**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: Working Together Toward Maturity**

**Ephesians 4:14-16**

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BI: God has given gifts to every Christian to build up His church to maturity (4:7-16). Maturity is speaking gospel truth so we build each other up in love (14-16).

 We are in the second half of our series, Brought to Life; Brought Together, based on the New Testament letter to Ephesians. Chapters one through three describe what God has done for us in Christ while chapters four through six call us to live out what God has done for us, what he calls Walking Worthy. 4:1-16 describes walking in unity as Christ’s church (4:1–16). God has united us and now we are called to maintain that unity. But unity does not mean uniformity. God has given each of us various gifts to be used to build His church to maturity (4:7-16). Today, this maturity is further described as speaking the truth to one another to build each other up in love (14-16).

1. **Christ has Designed the Church for Spiritual Maturity (13, 15, 16)**

 The main goal of this passage is spiritual maturity. Christ’s death has secured our salvation as well as the spiritual gifts he gave to each of us. We defined spiritual are any ability empowered by the Holy Spirit used to serve His church. As we use our gifts the body grows toward spiritual maturity. So spiritual growth is a community project. When Jesus called his first disciples to follow him, he called them to become part of the community of disciples, following Jesus together. So being a Christian means following Christ as a meaningful member part of his community, the church.

1. **The Characteristics of Maturity (14-16)**

 Maturity is described in a number of ways in verses 14-16. First, it is described by what it is not, children characterized lacking stability, tossed by waves, and lacking discernment, blown by the winds of false doctrine. Then he describes maturity positively, grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head of the church by speaking the truth to one another in love. Then maturity is compared to a healthy human body. When each member is doing their part, the church is like a healthy human body. So, let’s look at this in more detail.

* Spiritual Stability (14)

 As everyone uses their gifts the whole church becomes mature, like a grown man, so that we are no longer spiritually childish, immature. Spiritual immaturity does not necessarily corelate to length of time being a Christian. There are those who have been a Christian for a long time who are still spiritually immature and there are those who have been a Christian for a short period of time who are spiritually mature.[[1]](#footnote-1) Spiritual immaturity is characterized first by a *lack of stability*, the childish person is tossed to and fro by the waves. They are not stable so are at the mercy of the waves of life and circumstances. The sea was a dangerous place in that day. Shipwrecks and death at sea were common.

 Second, spiritual immaturity is characterized second by *lack of discernment,* the childish person is carried about by every wind of doctrine. They are vulnerable because they cannot discern truth from error. They listen to preachers who have big followings with charismatic personalities yet are not teaching the truth. They use the bible or their teaching is sprinkled with the bible but their actual teaching is not biblical. The danger he is describing is inside the church not outside. Spiritual maturity is characterized by spiritual stability and spiritual discernment.

* Speaking Gospel Truth (15)

 Then he describes spiritual maturity positively as we are to grow up in all respects, by speaking gospel truth to each other in love. So, he started this section by saying that God gave gifted leaders to the church to equip every member to use their gifts to build up the church. As we all use our gifts, the church becomes mature, that is, we grow up in every way into Christ, not by gifted leaders teaching, but by all of us speaking the truth to one another in love (Col 3:16). He is talking about two different environments that promote unity and maturity. One environment is gifted leaders teaching in a public setting so that we are all equipped to use our gifts to build up the church to maturity. The other environment is speaking gospel truth to one another to build up the church to maturity. He is describing church life that goes beyond casual or even regular Sunday attendance. Sundays are for gathering to worship together, to hear God’s word, and hear where we are going as a church. The latter is more intimate and relational. He is describing a level of relationship that allows us to speak gospel truth to one another to encourage each other toward spiritual maturity.[[2]](#footnote-2) Both are necessary for spiritual maturity, becoming like Christ. So, Sundays is our environment for teaching and equipping. We invite others to be part of our family and hear the truth. Life Groups is the other environment for cultivating community and family. Life Groups are the place for caring and sharing, understanding and applying the sermon to life. People will sometimes say that they are looking for community but community is developed. Real community is encouraging, strengthening, and enriching but real community is also difficult and painful at times. We have a third environment for more intentional growth, Discipleship Groups, which are gender based groups that last for a year to a year and a half and are designed for encouraging each other in our discipleship to Jesus and equipping each other to disciple others.

* Cohesive Community (16)

 Finally, maturity is described as growing up in all respects into Christ, who is the head of the body. So far the church has been described as a family, a new humanity, a new temple, now the church is described as a body with Christ as it’s head. God has designed the church so that our own spiritual maturity fosters corporate maturity. Christ as the head is the source of spiritual life for us individually and corporately like a vine is source of life for the branches. Then he describes what maturity looks like with the metaphor of the human body. As we use our gifts and speak the truth to one another, we are like a healthy body with all the connecting tissues like muscles and ligaments and limbs working together causing the body to build itself up in love. The picture is of a cohesive community, not a perfect community but cohesive community. Spiritual maturity is a community project.

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What does unity in Christ means?
2. How does each of our own diverse gifts build up the church?
3. How do each of us using our gifts build unity and maturity?
4. What are the two environments that Paul describes that build unity and maturity?
5. What are the three environments that CCC uses to accomplish unity and maturity?
6. How does my own growth in maturity foster maturity for corporate body of CCC?
7. How does maturity related to my discipleship?
8. How is this message speaking to me?
9. How does this message help me in making disciples?
1. What distinguishes the two is often suffering, adversity, or what the bible calls trials, Jms 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7; Rom 5:3-5, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See for instance, Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29, 1Cor 15:1-2; 1 Tim 1:18-20, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)