

Ephesians 4:1-16

### **Immaturity**

1. Rawness, imperfection, greenness, unpreparedness, unripeness, inexperience
2. Childishness, silliness, ineptitude, juvenility, babyishness, “his immaturity and lack of social skills”

In this section, Paul shows us how a church can grow up - how a church can become mature, ripe and fruitful in the deepest spiritual sense.

- I. We need to constantly work toward unity. 4:1-6
- II. We need to use our God-given ability. 4:7-10
- III. We need to help the body grow to maturity 4:11-16

### **We need to work toward unity by using our unique abilities for the benefit of the body of Christ.**

- I. We need to constantly work toward unity. 4:1-6

4:1-3 The Greek word for unity appears 2x in the NT. Both of them are in today’s passage (4:3 & 13).

There is a **unity** that we already have, that comes from the Holy Spirit, when He unites us to Christ in His body the church. Now, however, we need to **maintain** that unity. Unity in a church is never based on perfect people always getting along because they are all just so naturally wonderful. Unity is something deliberate, that imperfect people intentionally make happen.

Several marks of the worthy walk:

1. **Lowliness** – or humility
2. **Gentleness** – an inward calmness, especially toward God
3. **Longsuffering** – self-restraint before proceeding to action. The quality of a person who is able to avenge him/herself yet refrains from doing so.
4. **Bearing with one another in love.** – This means we are to “put up with” people.
5. **Endeavoring** – to be diligent, eager, to do your best, “make every effort” (NIV, NLT),

4:4-6 Unity in the church has its roots in the unity of the Godhead.

1. **One body** God’s intention is that the church would be unified as one body – this is especially true within each localized individual church.
2. **One Spirit** The one Holy Spirit unifies us. We all share our indwelling relationship with Him.
3. **One hope** All believers look forward to the same hope of eternal life.
4. **One Lord** We all have the same Lord Jesus Christ.
5. **One faith** This refers to the doctrinal truths that Christians commonly confess.
6. **One baptism** Baptism was important within the early church. New believers were simply expected to follow through by being baptized. It was the customary way that people publicly expressed their faith in Christ and their desire to be a part of the Christian community.
7. **One God and Father of all** We are all part of the same family having been adopted by the same God and Father.

II. We need to use our God-given ability. 4:7-10

A. 4:7-8 Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. This is one of the results of Christ's ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit. We are now here to serve in His name.

**1 Cor 12:7 NKJV** *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

- **HCF-NE Every member a minister** Ministry is not simply for those who are "in ministry". Ministry, or "works of service" (NIV) are the responsibility of every member of the body of Christ. As we'll see shortly, certain members of the body have the responsibility to equip the rest of the body to do those works.
  - **Key Question:** How do I know what ministry I am supposed to be involved with? That depends on your gifts. How do I know what my gifts are? Try out different ministries.
  - **Key Principle:** It's easier to discover your gifts by trying out different ministries than it is to commit to a ministry by first trying to determine your gifts.

III. We need to help the body grow to maturity. 4:11-16

A. Certain gifts are especially needed to bring the body to maturity.

i. The gifts of the NT apostles and prophets are seen right here in the Scriptures. Today's missionaries, evangelists and pastor-teachers build upon those.

*The Purpose of the Church* from Chuck Smith in *The Word for Today Bible*:

For years, in the early part of my ministry, most of my sermons were evangelistic sermons, because I believed that the primary purpose of the church was to evangelize the world. It was only when I began a careful study of Ephesians and read these verses that I came to the conclusion that the purpose of the church is not to evangelize the world, but to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, to build up the body of Christ.

The problem with evangelistic messages is that they don't help the people to grow and mature. I kept the church members in a state of perpetual infancy by preaching the same basic sermons to them over and over again and not taking them on into maturity in Christ.

I have discovered that the real need in the church is solid, systematic, expository teaching of the Scriptures. That is what leads to spiritual growth in the people and equips them to go out and evangelize and minister in many other ways, which will lead to the body of Christ being built up. It just works.

