

## BODY BUILDING II

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As we talk about body building it's interesting there's a lot of correlation between physical body building and spiritual body building. If you look at people who body build, and we have some here, if you talk to them and say, "What's the most important thing about body building?" They'll tell you one thing, which I have heard over and over again. It's your diet is more important than your workout. They say that a lot so it must be true. By the way, just because someone says it a lot doesn't mean it's true but you take it from somebody who practices.

The obvious spiritual application here is if you are going to be building the body, if our body is going to be healthy, if our body is going to be strong, if our body is going to be flourishing, we need to be consuming a healthy diet of the word. We need to be all about the word of God, we need to be assimilating it into our lives individually, corporately and small group wise. Every ministry should be people of the book. As we go forward we'll talk a lot about that.

If you haven't been here for our study in Ephesians, a little bit of background is Paul is in prison and he had more of a relationship with this church than any other. He had a very close, intimate relationship with them. The church had a fantastic start. Paul is in prison and he is hearing things about this church. He said that he didn't fail to declare to them the whole counsel of God. He recognized that he told them everything God had to say on everything that God would say was important to them. He didn't hold back anything, he told them everything. Then he warned them with tears in the Book of Acts "***I warn you with tears that evil men will come in to bring in destructive heresies, so error is coming your way***". He warned them of it and he's going to talk a little bit about that today. Why do people fall for error? Because they are not mature. Why do people get carried away by false doctrine? Because they are not mature. We will look specifically at that and we'll try to heed Paul's warning. We'll try, by God's grace, to build us all up in the holy faith, so that we're very mature and very discerning.

When Paul writes to this church he says a couple of things that I think you might find interesting. I haven't mentioned this before but I think it's pretty profound. He heard of their faith and he heard of their love. He talked about that in Chapter 1, verse 15, and he said "that was going pretty well"; but when he writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 13:13, he seems to measure the success of a church on 3 things: faith, hope, and love. That seems to be something that Paul sees as a very good, vital sign for a body of believers. Do they have the faith? Are they loving? And do they have hope? If one of those is missing, there is an issue. The thing I found interesting in the Book to Ephesians, that letter, is that Paul commends them for their faith, he commends them for their love, but he doesn't commend them for their hope. As a matter of fact in Ephesians 1:18 he prays specifically that they would realize the hope of their calling. These people had some stuff on the ball besides great teaching, but they

didn't have hope. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick", scripture says, "but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." So if you are lacking hope, Christianity is going to be very, very difficult for you. It's going to be very, very hard to grow if you don't have any hope. If all you can have faith in, is what you can see, then hope is going to be very hard and Christianity will be impossible. We hope in what we don't see. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. So we need to have hope.

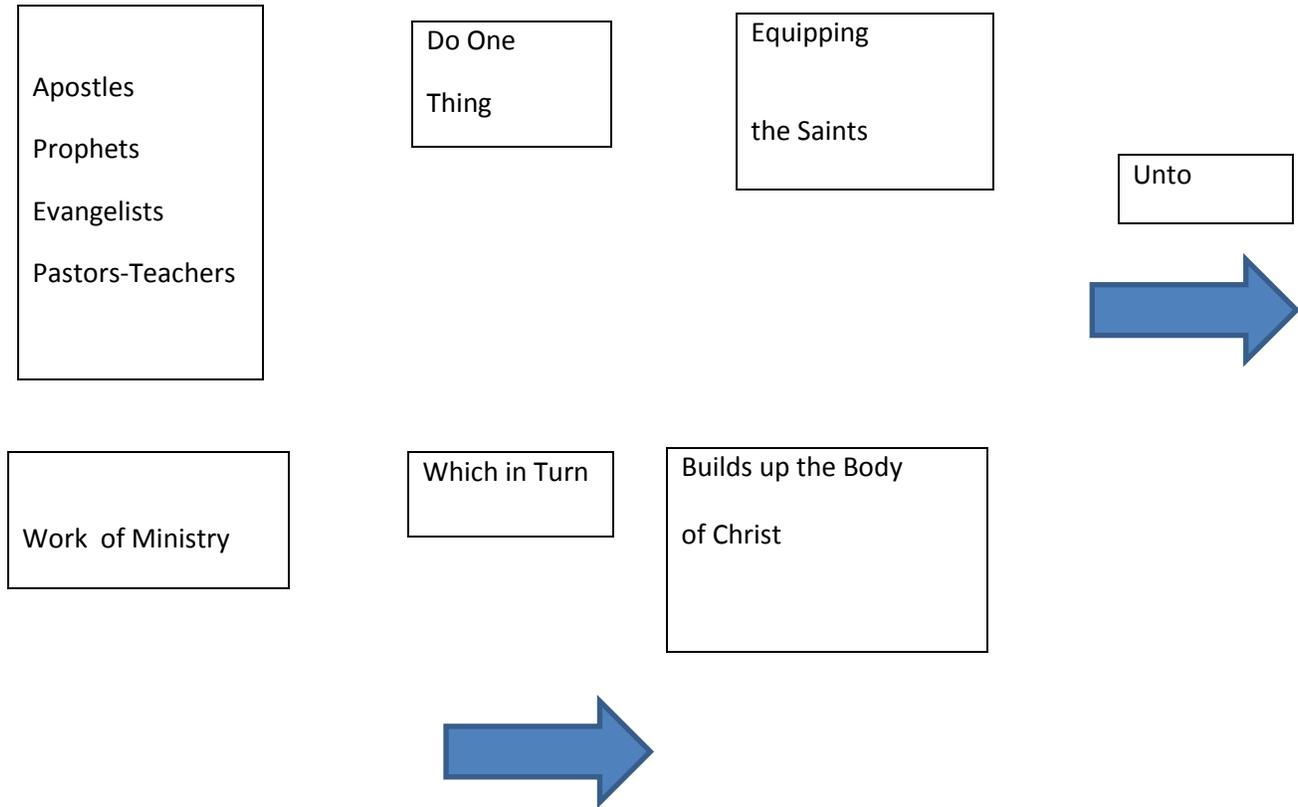
Today I am going to talk specifically about how we fuel that hope based on the promises of God in our body. It's it amazing though when you look at Paul's letter to Ephesus or you read any of Paul's letters or any of the bible in general, there are always these strong encouragements to us. People have a tendency to get discouraged. They go, "Man, why does Paul always hammer on these people. Doesn't he have anything nice to write to them? Why are all his letters filled with these big doctrinal things and why does it seem like he's just mean-spirited to them all the time? He's like, "Get your act together, folks". Why does he do that"? We look at that and think it is so discouraging but the reality is God gives us those things to hold up his standard. We're not ever going to achieve perfection but we don't lower the bar because we don't achieve perfection. We still call people to mend, this is God's standard, and this is what God wants for us. So for every church - this one, everyone - the word of God is given so that we would all together mature up and grow up to be the people that God has called us to be, and to raise the standard of God's people always. Don't get discouraged when you feel like, "Man the word is always telling me this stuff. I'm feeling beat down!" You should be encouraged. You should be encouraged that God won't leave you beat down; he wants to raise you up. So the purpose of His word is to exhort you, to build up and to raise up.

