

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## **From Deception to Loving Maturity**

### **Ephesians 4:14-16**

**PowerPoint Presentation: None**

**Keywords: Spiritual growth, Fellowship, Maturity, False Teachers, Love**

**SermonAudio blurb:**

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Read 4:11-16.
- B. Last week we saw that at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ He gave to His Church gifts.
  1. These gifts were people— Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers.
  2. The purpose of this was to equip, build up the Church in sound doctrine and bring the Church into a unity of the faith.
  3. All Christians are part of this grand drama of God where we are displaying and proclaiming over and over the triumph of God in Jesus Christ over all the spiritual powers of darkness.
    - a. And this means that we need to be properly outfitted and trained.
    - b. And that is where these gifted leaders come into play. They provide the guidance, leadership and teaching to bring about true transformation in the hearts and minds of all in the church.
  4. Therefore it is wise for us all to be wary of who is our leaders.
    - a. Everyone should give care in who is allowed to have influence in your lives, especially in the training of doctrine.
    - b. Remember that all of us live out our real theology.
    - c. Remember the warnings from Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy that in the latter days many in the church will turn from sound doctrine and gather for themselves teachers who will tickle their ears.
    - d. Remember Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. False teachers would arise from even among their own midst.
  5. These leaders are given to the Church so that they can equip the people to do the work of God.

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6. This is what is at the heart of a verse that defines what I seek to do as a pastor in Colossians 1:28, "Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, giving him all the wisdom of God, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."
- C. What happens when the people of God recognize their responsibility?
1. Why are you here? You may have many reasons or just one. But is it so that you might be equipped to do ministry and service as a mature Christian?
    - a. Vs 12 makes it clear that the major task of these leaders is that of equipping you. This makes teaching and learning central to why we gather each week.
    - b. It is not a time of sharing or singing or experiencing God in some way.
    - c. It is a willful submitting of your self to the teachers of this church as they help guide you through the Word.
  2. Is that why you are here? To have your bible open and ready to learn so as to know how to live and see and interpret this world?
    - a. Do you recognize that need and how important it is to the health of this church?
    - b. Do you take what is taught and seek to put it into practice right away? Do you make notes so that you can recall what is taught when it is needed?
    - c. I think of my time in seminary. I desired to teach and preach the Word and therefore I recognized my need to be trained. I had the giftedness, that had been seen and affirmed. But I did not have the skills and so I submitted myself to the teachers and professors, obeying their rules and submitting myself to their standards. If they said I must read something I read it. If I was told to memorize something it was memorized. There was no room to debate, I was being equipped.
    - d. The same when I was in the police academy. I wanted to be an officer but obviously lacked the training. Again I willfully submitted myself to all that the instructors demanded of me. Whether I saw the logic or reasoning was not important. I trusted that they knew what I did not know and therefore followed their commands.

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- e.      What is your mind set here? Are your teachers, elders, and leaders here to equip you and is your posture one that models one being equipped? Can you say to another, follow me, watch me, imitate me in what it looks like to be equipped to do the work of service in the church?
- D.      In our passage today we see first what we are to stop being and then what we are to become.

## **II. Stop being spiritual children (14).**

- A.      Every Christian starts here. There is no shame in this. But it is not something we are to remain in.
  - 1.      It is like where Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that when he was a child he spoke as a child and acted as a child, but when he became an adult he put away childish things.
  - 2.      Peter tells us that we must long for the pure milk of the Word so that we can grow with respect to our salvation.
  - 3.      Jesus asked His Father to sanctify/set apart us in truth and then identified truth as being the Word of God.
  - 4.      And just as children needs parents to guide them and help them grow well into maturity so too the church needs these leaders to do the same.
- B.      Notice what it is like to be a spiritual child.
  - 1.      Instability.
    - a.      An immature Christian is in a difficult place if they are not in a sound church with faithful leaders.
    - b.      They are not yet built up in the faith and therefore they are easily moved around.
    - c.      New teaching that is merely old errors that are repackaged and resold over and over can easily find a place in their mind.
    - d.      They are given to wandering about in their thinking. Often they are wiser in their own thinking than they have a right to be.
    - e.      The simplest way to grow into maturity as a Christian is to learn to sit still.
      - (1)      Find a solid church where the Word is prominently, thoroughly, carefully taught. Where the leadership is trustworthy and faithful.

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- (2) And then sit still. Stay with the teaching and stick it out. Don't pop in and out, don't start listening to other teachers as well unless they are recommended by your leadership.
  - (3) Just sit still and learn.
  - (4) 1 Corinthians 14:20—here is a church who is filled with spiritual babies. They love the experience of tongues rather than the discipline of being instructed (19).
2. Easily led astray.
    - a. I read a survey the other day that asked several questions related to the Christian faith. Important questions. The answers were disturbing and sad. It was clear that the church in America is filled with both weak and false teaching.
    - b. There is a ton of bad teaching out there and it requires great care to avoid it.
    - c. This is where the battle is fought. It is in truth. We do not properly declare to the powers of this age the triumph of Christ when we are untaught, immature and easily deceived.
    - d. There are people who work hard at deceiving you. They have their tricks and methods. They know how to blow so much smoke that you can't see anything clearly. And they will market it with great gusto as if it is some new, great truth.
    - e. I can't count the number of times I warned a person regarding a book they were reading, a person they were meeting with, a teacher they were listening to and I was ignored.
  - C. Understand that being a spiritual child has nothing to do with your age nor with the length of time you have been a Christian.
    1. I have watched new believers faithfully begin a life of spiritual disciplines and rapidly grow into stability and maturity.
    2. I have also watched people return to the same empty troughs expecting new results time after time. It is sad when you look at a person and realize they are no more measurably mature today than when you knew them ten years earlier.
    3. Example of the young believer at Grace whose friend from Church on The Way started coming.

