

## Why Growing Up Matters

### Ephesians 4:13-16

Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV) And he [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

### Introduction

- A. *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians* is my favorite book. Risky to say because the Bible is the Word of God so comparison is probably unwise. (Genesis, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, John, Acts, Romans, etc.).
- B. Ephesians from my perspective unfolds both the Christian life and the doctrine of the church with forceful clarity as well, if not better, than any other book of the Bible.

1. Regarding the Christian life:

You will not go wrong if you plunge into Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Master it. Be mastered by it. Work Ephesians into your thinking, your living, your prayers, your conversation, your practice. The Bible is vast and deep, and human life is diverse and perplexing. But in a pinch you *could* do all counseling from Ephesians. David Powlison in *JBC, Vol 17, #2*, p 12

- Ephesians is vast and deep meaning there is something here for every situation that we will face in life.

2. Regarding the doctrine of the church:

One of our evangelical blind spots has been to overlook the central importance of the church. We tend to proclaim individual salvation without moving on to the saved community... Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel. For Ephesians is the gospel of the church. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 9

- This is because in Ephesians we see our need for leaders to equip us and we see our need for relationships with other believers.

- C. If I were to choose the heart and soul of this book of Ephesians I would choose Ephesians 4:11-16 (verse 15 in particular). Here we find Paul's passion (and God's!) expressed.

Ephesians 4:15 (ESV) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

1. My title is **Why Growing Up Matters**. It is vitally important that we understand not only how we grow up but why we are to grow up in Christ.

Ex: If you and I are assigned a task and we do not understand the why we will be tempted to avoid it or take shortcuts. None exist for godliness.

- I. **Our text tells us to grow up in every way. Our text does not say why because Ephesians 1-3 contains several reasons explaining why growing up matters.**

- A. In Ephesians 1-3 Paul (Michaels) and I attempted to highlight God's sovereign grace.
1. It is remarkable that the apostle Paul can write about God for these 3 chapters and only give us one command. Remember ... you were separated and alienated from Christ.
  2. If the thought crossed your mind in those sermons that it almost seems like it doesn't matter what we do you would be getting warm (closer to understanding grace).

The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Romans 6*, p 8

3. In Ephesians 4, we turn a corner and we see the gospel applied to our lives. But, chapters 1-3 are essential because they root us and ground us in God's purposes.
- B. Why does growing up matter? Three reasons from Ephesians 1-3 (I'll avoid the entire review).
1. One, **growing up matters because we are in Christ**. This phrase "in Christ" appears often in Ephesians 1-3. To be in Christ is to be transformed into the image of Christ (He is our head).

Ex: Jesus used the analogy of a vine and a branch in John 15 (abiding bears fruit).

Romans 8:28-29 (ESV) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Ex: What does it mean to be in UPS? Brown trucks, brown uniforms, service. What does it mean to be in Christ? A transformed life bearing good fruit.

2. Two, **growing up matters because God gets glory**. That is why we say we are "changing lives for the glory of God." God gets glory because we can't change anyone.

Ephesians 1:12 (ESV) So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

3. Three, **growing up matters because we display the wisdom of God** to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places (see Ephesians 3:10).

Ephesians 3:8-10 (ESV) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, [10] so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Ex: Think Job and his testing

## II. **There are three phrases that identify the goal of our corporate life (see Eph 4:13). Until we all attain ... means this is never ending in this life.**

The unity of the faith  
 The knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood  
 The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

- A. What do these three similar phrases mean? The idea is that the entire church grows up to maturity which means individuals mature (but not only individuals). Reached only in eternity.

1. The unity of the faith means we hold common essential doctrine (Ephesians 4:1-6).
2. The knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood means we know Christ and are like him.
3. The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ simply overflows as a statement that Christ is all in all in every way in our lives.

B. In Ephesians 1-3 God loves us as we are; in Ephesians 4-6 God loves us too much to let us stay the way we are.

1. We can summarize these phrases by saying that growing up matters to God. What does growing up look like specifically? Besides the rest of Ephesians, Galatians 5 is helpful.