We are going to recap some of the things we've talked about. This *is Ephesians 4:11-12*: <sup>11</sup>**And he** Jesus ***gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors/ teachers*** and he gave them for a specific purpose to the body. It's not to make business decisions; it's not to have meetings; it's not to do any of the things that a lot of people think pastors do, it's specifically given by the Lord <sup>12</sup> ***to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up the body of Christ.*** We talked about this last week, the Greek word here "katartizo". It means we get artisan, we get all those great words, but it literally means "to mend the net". I said that what the ministry is to do, the work of the ministry, is to equip the saints to mend their nets to help them to - the word also means - to set a broken bone, to perfect, to supply what is needed. It means that you do things in such a way that the people accomplish the ministry that God ordained for them. When I say that it doesn't mean that the pastor/teacher, the staff, the leaders; that that's what they do in their flesh. It means that God works through His people. God always accomplishes the work. It's never the people who accomplish the work, it's the Lord. So the Lord works through his people to accomplish that end. I didn't specifically emphasize that but I wanted to make it very clear that a man in himself can do nothing. A man in his flesh can do nothing. But God working in and through you can accomplish more than you can ask or ever imagine. The working of the ministry is predicated upon the working of the spirit in and through the individual to accomplish that end. So as long as we are clear on that.

So what's the goal here? The goal is so that the ministry would continue. Equipping the saints so that they would minister. That is God's heart; that is God's goal.

This is what the end result is. I made a flow chart here because some people are very technical and they like charts.

### The Goal of Equipping



It basically says this: God gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors-teachers. Why? To do one thing – to equip the saints. Why did He do that? Well, the next step *unto*. *Unto* what? *Unto* the work of the ministry. Why? So that there would be a building up of the body of Christ. So there’s a process and each of the gifted people that God brings to the church, including you, is involved in your ministry so that this result takes place – the edification and building up of the body of Christ. We often forget the “*so that*”, don’t we? We think there’s just a reason and so what we do is say ministry is for the people we pay to do it, or ministry is for somebody else to do, or ministry is limited to what pastors do, and it’s not the case. You don’t ever let the hired replace the called. Don’t let the hired replace the called. Each of us, as a Christian, *Ephesians 1: “we have been called”*. With that calling comes purpose and with that calling of purpose comes preparing good things in advance that you would walk in. God lays these things out and that calling is *unto* something. He doesn’t just call you out of death to life and say “now, figure it out”. He calls you *unto* something and that something that He calls you to has a practical outflow in the body but it also has an outflow in the world.

So when we talk about ministry I don't want you to just think that it's an end of itself. There's a **so that**. I'll give you an example. We have children's ministry. People go, "Why do you do that? Is it **so that** the kid's don't come in? So they'd be distracting to us?" No, we have children's ministry **so that** they can receive the word of God in a way that they can understand it, **so that** they would see that "**suffer not the little children to come onto Jesus for such is the kingdom of heaven**", **so that** they would discover their gifts, **so that** they would use it and build up the body of Christ.

"Well, why do you have small groups? So people can have a place to process their bitterness?" No, we have small groups **so that** the saints can get together and speak the truth in love and exhort one another and stir one another up to love and good deeds **so that** they will be able to take their faith out into the world **so that** Jesus would use them in their ministry in the workplace **so that** others would come to know Him too.

There's always that **so that** and if we forget that then we forget the whole purpose of why we are here in the first place. We are here **so that** God would work in us something that he wouldn't have worked if we weren't here. That God would do something in us **so that** we would leave a little bit more like Jesus than when we came in **so that** we would use the gifts and callings that God has given us **so that** somebody else would receive what I have to offer **so that** it would be more like Him. That's why we do what we do and if we forget that, it's terrible.

