

## “Stand Fast”

**Ephesians 4:11–12 (NLT)** — 11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the **apostles**, the **prophets**, the **evangelists**, and the **pastors** and **teachers**. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:11–12 (NKJV)** — 11 And He Himself **gave some** to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

### I. He Gave Some...

- A. **These Gifts Jesus gave the church are people He has set apart, and called to minister to His Bride, the Church.**
  - 1. They are people who have a special calling to help the church become all Christ had destined it to be.
  - 2. It is an extreme honor and privilege to be called out of the secular world in order to work in the sacred calling to one of the five-fold ministry gifts.
- B. **Here today, listening to my voice are people who have that sense of calling.**
  - 1. Many of you are the preparation stage, in school to learn how to minister to God’s people.
  - 2. Studying the Word of God so you can preach and proclaim the truths of the scriptures which will help people come to know Christ and how to live to please Him.
- C. **Others of you are already serving in one of these Apostolic giftings, some Apostles are here, those of you who are pioneers birthing churches, and movements helping to bring the gospel to communities and nations.**
- D. **Some prophets are here; bringing forth the word God is speaking to us today.**
- E. **Many missionaries/evangelists are here, whose passion is for the lost. Willing to go to the ends of the earth to bring the gospel who have never heard of the God in heaven who desire relationship with His creation.**

- F. Then the shepherds, the pastors, who gather God's flock, to disciple them and help them grow into authentic followers of Jesus.**
  - G. And finally the teachers, those gifted to study the word and dig deep to gain greater understanding of the hidden treasures found, and convey them to God's people.**
- II. I've been following the Lord in my calling as a Pastor and Bishop for 42 years.**
- A. I can tell you from experience that it is the most fulfilling, satisfying, difficult, challenging, frustrating, wonderful, lifegiving, blessing to be called of God to serve His people.**
    - 1. I have people who are with me since the day I began my ministry 42 years ago;**
    - 2. There are others who I serve faithfully, and they got caught up in gossip, believed the lies being spread by uninformed people who accused my and my wife of things which were untrue. They brought strife and contention in my first church, and cause a split. In a congregation of 250 plus people over half left in a matter of months. From an average of 200-250 our congregation grew to 110-130. With half the congregation gone over half the income was gone. Which meant my salary was reduced by 40%. This drastic reduction in pay brought me to the point that I could not pay my mortgage and bills and went into bankruptcy and lost my family home at the same time.**
    - 3. My wife and children were devastated, as was I.**
    - 4. I didn't know how I could possible survive this onslaught from the hand of the enemy, all because of lies and distortions.**
  - B. I'm telling you this story because you need to know now that even God's called and chosen servants, who faithfully serve Him and His people are not immune to attacks, and pressures of various kinds.**

- C. **Because of these pressures, many of God's choicest servants walk away from the ministry to pursue other endeavors.**
- D. **I did some research which helps you understand this dilemma.**

- Pastors: recent research finds only about 1–1.2% of U.S. Protestant pastors leave the pastorate each year for reasons other than retirement or death — which translates roughly to ~5,000–6,000 pastors per year if you use national clergy counts as the base. [Lifeway Research+1](#)  
Research also shows us that about **38% of pastors consider leaving the ministry annually.**
- Missionaries: attrition is much higher — agencies commonly report annual leave/attrition rates in the single digits (**≈6% per year**) but large cumulative loss over time (**about 40–47% leave within 5 years**); some estimates say ~12,000 missionaries leave the field each year. [OMF | Mission among East Asia's people+2Missio Nexus](#)

### III. Primary reasons

1. **Burnout** / overwhelming job stress — long hours, emotional labor, expectation overload and lack of margins. (Barna, Lifeway, Hartford Institute reporting). [Barna Group+1](#)
2. **Loneliness** / isolation / weak peer support — pastors and missionaries both frequently cite isolation from peers and friends as a major factor. [Barna Group+1](#)
3. **Conflict with congregation or sending organization** — interpersonal conflict, unrealistic expectations, and congregational resistance (or agency misalignment) drive many exits. [Lifeway Research+1](#)
4. **Political / cultural polarization** — post-pandemic political divisions and cultural pressure have increased stress and led some leaders to step away. [Barna Group+1](#)
5. **Family / personal health / financial strain** — family needs, health issues, and insufficient financial support are commonly reported reasons (especially for missionaries). [Lifeway Research+1](#)
6. **Preventable organizational failures (for missionaries)** — poor member care, inadequate training or support, and bad matching of role-to-person cause a large share of missionary attrition; agencies often classify most of these as preventable. [Missio Nexus+1](#)