Galatians 5:19-23 (ESV) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

C. How do we grow up into maturity? God's grace gives us three means.

1. One, leaders are given by the risen Christ to equip us. We do not pick our slot, position or gift. The church simply serves to confirm what grace Christ has given.
2. Two, walk in the Spirit, live by the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit. We will have more to say about this when we study Ephesians 5.
3. Three, from our text we see that our relationships matter. We are part of the body of Christ, joined to a common head, and each part is joined and grows together in love.

### III. **Growing up matters according to this text because we will no longer be children (see Eph 4:14). What is the problem with being a child? Didn't Jesus say we should become like children?**

Matthew 18:1-4 (ESV) At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" [2] And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them [3] and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

A. We are to be like children in this sense. We have humility and a simple faith and dependence on our heavenly Father.

1. In godliness we are to mature and grow up. This is not inevitable or automatic. The church in Corinth did not see themselves as infants in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:1 (ESV) But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

B. We all begin as children in Christ. We are not supposed to stay there because as you know children are not yet what they will become. Children are blessings and they are:

1. Selfish, liars, unstable (crying-smiling), lacking self-control, reactors (anger), easily deceived (Santa), ignorant, proud, lacking wisdom, and they like entertainment.

2. These are dangers to each and every one of us. The way we each act as individuals will contribute to the entire corporate expression of the body of Christ (the church).
- C. So who is to say what it means to be mature? God can handle it and God will do exactly that in Ephesians 4:17-6:24. Here (Ephesians 4:1-16) Paul gives us a synopsis and then it gets unpacked.
1. We know maturity when we see it. We know immaturity when we see it. How can we get a tangible handle on growing up?

The marks of maturity? Self-sustaining in spiritual devotions. Wise in human relationships. Humble and serving. Comfortable and functional in everyday world where people of faith can be in short supply. Substantial in conversation; prudent in acquisition; respectful in conflict; faithful in commitments. Gordon MacDonald in *Leader's Insight: So Many Christian Infants*

2. I like to pay attention to what older leaders have to say because they often possess wisdom that we can learn from. What is the problem?

What's been going wrong? Bad preaching? Shallow books? Too much emphasis on a problem-solving, self-help kind of faith? Maybe the answer is deeper or more profound than that. Perhaps it has to do with the penchant for churches (the last 40 years or so) to package everything into programs. You need programs to make large churches go: kind of like the automakers need an assembly line that stamps out fenders as fast as possible. I suspect you can do evangelism programmatically. And you can do infant-level discipleship in programs... But mature Christians do not grow through programs... [they] are mentored [discipled]... Mature Christians are made one by one through the influence of other Christians already mature. Additionally, mature Christians become mature by suffering, facing challenges that can arouse fear and a sense of inadequacy... But we have arising problem in the modern church. Older people - above 50, let's say - don't want to be tutors and mentors. Too busy, too distracted, too secretive, too afraid. So a younger generation of spiritual infants is really struggling because an older generation doesn't want to tell its stories, doesn't want to get involved. They prefer Christian cruises, Christian golf tournaments, and more Bible studies where information can be piled upon information. Gordon MacDonald in *Leader's Insight: So Many Christian Infants*

### Close

- A. The point is pretty straight forward. We need other folks who are connected to the head, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, speaking into our lives.
1. We all need leaders (especially pastors and teachers). Thank God for Sovereign Grace.
  2. We all need other Christians.
    - Care groups serve us to this end but more is helpful (thus fellowship).
    - Titus 2 informs us that older women are to teach younger women.
    - Discipleship means we can teach others from our strengths.

Ex: Pursuing God, marriage, parenting or finances. Ask questions as a learner.
- B. Here at Living Hope we are attempting to build this church relationally. Who are you connected to? Who do you listen to? Who watches your life?
1. May God give us grace to be like Nathan was to King David. Nathan was a faithful friend and he showed David, a man after God's own heart, the way forward.
  2. We need the gifts of others to grow up. May God be glorified in Living Hope Church.