So pastors are not called to get the people to do their ministry for them; that pastors are called to equip the saints to minister. So ministers of the church aren't the staff. Ministers of the church are us, all of us, each one of us. And that's our call. So what is the Lord doing in your ministry? You say, "I don't have a ministry in the church." You have a ministry outside the church, don't you? If you are a mechanic, I would go to you and say, "Tell me what the Lord is doing in His mechanic ministry". People go, "that's a crazy thing to say, all I do is fix cars". I go, "whatever you do in word or deed, you do it for the glory of the Lord". How is it that you make a distinction in the way that you do it over somebody else who doesn't know Him? How is it that your work shines in a way that somebody else who doesn't know Him? Doesn't! How is it that the way that you do what you do, the person who's the beneficiary of it sees something different than anybody else whoever would have done it? How is it that Jesus is seen in your ministry? That's one of the other things that we do to equip them to share their faith or do whatever they do **so that** Jesus would be seen **so that** somebody would ask them the reason for the hope that they have.

Whatever your occupation is you've got to say, "Look, I serve Jesus as a minister in accounting; I serve Jesus as a minister in baking; I serve Jesus as a ministry in whatever it is". There's always opportunity to glorify the Lord, whatever He lays before you. Otherwise He wouldn't tell you "**whatever you do in word and deed, you do it for the glory of the Lord**". There's a way to do eating and drinking that glorifies the Lord, and there's a way to do it that doesn't. There certainly is a way to do your occupation, to run your home, to minister to your children, to deal with your friendships in a way that's honoring and glorifying to God, and there's a way to do it that doesn't. There's a way to be part of a body that glorifies the Lord, and there's a way to do it that doesn't. The difference between those is

whether or not we are mature or immature. I think as we go forward we'll see specifically today some of those characteristics.

The first ministry of a believer is to other believers because God put you in a body; in His body for the purpose of edifying the rest of the body, ~~so that~~ the body is built up in love. Look in **Hebrews 10:24-25**: You'll hear the writer to this group of people say the exact same thing on how churches should function when you get together **"And let us consider"** the word consider means to give careful attention to. When you come to church you should be thinking but the first thing you shouldn't be thinking is about the message. You should be thinking carefully about how you might accomplish this exhortation from the bible **"how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting** or depending on your translation, forsaking **to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** Why is it all the more as you see the day draw near? The word of God tells us in the last days terrible times will come and the love of many will wax cold and people will gather to themselves, teachers to tell them what their itching ears want to hear and they will forsake the way of righteousness, and they will abandon the word of God, and they will want to go the way of Balaam's error. But all the more as we see that day approaching because Jesus said **"that day should not come upon you as a thief"** but all the more as we know that day approaches we should be gathering together and considering and thinking hard about how we can stir up one another to love and good deeds.

So what you should do is you should get to church and go, "Lord, I don't always want to sit in my same seat. I pray that you would put me next to somebody today and give me the word or give me the encouragement or give me the action or motivate me in some way so that I might stir them to love and good deeds in a way that somebody else might not". So you go through the message and you just don't go, "gee, I wish my brother was here because this is really what he needs." You say, "No, if God wanted your brother here, he would have brought your brother here. This is what you need. So you need to consider." Not, "well my brother should be hearing how to consider". "No, you need to hear how to love and consider stirring up other people. Otherwise, you wouldn't be here." And you say, "I'm not coming here then." Well, that's fine but then wherever God takes you, if they give the word he'll hear the same thing until you respond to Him. And He'll wake you up in the middle of the night and say, "consider stirring up others to do love and good deeds." You're going to go, "me,me,me,me". But it's not going to make any difference. He's going to keep bringing that point to you and he won't give you any more until you respond to what He's told you to do.

So the writer to the Hebrew readers was the same thought as Paul: Get together to build up the body; consider how you might stir others up to love and good deeds. I just love being a pastor when people go, "Man, you better talk about Jesus today because I brought my friend". I go, "Is this the first time they are going to hear about Jesus? Because I can't overcome what you've already told them about Jesus." They go, "I haven't told him anything." I go, "You've told them plenty by the way that you live, by the things that you've said, by the things that you've chosen. But they're here with you because of some reason. That something of Jesus has shown through, probably in spite of us all. I'll share Jesus with them but you share Jesus with them always. I get 45 (minutes) you get a lot". So again, how can we equip you to evangelize your friend because it's not just certain people's job to do that? There are people who are gifted in that but it's all of our jobs to share our faith. If it is important enough for us to invite somebody, it should be important for us to share with them and not be ashamed at what the Lord has done. So all that exhortation

just to say: this is the purpose of church, this is the purpose of being saved, and this is the purpose of God's heart for His people, to consider how we can stir others up onto that kind of behavior.