### IV. Additional Context

- A. According to Barna Group, 38% of U.S. pastors have *considered quitting full-time ministry* in the past year. [Barna Group](#)
- B. A study by the Schaeffer Institute found that many pastors consider leaving due to “clergy burnout,” and some do — especially fairly early in their careers. [Christian Post](#)
- C. **Workload**: Many pastors report working 50+ hours/week, on call 24/7, and feeling under-supported. [oasisrest.org](#)
- D. **Social / relational isolation**: Pastors often lack close friends and report loneliness. [Archdiocese of Milwaukee](#)
- E. **Financial pressure**: Some pastors feel underpaid, have financial insecurity, or struggle with fundraising expectations. [micog.org+1](#)

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F. Summary / Interpretation

1. Annual attrition is relatively low: Only around 1.2% of pastors (non-retirement) leave each year, according to solid research. [Lifeway Research](#)
2. But **stress is very common**: Many more consider leaving — a large fraction report burnout, conflict, family strain, or a shift in calling.
3. **Burnout and conflict** are real pressure points, though “change in calling” is technically the top reason reported by those who leave.
4. **Misconceptions matter**: While many people assume moral failure or scandal drive pastoral attrition, the data suggests these are relatively minor compared to calling, conflict, and burnout.

V. In this season of my life I have sensed a strong calling from the Lord to help those called and serving to be able to walk out their calling till they complete the race Jesus has called them to fulfill.

VI. Like the Apostle Paul, I want all of us to be able to say...

**2 Timothy 4:7–8 (NKJV)** — 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- A. Knowing the pressures and challenge those of you who are preparing and you who are already walking out your calling, how can you endure to the end?**
- B. Let me share with you some exhortations from the book of Philippians which will help you to keep pressing forward regardless of what you face in life and ministry.**
- C. It's found in two words. It's a determination; it's a decision; It's a position you commit to...**

**Philippians 4:1 (NKJV)** — 1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so **stand fast in the Lord**, beloved.

**Philippians 4:1 (NLT)** — 1 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, **stay true to the Lord**. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

**Philippians 4:1 (ESV)** — 1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm thus in the Lord**, my beloved.

## **I. Stand Fast In The Lord**

**Philippians 4:1 (NKJV)** — 1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

- A. Stekete (gk) = Stand Fast - This is the word which would be used for a soldier standing fast in the shock of battle with the enemy surging down upon him.**
- B. it is the exhortation a commander would use in the heat of battle to his troops.**
- C. There are many reasons why we need to stand fast:**
  - 1. Stand fast because there are influences around you that are set at **destroying your walk with the Lord**... and may I add, your ministry.**

2. **Stand fast because the pull of this world is attempting to draw you off track.**
  - a) Each day you are bombarded with messages that are designed to tempt you to follow the “ways of the world”.
  - b) Stand fast!
3. **Stand fast because the devil desires to shipwreck your faith.**
  - a) He will plant seeds of doubt and unbelief in your heart.
  - b) He will try to get you to live in your past failures...
  - c) He will continually condemn you and accuse you...
  - d) He will plant seeds of striving and contention and rebellion in your heart... hoping you will become a catalyst for division.
  - e) Stand fast.
4. **Stand fast because of your greatest enemy - you! Your flesh**
  - a) Your fleshly appetites hunger and crave more, and need to be put in submission to the Spirit of God
  - b) the flesh wars against the spirit of God within you.
  - c) The flesh fights against you when you make a commitment to follow God.
  - d) Your flesh reacts carnally to situations around you...
  - e) Realize a fleshly response can never work the righteousness of God.
  - f) notice the works of the flesh...

**Galatians 5:19–21 (NKJV) — 19** Now **the works of the flesh** are evident, which are: **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like**; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- g) **Stand fast!**

- D. The admonition is to stand fast... but it must be focused in only one direction.**
- E. Stand Fast in the Lord**
- F. It's not enough to have strong will power - that will give you the ability to stand fast, ...**
  - 1. your will power will not give you the ability to defeat the devil, your flesh or the pull of this world...
  - 2. The only firm foundation which you can stand upon, and in, is the Lord Jesus Christ
  - 3. For it was Jesus who defeated the devil and made him a public spectacle and gave you authority over Him.
  - 4. It was Jesus who broke the power of sin which dwells in the flesh and has given you the power to mortify the flesh and its appetites.
  - 5. It is Jesus who is the way, and the truth and the light who will give you all you need to stand against the tide of this worlds system and the spirit of this age.

