

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Getting Ready to Grow Elements essential for growth in a local congregation *by Dempsey Collins*

Ephesians 4:11-15 reveals, in capsule, God’s purpose in the local assembly.

- **Christ gave gifts**
v. 11 – Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers
- **For what purpose?**
v. 12 – to equip the saints for the work of service
- **With a view to...**
v. 12 – The building up of the body of Christ
- **How long?**
v. 13 – Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God
- **To what level or degree?**
v. 13 – To a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ
- **With what results?**
v. 14 – We are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming
- **With what manner and objective?**
v. 15 – Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, Christ

A Spiritually Healthy Environment

In order to accomplish these objectives, the local assembly must be conducive to growth. God intended the local ekklesia to be, as it were, a spiritual incubator for His children. In Ephesians 4, God teaches us how to create this spiritually healthy environment.

*v. 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,
v. 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Unity must be based on solid spiritual ground:

vv. 4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Additional Elements from Ephesians 4

- v. 25 We must speak the truth...for we are members of one another.
- v. 29 We must only speak words that are good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
- v. 31 We must put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, and malice.
- v. 32 We must be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.

Other Elements Essential for Growth

- Sound teaching: (Public and private) This fact was already stressed in Eph. 4:15, but the importance of this element cannot be overemphasized. See also: Eph. 4:15; Acts 2:42; II Tim. 1:13, 14; II Tim. 4:2-5; II John 9-11; Gal. 1:8, 9
- Strong leadership: Acts 20:28ff; Heb. 13:7, 17
- Edifying worship: I Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:12
- Family atmosphere: I Tim. 3:15; Rom. 12:10
- Friendliness: Eph. 4:32; Gal. 5:22; Matt. 22:39
- Hospitality: I Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13
- Acceptance of all members: I Cor. 12:14-26
- Maintain a servant spirit: Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:2-5; John 13:5-15
- Set a good example: I Tim. 4:12; Matt. 5:16; I Pet. 2:12
- Take initiative to encourage others and help with other needs: I Thess. 5:14; Matt. 25:40; Gal. 6:10
- Encourage good personal study and prayer habits as soon as possible: II Tim. 2:15

Along with these positive steps, a few negative elements are also necessary to insure fertile ground for growth.

Don'ts for Growth

- Don't be self centered
- Don't be quick to speak and judge others
- Don't be rude or unfriendly
- Don't be a spectator (Worship is a verb – be a participant)
- Don't be habitually late
- Don't be a constant complainer
- Don't be a “check-list member”
- Don't show partiality
- Don't wait on others to help a brother or sister in need
- Don't wait on others to greet someone or extend kindness
- Don't expect instant maturity from one another

Encouraging Individual Responsibility

A congregational family is extremely important in the growth of a disciple, but it is limited. Its primary work is to “equip” and “build up” the Christian, enabling him to “do the work of service” in every aspect of life (Eph. 4:12). Christ is our life (Col. 3:4) and we must learn how to conduct ourselves as Christ on a daily basis in all relationships (Gal. 2:20). The local church is to help provide the knowledge of the Son of God “to becoming a mature man in Christ” (Eph. 4:13, but the primary responsibility for individual growth always rests in the individual. (Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7)

The first step on the road to true discipleship begins with dethronement of self from the heart and enthronement of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20). Our personal wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ in all things and at all times must be continually emphasized.

God's Objective – Ephesians 4:16

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.