Maturity here from verse 13 is one of the ~~so that's~~. Why do we do ministry? ~~so that~~ we can be mature. Look at what it says here: ***Ephesians 4:13: "until we attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"***. This is what I said last week that we are going to talk about today exclusively. It says ***until we attain***. The word "until" here is interesting. It's obviously a time frame. It means that the ministry of equipping the saints happens until the duration of something. What's this something that this happens until? ***Until we all attain maturity unity and knowledge of the Son of God . . . mature manhood to the measure. . . of the fullness of Jesus.*** So you say, how do you put that in English? The ministry, interpersonal relational ministry, in the body is to continue until we are all like Jesus. And you say, "I'm already like Jesus." I'm glad, but is there anybody that isn't? If the church is healthy, and as Chuck Smith use to tell us "healthy sheep multiply", there will be new life that comes in. There may be people who go, "I've been with the Lord for 50 years. I look like Jesus!" I go, "I think Jesus was a little more humble than that but OK I'm with you so far". If that's true than how are you stirring and equipping this young person who knows nothing about Jesus, except that they need Him and they are having a struggle in their walk? So you see that this process continues until we are ultimately with the Lord. It's not something that just comes for a little while then goes away. So it is duration of the office of ministry continues until we all attain maturity and complete manhood and we are united in knowledge of Jesus, and we are like Him, and He takes us home. So it's an ongoing thing; we're in it for the long haul is what I am trying to tell you. It's not something that would ever totally hit. We're not going to hit the mark and say, "we're done, no reason to gather together anymore". But all the more as we see that day approaching, we should be considering it because our tendency is going to be to drift away. Our tendency is going to be to watch the world and drift away with other people who name the name of Christ and turn away from Him. So we shouldn't follow that pattern, we should follow the biblical pattern.

So the perfecting of the saints is to continue until – and the Greek word here, to arrive is "katentao" not Lake Tahoe. What it means is to arrive at a destination. God's purpose in us in equipping each other, God's purpose in us ministering to each other is so that we arrive at a destination. We use the same English word like "come". It has a figurative meaning and a literally meaning. I can say, "Come over to my house and see me". You say that is talking about a distance travelled to end up at a location over in PQ. But I can also say "come to your senses". That's figurative. It doesn't mean you are going on a journey it means come to reality. So this exhortation here is not that you are going to a distance it is he is calling us to arrive at the likeness of Jesus. He's saying I want you to arrive somewhere but it's not a distance for travel, it's a transformational trip. To where you are changed in the process and when you arrive you may not have gone anywhere but you'll be like Him. That's kind of what God's heart is.

In ***Ephesians 4:3*** it says ***"we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"***. The unity of the spirit is the gift that God gives to be guarded. That's something we already have. Somebody asked last night, "What do we do about unity?" We already have it. We just got to get the stuff out of the way so that it flourishes. It's a gift been given, purchased by Jesus for the unity of His

people. That's already there. That's something that is to be guarded so it doesn't get smudged and obscured. Here we have something that is to be reached, a goal. The unity of the faith is a goal that is to be reached. The idea here in the text is that we can achieve unity in the knowledge of the Son of God by means of being faithfully taught in the word. Notice here that unity and knowledge are tied up in one package, and they are tied together in the word of God. The word of God is the basis of Christian unity because the word of God can and will, if we submit to it; bring all of us to the divine viewpoint. We will have the mind of Christ. We will think the same thoughts. We will believe the same things. The word of God is critical for us to have same unity in truth. To have this unity in the knowledge of the Son of God. Unity of thinking leads to unity of purpose, which leads to unity of service and actions, which leads to building up of the body of Christ, which leads to the glorification of the Lord in our presence, which leads to the joy of His people, which leads to great things. This also leads to people going, "tell me the reason for the hope that you have because you guys are weird." That's what we're looking for. Not people who say "you are weird", they are going to say that anyway. But we're looking for people to ask reasons for hope. Remember, these people weren't commended for their hope. Paul prayed that hope would flourish. My prayer is the same. My prayer is for all of us that we would excel in faith and in hope and in deeds of love. If you don't have hope, it's going to crush it.

So he's praying for hope for them and he wants to instill in them saying, hope will come as you mature. Hope will come as you pass through trials and testing. Hope will arise in your heart because of those, not in spite of those. The testing of your faith develops perseverance and perseverance character and character hope. Hope does not disappoint us. You should thank God for the trials because it is going to instill and produce hope. As long as you don't buck out from under it. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, scripture says, rather painful. But later on, however, it produces a peaceable fruit of righteousness if you are trained by it. That's the exact same thing we are looking for.

The knowledge of the Son of God is not merely intellectual or academic. It's not learning facts about Him because the Pharisees had facts; they didn't have faith. Jesus said in John 17:3 one of the most critical passages in the entire bible. ***"This is eternal life"*** You say what does it mean to be saved? Jesus said, ***"that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."*** So knowledge of Him doesn't mean facts and figures. Knowledge of Him means intimate relational "I know Him"; we know each other. Not I know about Him, I know Him. I know His heart, I know His ways. That's the kind of knowledge that we are talking about here. That kind of knowledge is the unity that the Lord is looking for here. Not in agreement in, yes Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Yes, I understand where He did his first miracle. That's not what it means. It means that we say, "You know what, I know Him and I know that you know Him because I see Him alive in you." I know that we know Him because I see Him alive in His body and He's the head and I see how He works. The way I see Him working in the word, I see Him working in our body. It's the same way I see Him working in you. That's what it means to have that kind of knowledge. If we think that way, we'll see that we will have complete unity. We'll recognize the grace that was given to each of us.

Let's see how Paul says it to the Philippian church. Same kind of thing; same kind of thought.