**G. I encourage you to Stand Fast In The Lord**

**II. Be of the Same Mind In the Lord**

**Philippians 4:2 (NKJV) — 2** I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

- A. Disputes were not uncommon among God's people and God's servants.**
- B. we can go back throughout biblical history and see this clearly.**
- C. All the Israelites had disputes.**

**2 Samuel 19:9 (NKJV) — 9** Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom.

**D. The 12 apostles had disputes among them**

**Luke 9:46 (NKJV) — 46** Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.

**E. The church members in Jerusalem had a dispute and nearly split the church into a Hebrew and Hellenist church**

**Acts 6:1 (NKJV) — 1** Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, **there arose a complaint** against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

**F. The church in Antioch had a dispute with teachers who came up from Judea**

**Acts 15:1–2 (NKJV) — 1** And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” **2** Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

**G. Paul and Barnabas (the son of Encouragement) had a dispute and split the first mission team in two**

**Acts 15:36–41 (NKJV) — 36** Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” **37** Now **Barnabas was determined** to take with them John called Mark. **38** But **Paul insisted that they should not** take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. **39** Then **the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another**. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; **40** but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. **41** And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**H. Now, these two prominent women in the Philippian church, co-laborers for the Gospel with the Apostle Paul, had a dispute.**

**I. Here is one thing we can learn from the bible about disputes and disagreements...**

- 1. good and godly people have them all the time.**
- 2. Spirit filled, God loving, water baptized, bible toting, tongue talking Christians have them.**

**J. Notice also, Paul does not lay blame with either Euodia or Syntyche**

- 1. He address them each individually,...**

2. **One temptation that we must resist when there is a dispute or contention in the fellowship/ministry/mission/organization is “taking sides, and looking for the good guy, and the bad guy.”**
3. **the fact that He implores each of them individually shows that his one desire is not to find fault, but rather that these co-laborers be of one mind in the Lord.**
4. **It’s OK if we disagree.**
5. **It’s OK if we don’t see everything eye to eye**

**Proverbs 27:17 (NKJV) — 17** As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

6. **there are times when our differences will bring us to a fork in the road...**
7. **and when it does, let us love one another, and always remember we are, in the Lord, family. Always!**

**Philippians 1:27 (NKJV) — 27** Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you **stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,**

- K. **let me remind all of us we have this one responsibility which far supersedes any other - we are to love one another**

**John 13:34–35 (NKJV) — 34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- L. **I implore all the Euodia’s and the Syntyche’s among us, to be of the same mind for one primary purpose - for the sake of the Gospel**
- M. **and once again, let me say that it is only in the Lord, that we can and we must be of the same mind; why; for the sake of the Gospel!**
- N. **Let me preface what I am about to say... I know of no dispute.**
- O. **I am not pointing this at any one individual or group**

- P. That being said... should there ever arise a dispute among you... it's time to love our brothers and sisters, bless them, and let love cover the multitude of misunderstandings, and areas of disagreement, and failures for the sake of the Gospel.
- Q. Let the kingdom of God be glorified as we love one another!
- R. (#1. Stand Fast In The Lord; #2. Be of the same mind in the Lord)

### III. Rejoice In The Lord

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV) — 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

- A. rejoice (heb.). ranan, raw-nan';.. to shout aloud for joy, cry out, be joyful, (greatly, make to) rejoice, (cause to) shout (for joy), (cause to) sing (aloud, for joy, out), triumph.

#### B. Why rejoice in the Lord?

1. You say, "I don't feel like I have got much to rejoice about!"
2. I don't feel like rejoicing with all that's been going on in my life these days!"
3. Let me tell you what the bible says about why you should rejoice:

#### C. Rejoice because... praise from His people is beautiful

Psalms 33:1 (NKJV) — 1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.