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- D. If the church is doing its job then there shall be a consistent flow of new babes in Christ.
  - 1. Therefore the need to be constantly teaching and constantly reminding is part of the work of the service you are being equipped to do.
  - 2. For you who are mature you are to be pouring your lives into the lives of those younger and immature.
  - 3. This is part of what the CG is designed to do. It allows both the strong and the weak in faith to mingle. Where you are able to exhort and encourage one another in the faith.

### III. Grow up (15-16).

- A. The simple answer to not being a spiritual child who is at the mercy of every bit of worthless and evil doctrine is to grow up.
- B. Notice what is our goal and model, it is Jesus Christ.
  - 1. Roman 8:29 says that we are predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ. That is what God is doing in the Church.
  - 2. We are the body of Christ and we are to be ever growing and transforming into a faithful image of our Lord and Savior.
  - 3. We can ask ourselves if our actions, our attitudes, our thinking reflect Christ or not.
  - 4. Are the things we are involved in doing helping or resisting this very goal that God has called us to?
  - 5. Is the church you attend merely helping you be a moral person whose felt needs are being met or is your church driving you toward conformity to Jesus?
  - 6. Let me show you how your elders are viewing and evaluating you. [Moving To The Right powerpoint]
- C. How is this accomplished?
  - 1. First by speaking truth in love.
    - a. Here Paul is making a strong contrast with the false teachers and their scheming.
      - (1) Their motivation is not for the well-being of those they teach and influence. There is no love present.

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- (2) Rather they serve their own appetites seeking to fulfill their own perversions and longing.
- (3) They do it out of a love of money or for power and influence.
- b. The antidote is truth.
  - (1) The focus is not primarily on the individuals in a church but rather upon the teachers and pastors in the church.
  - (2) 1:13 speaks to that very issue.
    - (a) We are to be a people confessing the truth of the gospel and all that attaches itself to it.
    - (b) This truth is part of the very armor of God that we are commanded to put on so as to stand firm against Satan and the powers of darkness.
  - (3) The church of Jesus Christ is to be constantly growing up in truth. The church is to be putting off childish thinking and values and putting on sound doctrine that adorns the gospel.
- c. But it is not just truth, but truth in love.
  - (1) This idea of "love" is prominent in Ephesians.
    - (a) Paul prays that our eyes would be opened to comprehend the fullness of Christ's love for us.
    - (b) 4:2, 16.
    - (c) 5:2, 26.
  - (2) It separates us from the false teachers when we are teaching and speaking truth in love.
  - (3) This means that truth is not some cudgel that we use to hammer each other. It is not a tool to exalt ourselves over others who do not know or understand.
  - (4) Rather, when we speak truth in the realm of love it means we are transparent and give of ourselves. It is a giving of truth that seeks the others' good and well-being.
  - (5) It does not seek its own agenda but the agenda of the Lord who desires to see His church grow into His likeness.

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- d. So we become conformed into the likeness of our Lord first by hearing and speaking truth in love.
2. Second we do it by actually growing.
  - a. This means that spiritual growth is not some passive work of God where we just sit and wait. That will accomplish nothing.
  - b. Rather it is an active work each of us is expected to participate in.
    - (1) You grow by actively listening and actively then putting into practice what is taught to you.
    - (2) It is a sad thing to watch a person claim Jesus Christ as their Lord and yet not obey Him. It is at the foundation of the great commission.
    - (3) This is why James says we must not deceive ourselves into thinking we are truly a follower of Jesus if we practice hearing but not doing the Word.
    - (4) I can speak the truth to you for the rest of my life but if you merely listen, rise up and walk out, forgetting what you just heard then you shall not grow.
    - (5) I have listened to too many people over the years tell me how they want to grow or they want to meet with me, but then they will not actively participate in the process.
  - c. Notice also how expansive this growth is to be.
    - (1) "Grow up in all aspects into Him"
    - (2) There is nothing in any of us that is to be left out in this growth process.
    - (3) And much of the rest of Ephesians is going to show us what it will look like.
      - (a) 4:20-32 covers a lot of territory as to what Paul means "in all aspects into Him."
      - (b) 5:1-6 brings new dimensions as well.
  - d. Vs 16 is interesting in this final point.
    - (1) Notice that the church is connected vitally to the head, Jesus Christ.

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- (2) Jesus is our ultimate source of the church's growth. It is "from Him." He is the vine and we are the branches. We are the building, the temple of God but He is the foundation from which we stand.
- (3) But as that vital connection is practiced by each believer and we grow with respect to our salvation and we become mature rather than immature, what happens is that we start thinking in a corporate manner rather than a bunch of individuals.
- (4) this is what is meant by "being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part"
- (5) When the whole body, the entire church, is properly working and serving as they are growing in truth and therefore properly equipped, then the church causes itself to grow in love.

## **IV. Conclusion.**

- A. As we remember that this is all part of the drama of God in which through the Church He is displaying His victory through Jesus Christ then this goal of being conformed into Christ's image makes sense.
- B. The better each local church reflects the person of Jesus the better we are functioning as monuments of the glory and victory of God.
- C. We must constantly press one another to continue to grow in truth and apply that truth into our lives and relationships.

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## **Community Group Questions**

- **When thinking about the idea of "moving to the right" where do you see yourself? How can the church or this group help you to move and grow?**
- **What are ways you are actively participating in growing in your faith?**