

WE ARE TO GROW UP

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Read Ephesians 4:7-16

⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds 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.

Verse 7: **'Grace (that is, gifts - your calling and ability to serve in ministry) was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift'**

Each of us – whoever you are, whatever your background, whatever your prior experience – have been gifted by God to serve.

You are not an accident. You have been purposed and designed by God to be an integral part of the body of Christ, to add something to the body that it would otherwise be lacking.

Read Psalm 139:13-16

You carry something that God has placed within you that he wants to place a demand upon and bring out of you in order that you might use that gift to serve the body of Christ.

Verse 11-12: **'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ'**

God has gifted certain people in specific ways - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers - not to be the ones who do all the serving but to equip and unlock the saints for the work of ministry; to help others identify their God-given gifts and learn to walk in them.

The work of ministry is the building up of the body of Christ, but the eventual, desired outcome of this is not slick, impressive churches that give **off the appearance of success; it's a church that is mature enough to be able to reproduce itself in a healthy way.**

If the members of the church do not grow, then the body of Christ itself remains immature, focusing on maintaining itself and meeting its own needs rather than maximising the God-given potential we carry within us to meet the needs of others.

The mission of God – to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded – has a church to accomplish it.

Verse 13-14: *'...**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***

Paul's clear intention here is that unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood and the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ is not for a select few in the church, or even for the majority – he says 'Until we all attain' to these things.

He wants and believes that it is possible for all believers everywhere to attain:

1. Unity in the faith – the kind of unity that goes beyond naturally getting on well with others and can only exist because of the work of the Holy Spirit that brings us into peace with God and each other.
2. Knowledge of the Son of God – not head knowledge that knows the stories of the gospels, but a real, personal experience of the Jesus that is described in the gospels. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
3. Mature manhood – **Paul's aim is that everyone would become mature in Christ.** (Colossians 1:28)
4. The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ – **Paul's conviction is that every believer should become more like Christ as they walk out their discipleship towards Him.** (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Verse 15: *'**Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ'***

We are to grow up. That is the plan, the intention of God – **that we wouldn't remain immature like children but become selfless instead of selfish, stable rather than unstable, single-minded instead of doubleminded, focused on **advancing God's kingdom rather than seeking to build our own.****

This message is for all of us. Every believer everywhere is exhorted to go on growing up **in every way into Christ. Growing up isn't always easy.**

1. Growing up leads to less recognition.
2. Growing up often looks like going lower

Conclusion Part One: Why should we grow up?

Paul's position is that '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.'*

As members of the body of Christ, we have been designed to grow and the rest of the body requires that we do so.

Conclusion Part Two: How do we grow up?

1. Press into Him
2. Start serving
3. Step out of your comfort zone
4. Steward your gift
5. Embrace discipleship