**Philippians 1:9-11: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may approve things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day that Jesus Christ, being filled with the fruit of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.**

Knowledge and judgment here, look closely, are the foundations of the outworking of Christian love and fruitfulness. **“Judge not less you be judged”**. No, make proper judgment. Discern truth. Discern the reality of who He is. Don't fall for false teaching about Him because it makes you more comfortable. Fall for truth. Passionately pursue truth. Bible knowledge produces the stability of mind; it produces maturity but you must submit to what the truth of the word of God says. God isn't really into crisis management. Do you know the biggest rip off in business machinery? It's called preventative maintenance. They basically charge you money and don't do anything. People like that because it gives them confidence that something was done that might prevent some future disaster. God does real preventative maintenance in His word. He gives you His word ~~so that~~ “your word have I hidden in my heart ~~so that~~ I might not sin against you.” God does the preventative maintenance in the real kind of way. He says, “I'm giving huge investments to you. I've given you 66 books of truth and on every page is something wonderful and beautiful about me or my Son, that will give you hope, that will be a rock in your day of trouble. You build your life on this book and when your day of trouble comes; your house will not fall. But if you don't do that and you leave it on the shelf, your day of calamity will come. For you've built your life upon yourself, for about the things of the world, and on that day there will be a terrible crash.

God is front loading the trouble that will come our way by giving us His word and equipping us for ministry and sticking us in a body ~~so that~~ when our day of trouble comes, two are better than one. Whoa to him who has no one to help him up. God has given us a body ~~so that~~ in our day of trouble **we walk through the valley of the shadow of death** together and we **fear no evil for the Lord** and his people are **with me**. A quarter 3 strands is not easily broken and we know the ways of God. So He front loads all these things. Our positional perfection is gained by salvation, that's what we got, but our ultimate perfection is gained by glorification. Our practical perfection of how we live day to day is by our sanctification. Another name for sanctification in the bible is spiritual maturity. I want to talk specifically about this maturity.

Let's go back to verse 13. Look what it says here. We are to attain something. There's a goal, spiritual maturity, and there is a pattern. Let's read it. **Ephesians 4:13: “until we attain the unity of the faith we know what that is and of the knowledge of the Son of God we know what that is to a mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.** So the goal is spiritual maturity. What does that mean, being old? No, that's just old. Spiritual maturity doesn't come with time necessarily. It's not something that automatically happens. Some of us think it's like puberty, one day your voice changes and you start growing a beard. No, spiritual things aren't like that. One day you don't just get up and go “Wow, I'm all of a sudden spiritual. I'm starting to think in ways I never thought”. It doesn't happen like that. It happens as God disciplines you in His way and in His word. If you shortcut that, there is no shortcut. There's no instant. So the goal is maturity but the pattern is the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So maturity happens and this is a funny quote of the world: "Maturity is achieved when a person postpones immediate pleasure for long term value." I guess that's OK. Don't really read it in the bible, but that's OK. Maturity defined by the world is full development. I guess that's OK but it's not really the heart of what the bible talks about. I'll give you a bible definition that I wrote, and then I will give you a shorter one that you can remember.

Biblical maturity, I wrote, is consistent biblical behavior patterns in response to any of life's situation. You say, that very technical. I'll give you an easier one: Biblical maturity is Christ-like-ness. Is that acceptable? That is what the Lord is after. You have been predestined in Romans 8 to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. That image isn't in the sense of God wants us to all grow beards. That image is in there should be the divine imprint upon each of us ~~so that~~ people see something unique about us. If they know Jesus, they go, "You know what, I see Him there." One of the greatest compliments you could ever have is for somebody to say, "I know Jesus better because I know you."

There is a lady who said to me just last night before service and it wasn't about me. It was about another guy who's one of the teachers for the Bible Institute. She said, "This guy impacted my life more than almost anybody I've met. The fruit of the spirit was so evident in his life, that I feel closer to Jesus because I knew him. And he taught truth. I checked if it was true, but I discerned the truth because I saw it living in him." That is incarnate ministry that Jesus took on his incarnate flesh. ***The word became flesh and dwelt among us.*** He's not here in the flesh anymore but He is the head of His body. We are incarnate body #2. There shouldn't be much of a distinction. The same things that He did in the flesh should be seen in His body here. You say, "Whoa, we should be spitting in the mud and rubbing it on blind people's eyes." No, but the fruit of that should be manifest. The fruit of God working in our mist should be manifest. We should recognize, "Man, I see the Lord at work there. I know the way God works and I see the same patterns." That is what God is after for us.

When we look at this maturity means change. Right? Often it means we need to change. I'll give you this thought. People change when they've heard enough that they have to change. When the pain gets so bad you can't take it anymore, then you are going to change. But they will want to change when they learn enough. They'll say "I have to change because I can't take it anymore" but when they learn enough they'll want to change but they will only really change when they receive enough. I'll read it to you: ***People change when they heard enough that they have to change, learn enough that they want to change, receive enough that they are able to change.*** That is the fruit of God working in our mist. You won't change on your own. Maturity means that you have it. To mature, we have to change. All of us will always be in the process of changing. We are being transformed from glory to glory to glory. You're like, "You know what, when I'm on the middle glory, when I'm hitting the glory things, praise the Lord! But the middle part between the glories, that's not so good!" You need to learn to say, ***"Though it tarry wait for it, for it will surely come.*** And I'm going from glory to glory to glory and each glorious mark is a change where God makes me more like Jesus. And I need to learn to enjoy the process."

So let's look at the pattern now.

## THE DISCIPLE'S CALL

Our call was simply to follow Jesus **“to the measure of the stature”**. The word stature here means this: the age of discretion. So maturity means to be like Jesus Christ. We are to pursue that until we attain the stature of Him. It's not talking about his physical standard in height; it's not talking about his 33 years of age; it's talking about his character. We are to pursue the character of Jesus Christ till it is manifested in us. You say what does that look like?