4:13 Some people think that the learning of doctrine is inherently divisive, but the **knowledge of the Son of God** builds up the church and brings us to "mature manhood" (ESV).

**Measure...** Christ is the standard of the maturity that the church must keep moving toward.

- The first mention of **unity** in this chapter (v.3) was the unity of the Spirit that we make every effort to maintain.
- In this verse (v.13) the **unity of the faith** is one that we are still working toward. It comes from maturity, from a deeper acquaintance with Christ. We're not there yet.
- We are to **maintain** the **unity of the Spirit** while **growing** toward the **unity of the faith**.

4:14 Immaturity in the truths of Christian doctrine makes the church like gullible children **tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine**. Notice what Paul refers to here: **Trickery, cunning craftiness** and **deceitful plotting** of false teachers. These are the people who truly destroy the unity. The pattern here normally goes like this:

1. The church starts out strong and devoted to the truth.
2. Lies begin to secretly creep in through the craftiness of false teachers.
3. Stable believers condemn the lies and expose false teachers.
4. The false teachers then accuse the stable people of being divisive.
5. This makes it appear that a desire for doctrinal purity causes division, when in fact it is the other way around. The lack of doctrinal purity was the cause.

4:15 **speaking the truth in love** more than just speaking, but also doing the truth, having integrity, being real or authentic as a believer. "Truth without love can be too hard. Love without truth can be too soft."

**Grow up in all things into Him** Christians need to grow up. Our aim should be continuous spiritual growth. We should grow in our understanding of God and in our ability to serve.

Excerpt from Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* for October 20, Morning

Should we be satisfied to believe in Christ, and to say, "I am safe," without wishing to know in our own experience more of the fullness which is to be found in him? It should not be so; we should, as good traders in heaven's market, covet to be enriched in the knowledge of Jesus. ... We must not neglect our own spiritual growth ... If we would ripen in grace, we must live near to Jesus – in his presence – ripened by the sunshine of his smiles. We must hold sweet communion with him. We must leave the distant view of his face and come near, as John did, and pillow our head on his breast; then shall we find ourselves advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope-yea, in every precious gift.

4:16 Notice this: Every joint supplies something. Every part does its share. The result is that the body grows and builds itself up in love.

**Rom 12:4-8 NKJV** <sup>4</sup>For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup>Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>or ministry [service], let us use it in our ministering [serving]; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

## Applications:

- Do we intentionally work toward unity or are we habitually contributing to divisiveness in the church body?
  - Being supportive of one another rather than critical.
  - Intentionally trying to connect with others we don't yet know.
  - Looking for ways to encourage or meet one another's needs.
  
- Using our God-given abilities.
  - Do we believe that we each have something to contribute to the overall benefit of the church?
  - If so, are we doing our part, or are we assuming that someone else will get everything done?
  - Are we trying to be someone we are not, the way Chuck Smith was trying to be an evangelist when God had made him a pastor-teacher? Chuck's story rings true with me.
  
- A church that is growing to maturity will be comprised of believers that are growing to maturity.
  - Are we being diligent to keep ourselves in the basic things that will contribute to our spiritual growth? Nothing special here, just the basics of the Christian faith:
    - The Scriptures
    - Prayer
    - Fellowship, relationships with other believers
    - Good teaching so that we keep learning from the Word.
      - We need a steady diet of solid biblical teaching. We need to reject the lie that too much thinking about biblical truth divides the church. In fact it will ultimately unite a church as people grow and mature in their faith.
  - Taking part in some kind of service to others within the church. Remember that actively using our own God-given abilities is what contributes to the overall maturing or growth of the church.
  - If we don't do our part, it's likely that something crucial is not getting done.
    - No one can do everything, but everyone needs to do something.
    - Take to heart the idea that ministry is everyone's business, not just the job of the chosen few.

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