1. when God's people praise Him, God sees it as a beautiful thing
2. When we rejoice in Him, we are recognizing His goodness, His faithfulness, His mercy, His grace
3. God says, now that's a beautiful thing, and for that reason alone we can rejoice

#### D. Rejoice because ... of His Holy Name

Psalms 97:12 (NKJV) — 12 Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

1. every time you remember His holy name - shout for joy
2. Jehovah - Tsidkenu - the Lord my righteousness
3. Jehovah - M'kaddesh - The Lord who sanctifies me
4. Jehovah - Shalom - The Lord my peace
5. Jehovah - Shammah - The Lord is there
6. Jehovah - Rophe - The Lord my healer
7. Jehovah - Jireh - The Lord my provider
8. Jehovah - Nissi - The Lord my banner
9. Jehovah - Rohi - The Lord my shepherd
  - a) Why rejoice?, because every time I remember His holy name that is who He is to me!
  - b) why rejoice?...

**E. Rejoice because He has saved you!**

**Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV) — 10** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; **For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,** As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

1. If you think you have nothing else to praise Him for, remember this one thing, once you were lost, and now you are found.
2. You got a new robe you're wearing today; it's the garment of salvation!

**F. Rejoice because He is sending the rain**

**Joel 2:23 (NKJV) — 23** Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, **And He will cause the rain to come down for you— The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month.**

1. rejoice because He is the rain-man.
2. He sends the rain faithfully.
3. The former rain has come, the latter rain is coming...

4. **God's Spirit is stirring, and He is moving, get ready for the rain -**
5. **Rejoice because of the rain!**
  - a) **rejoice because your saved;**
  - b) **rejoice because of His Holy Name**
  - c) **rejoice because God says it is beautiful...**

**G. Rejoice because He will make you walk on top of your circumstances!**

**Habakkuk 3:17–19 (NKJV) — 17** Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— **18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.** **19** The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And **He will make me walk on my high hills.** To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

1. **regardless of your circumstances...**
2. **regardless of your feelings**
3. **regardless of what people are saying about you**
4. **regardless of how bad it looks...**
5. **don't look down, look up**

**H. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice!**

- I. **stand fast in the Lord; Be of the same mind in the Lord; ...**

**IV. Give to the Lord for His Mission Cause**

**Philippians 4:10 (NKJV) — 10** But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

**Philippians 4:15–16 (NKJV) — 15** Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

- A. **Please don't forget the great mission heritage God has built here...**

**B. out there today are people like the Apostle Paul,**

1. **people who depend daily on your prayer and your giving.**
2. **when you give to the Lord for His mission's cause notice these two things**

**Philippians 4:18 (NKJV) — 18** Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, **a sweet-smelling aroma**, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

- a) **your missions giving pleases God**
- b) **It is a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice**
- c) **God does not forget what you have done, your sacrifices and your giving.**

3. **secondly remember this about your missions giving:**

**Philippians 4:19 (NKJV) — 19** And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

4. **God will supply all your need - because you have given to the missionary need.**

**2 Corinthians 9:8 (NKJV) — 8** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

5. **your prosperity and the abundance God has given you has an eternal purpose in mind.. it is for every good work.**
6. **Let me exhort you to pray for, love, care for and give to other missionaries.**

**V. give to the Lord in His mission cause; stand fast in the Lord; be of the same mind in the Lord; and Rejoice IN the Lord, always!**

**VI. One final exhortation...**

**Ephesians 4:3–6 (NKJV) — 3** endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- A. **ESV – Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**

- B. NASB – being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**
- C. NIV84 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**
- D. NLT – Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace**
- E. Ephesians 4:3 (AMP) — 3 Be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit in the binding power of peace.**
- F. Ephesians 4:3 (GW) — 3 Through the peace that ties you together, do your best to maintain the unity that the Spirit gives.**
- G. Ephesians 4:3 (The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language) — 3 alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.**
- H. Ephesians 4:3 (ISV) — 3 Do your best to maintain the unity of the Spirit by means of the bond of peace.**

## **VII. One body, many parts**

- A. A body does not function when all the parts are not unified.**
  - 1. Each part of this body has a role to play.**
  - 2. Each part of this body is valuable.**
  - 3. Each part is needed and necessary for the body to function at full capacity.**
  - 4. Each part was set in the body by God himself.**
  - 5. Each part is to be honored and celebrated.**
  - 6. Each part must strive toward Oneness... the deepest goal of unity**
- B. From community, to unity, to oneness**

**John 17:21–23 (NLT) — 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. 22 “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.**

### **VIII. Let me close with one last scripture...**

**Romans 14:4 (NKJV) — 4 Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**