Charles Spurgeon wrote a really great quote that I put in English so you can understand it because I don't like the Old English: **“Jesus is the line of Judah. He is also the Lamb of God. He grasps the whip and clears out the temple court. He cries at the grave of Lazarus. He has the courage to reprimand the Pharisees and the scribes and yet He dared to show weakness when His trial was at its hardest in Gethsemane. We see that in Him there was love and strength; tenderness and firmness; mercy and truth; meekness and majesty; all are in perfect balance in Him. Therefore Jesus is in a special way the only model for a man”**.

Maturity is not what you see in the world. We have people that we esteem. We have athletics that we wish we were but it's mostly we wish we were them for their paycheck; or we wished we were them because of the praise they receive. A lot of them are just glorified babies! A mature man is Jesus Christ.

A youth pastor I know laments over the fact that 80% of students who attend youth ministry and go to junior high or high school, then they try to get into college ministry, 80% of them by the time of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year in college, shipwreck their faith and abandon it completely. 80%. You say, “Why does that happen?” There are many reasons why it happens but the first primary reason is because they don't know the Lord. They don't know the Lord in the sense that they need to. They are not unified in the knowledge of God. What happens is if you don't know the Lord? If you're a thinker you sway over into literacy. If you are not really a thinker and you don't want to think about deep things and are most experiential, then you swing over into charisma, and you're pulled away into false doctrine. All of a sudden you believe the teaching of Discovery Channel that says the earth is billions and billions of years old. 6 days, please! Most people, even those who go to churches who are in high school and college, don't believe the literal 6 day creation. They say that's just a metaphor for what we know. I go, “Really, are you an archeologist? Do you know?” They say, “No, but I heard”. I say, “But who did you hear from?” You hear from somebody who is going to be worm food in a few years. Have you heard from somebody who never dies? Have you heard from the one who was there when it was made? Because he wrote a book. Have you read it?” They say, “How can you know?” I say, “How can he know? I'm taking from what God says because there are plenty of facts that prove what God says. The bible isn't a book about science to sway the skeptic. The bible is a book for God's people to sway their heart. To sway our hearts so that we trust Him more.

So this youth pastor said this, and he's writing specifically of young men, the woman have issues too but here is heart is for the young men, men in their 20's: ***“The young men of today they can bungee jump. Amen. They can seek the challenge of extreme sport. They can set off to the remote corners of the world in search of adventure. You're like, “yeah, they are so gutsy”. They are, but *But the courage for commitment and responsibility and marital love is being lost at an alarming rate and then some. The****

*Church of Christ, and we who preach the gospel, must give them that courage and call them to their true image - the man Jesus Christ.*" He's saying, "I'm heartbroken to put so much effort into students' lives and I see them just tank, particularly with young men".

I work with young men, college students, and I'll tell you, this assessment is 100% correct. What do you see with that age group? You see a lack of desire for those things. They say, "Yeah, I read my bible". But they don't heed the call of the Apostle Paul who said **"when I was a child I thought like a child, but when I became man I put away those foolish things."** I'm not saying video games are foolish things but you know what, there's no reason that somebody in their 20's should spend 10 hours a day playing video games. They should put that away and say, "Lord, make me a mature man like Jesus Christ. Lord, let me put that away. Let me go on to maturity. Let me understand commitment. Let me understand responsibility. Let me understand those things **so that** I would make a godly husband to one of your daughters one day, **so that** our relationship would be seen as a picture of Jesus' love for the church, **so that** the lost would come to know you." That youth pastor was lamenting over that, *"Oh God save us from those things"* He said, *"What we haven't told the kids is that they need to be mature. We've catered to them. We've prolonged high school for 15 years past high school. We haven't challenged them to grow up."* So they get into school and the school just crushes them. What do you do about that? What do you do when the students don't see it? What do you do when they don't get it? What do you do when you constantly pull them away from their families and don't say, "You know what, you should see your Dad and your Dad should be instructing you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We should take the fathers and say, "Tag you're it!" We want to help you man but "you're it". We need to tell the kids, "See your Dad, honor him, love him, follow him." Not say, "Your Dad isn't worth anything, do your own thing. Live in fantasy because you'll never grow up and you'll never mature and the body of Christ suffers and people's lives are shipwrecked by it."

When I thought about this and I was wrestling with it so much, I was reading Isaiah and I got this verse to share.

### WHAT A MATURE MAN LOOKS LIKE

This is what Jesus would look like, described in metaphor: **Isaiah 32:2&8: Each** (this should be true of each of us. Do you want to know what a mature man looks like? This should be him) **will be like a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.** <sup>8</sup>**But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands.** This should be true of us, that should be the mark; that should be the reality.

As a guy, can people look at us and say, "You know what, that guy, out of his inner most being, flows a river of living water. That guy there is a shelter from the storm. He's a city of refuge just like Jesus Christ. He's a place to come to when I am hurting and I can find truth, and wisdom, and guidance, and safety." Are we that for our families and are we that for others in the church? This is how the church is to function. When a widow comes in, God puts the lonely and family. She is our family. When a kid comes in with no Dad, he should have a hundred Dads here. We should say, "You know what, you belong to the Lord, you're my brother and I want to show you what a godly dad does. Because maybe

you'll understand God a little better because you never had a flesh earthly Dad. So let me show you. God is like that only a million times better." That is why true religion takes care of widows and orphans. That's why. If we don't press on to maturity you've got nothing to offer. And that is my tremendous fear.

