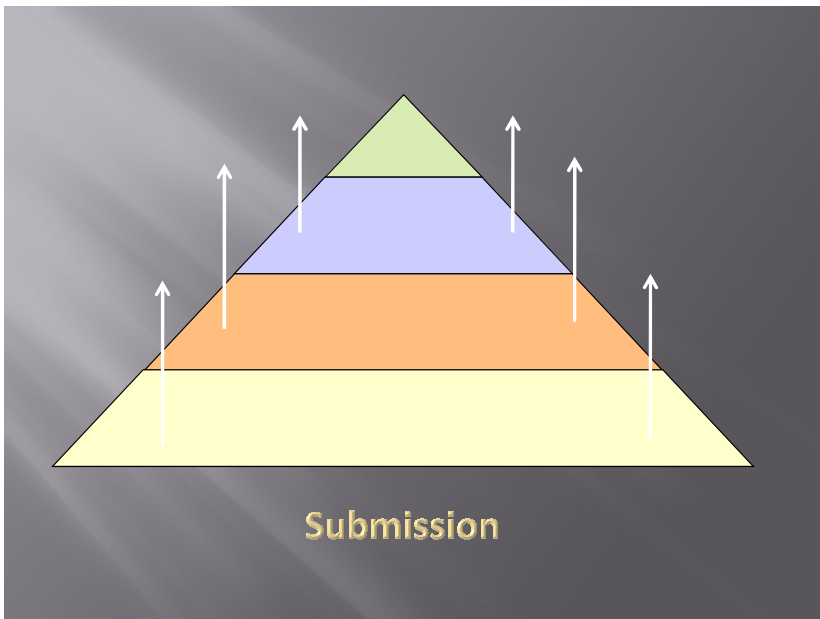


Diagram 3



Diagram 4

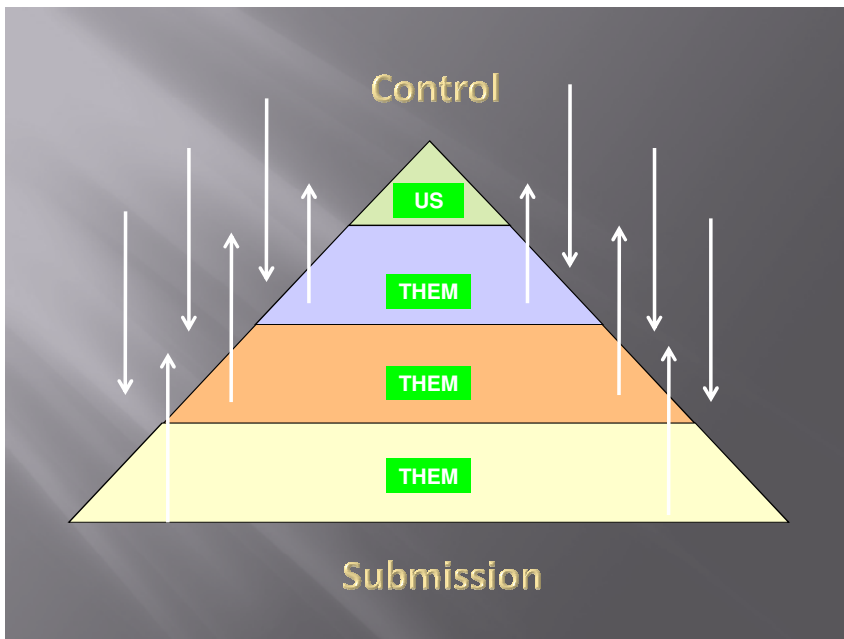


Diagram 5