### OPPOSITE OF MATURITY

**Ephesians 4:13:** *"<sup>14</sup>so that we may not be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful scheming"*. You see the word **tossed** and the word **carried**. Those are involuntary movements. The immature person, I'm not just talking men now, the spiritually immature, will be carried away and moved involuntarily by things that tickle their ears, and tell them what their flesh wants to hear that is inspired by Satan, to cause you to go back to your previous behavior. God is not interested in that. The word here for **children** doesn't literally mean children; it means foolish or childish. It means immature. **Tossed about** is a fascinating word, it's too hard to pronounce it, but it means: to drift; unmanageable ship; dismasted without rudder or a compass; driven by every wind.

What's so great about God and here's one of the only times I'm ever going to give you an unbiblical illustration. It was Wednesday morning and I'm with my brother. We are sitting down at the bay fishing. We are sitting on the rocks by the jetty. As we are sitting, there was this man with his son in a boat. He is not from here, he's a tourist. He rented a big sailboat. He's cruising along and there's a headwind blowing right into the basin. There's a basin then a jetty. The winds blowing right in and if you know anything about sailing, you need to tack. Right? You don't go right into the headwind because you can't do it. So he makes one tack and decides it's taking too long, I guess, so he decides he's just going to go straight and go right out into the jetty. Doesn't work that way. The headwind is blowing head on and the sails aren't full of wind anymore and so the boat starts to drift. And where does it drift? It drifts full speed right towards the rocks where we are standing. As it comes flying over I drop my fishing pole and I catch his boat right before it hits the rocks. My brother and I are both pushing it. It still hit the rocks; it was a big old boat. It crunched. I looked down and thought, "Oh, that's bad". It's not leaking, but it's bad. The whole thing is scraped, all the paint is gone. Man said, "Is it bad?" I said, "I don't know what to tell you but it's not good." He said, "OK, shove me off". So we shoved him off. He starts going again. He made one tack and he tries to go straight. I thought, "This is unbelievable!" Then the man pulls the rudder out of the water. I guess you don't need it! So the boat starts floating back. This time half the people from the hotel are down on the bank and they are just looking at this man thinking he's crazy. One guy threw his bike down because the boat was coming towards the rocks again, even faster this time. He yelled to the man in the boat, "Put the rudder back in water, let out the jib, and swing it around." The man said "Shut up, I don't need your help." The kid in the boat is about 15 years old looking like, "I can't believe I'm with my Dad. Is anybody seeing me?" The boat comes back again to the rocks and crunch. This time not the front but the whole side. I'm thinking, "Man, I don't know what kind of security deposit you gave, but you're not getting anything back!" The guy on the bike goes, "Listen, I have a boat, this is what you need to do." The man is getting angrier and angrier. He is not listening. I'm like, "Sir, the rudder probably has a

purpose and it should be in the water. It's got to have a reason to be there. That's how it was when you got it; it should be in the water. Put it back in." The man is just getting more and more irate and angry.

That's the point of what this is talking about. People who are immature are carried away to destruction and they won't heed good instruction. Maybe the cure for maturity is a little bit of humility that says, "It's possible I might be wrong. Maybe the rudder has a purpose."

To finish the story we pushed the guy off again. The whole side of the boat is trashed now. The 15 year old is mortified. He's crawled under the deck now. He doesn't want to be seen because there are about 50 people watching. The man puts the rudder back in and does the same thing he's done before except this time he barely misses the rocks and heads out into the ocean. The guy on the bike goes, "I'm going to call the lifeguard and tell him there's a man that doesn't know what he is doing. I don't know if we'll ever see him again." The guy called over and we never said the man the rest of the day.

The point is that's God's way of just saying, "Look, let me show you what I am talking about. Do you see how you tried to give that man a little bit of instruction?" I'm not a sailor but I do know some things and tacking is important. But when they won't receive it, it's a sign of immaturity. The people, who are immature, don't receive sound doctrine and they are carried away by false things. And they shipwrecked their faith on the rocks like that boat. The scars that they receive in their shipwreck take a very long time to heal and never really go away. Maybe if we could be a little bit more humble and say, "It's quite possible that maybe I'm just wrong and don't know how to sail at all." Maybe the guy who knew how to sail would have said, "I'm not doing anything. I'll be happy to show you." Then the man would have learned the right way to do things.

That's what this passage is all about here. It's about maturing so that we show others how not to crash their boats. Not laugh at them when they do and mock them for not being as good of a sailor as we are. Its saying "Let me tell you about the times I crashed because I didn't heed the word of God. Can I help you through that? Can you understand this?" Forget about UFC 103 tonight. Let's go talk about Jesus. Seriously, your video game, cut it down to 5 hours and maybe put 5 hours with the bible. For if you do I think your video game will end up disappearing because God will call you to put it away and move on to maturity.

As we look at this I think you can see the way that Satan fuels these things. Satan discourages unity because he encourages Christians to ignore God's word; to ignore sound teaching; to look for problems with it, so that we revert back to our former way of living. Or what he does is he works heavily in our mental attitudes sin such as fear, worry, bitterness, pride, guilt, unforgiveness, and hatred. Those mental sins are worse than pretty much any other sin. Because what that does, is the mental attitude sins progress to take place into practicing sins, and those happen in our mental capacities because we ignore the word of God. Once you ignore the word of God and you begin thinking wrongly, it doesn't take long for your behavior to conform to your bad thinking. No matter what this guy would do, he can be determined as all he wants and say, "I'm not going to crash the boat this time." But you know what, you're going to crash the boat every time until you heed the right way to do it. ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap. He who sows to the flesh will***

**reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will reap life.”** Get your rudder in the water and heed the word of God and you will mature.

We talked about this last week. I’m just finishing up for context sake. **Ephesians 4:15: “<sup>d5</sup>Rather**, than be immature in shipwrecking, rather than being tossed around, rather than by being deceived, rather than listening to crafty arguments, rather than that **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”**. The word here says “speaking” but literally it’s not translated as speaking. The word doesn’t mean “speaking”. The translators make it “speaking” but literally it’s “truth” in the present continuous tense. So it’s “truthing”. Certainly it includes “speaking” and the reason they translate it as “speaking” is because of the context where it says, instead of listening to false doctrine and being carried away, “speak”. Instead of listening to somebody else speak lies, you speak truth. That’s applicable and that’s true but literally this means “truthing”. So don’t just speak but truthing - incarnate that. Incarnate truth in action just as Jesus did.

### [John 1:14](#)

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

What is truth? Pilate asked. Jesus said, “You are seeing it, me”. Be truthful; be truthing; be truthing in love. You say, “What does that look like?” You know what that looks like. I don’t need to tell you. You don’t need that any man should teach you. God teaches you just by pointing errors of your life right now. He’s like, “That’s what I am talking about. You’ve seen it. Do it.” Truthing.

How does this maturity come? Twice in this passage about the church, Paul says in verse 15 **“speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way”**. Then at the end of verse 16 he says the same thing, **“When each part is working properly it makes the body grow”**. So growth is God’s method. It’s very encouraging to know that it’s not instantaneous. Doesn’t it? It’s a process. You say, “I don’t feel like I am growing”. You know what, you stay in the sun, the sunlight of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and you water yourself with the water of the word, you will grow. And in due season you will bear fruit. It’s a method, it’s a process and it’s encouraging. It just takes a while. It doesn’t take place suddenly. You say, “I’m not like that yet.” Don’t get discouraged. **“Though it tarry, wait for it.”** It will come. I will give you God’s promise: **“He who began a good work will be faithful to complete it.”** How do I know when it’s complete? When you look like Jesus. When you act like Jesus, then it’s complete. Until then God is working. In spite of bad decisions you make, He is still working. He’s not going to give it up.

Let’s give you 2 thoughts. There’s no drive through for your break through. Or I’ll put it to you this way, there’s no microwave for maturity. We all want change but we don’t want to be changed. We all want growth but we don’t want to grow. The solution to that is: that’s from Satan, let it go. And say, “God I will stand in the light of your word, in the grace of your Son, and you water me and you cause me to grow as you see fit, and let me grow up to be like Him.” If you do that, you’ll be really, really surprised.

There's this company called:

**GROW ME**

*Where do you want me to grow?*



If we say, "Lord where would you want me to grow?" He'd say, "Lots of places. Don't get discouraged because I began it and I'll complete it. Even if the process is hard, the fruit that comes from it would be so glorious, that you will thank me for it."

I can tell you personally, with 100% assurance and not lying, that I suffered physically for 18-20 years with liver disease and it was the worst experience I ever had. I look back now on it and I thank God for it because He taught me that he's the friend who sticks closer than a brother. He taught me that He would never leave me or forsake me. He taught me that though he slay me yet will I follow Him. He taught me that His love is not only manifest in blessings and goodness, it is also manifest in discipline and difficulties **so that** I would not trust in myself but in Him who raises the dead. Thus, I look back and I thank Him. I don't want to do it again but I thank Him for it. "Where do you want me to grow", is the question we should ask the Lord every day. It's the question you should ask your spouse if they are godly. "Honey, what area would you like to see me grow because I know that you know Jesus, so which part of Jesus don't you see here?" That's what maturity is and that's what the body is for. If you can get to the point where you have people in your life like that and you can say to them honestly, "Where do you want to see me grow? Where am I not like Jesus?" Then you will grow. But as long as you hide behind pride, you'll never grow.

Recapping is this: The Lord's goal for us as a body is that we would be equipped (Chapter 4, verse 12). The goal of that is that we would be mature (Chapter 4, verse 13). The result of maturity is that we would be stable (Chapter 4, verses 14 through 16).

Think of this. Here's another goofy story. A mother told me this story. There's a child that goes to bed and he falls out of bed. And the mother goes to the child and says, "Son, you fell out of bed." He's like, "Yeah, I know." "Why did you fall out of bed?" And this is what he said (and I wrote it down because it was so funny), "I stayed too close to where I got in, thus I fell out." So here's my word to you as we pray. Maybe God would say to you, "Don't stay so close to where you came in. Move in some. Move in some."

Let's pray together.

***Father, thank you so much for being in your word today and being in your house. I pray for each of us in this room Lord that we would move in some. That we would not stay so close to where we came in. That we wouldn't hold onto our childhood but that we would press on to growing up into***

***Jesus Christ. I pray specifically for the men that are here today, Lord. I feel the conviction upon us as a gender who have failed to lead our homes, to honor you, to train our children but we offset those things to others. That we put it under the guise of being too busy and Lord the families suffer because of it; your people suffer because of it; our kids suffer because of that. I don't pray Lord for condemnation of promise. I pray for conviction that we would take back what the enemy has stolen. I pray that the wives of the men would encourage them and pray for them and that we, Lord, would all grow up. That we would see our high and mighty call. Lord, I want to be like Jesus not because I have to but because we imitate those we most admire. So Lord would you cause our heart to be infatuated with Him who is so worthy to be praised and admired. And for that we are very careful to give you the praise that you deserve. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.***