

Title: Growing in Spiritual Maturity

Passage: Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Introduction:

Trinity Community Church Ministry Vision: to bring glory to God by building up and equipping its members for living out the Gospel in every facet of life. (“Building it up; Living it out”)

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- How should we make disciples?

Passages:

Ephesians 4:11-16

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, 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, 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

Context of Passage:

Ephesians chapters 1-3

- focus is “What is the Gospel?”
- God saved you (reconciled you with Himself. Moreover, reconciled you with others)

Ephesians chapters 4

- focus is “How should the Gospel affect your daily life?”

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

- God’s calling to be God’s adopted child
- How then respond? Ephesians 4:1-10
 - Unity around Christ’s behavior
 - Unity around Biblical doctrine (one Lord, one faith, one baptism)
 - Be aware of spiritual gifts granted (7-10)
 - Romans 12

- 1 Peter 4
- 1 Corinthians 12

Exposition

Question: Why does God provide spiritual gifts?

- Build mature Christians who look like Christ

Ephesians 4:11-13

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, 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,

Overview: Questions on Spiritual Maturity:

- What is it?
- How do we grow in it?
- What are some common hindrances that prevent it?

I. What is Spiritual Maturity?

Ephesians 4:13

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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,

- mature = wholeness, complete, perfect
- Book: "Maturity" by Sinclair Ferguson

Maturity involves Christ-likeness

Ephesians 4:13

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,

- growing in maturity is not optional

Maturity involves doctrinal stability

Ephesians 4:14

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.

- know the teaching of God's Word

Maturity involves truth expressed in love

Ephesians 4:15-16

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

- Truth-telling, truth-maintaining, truth-doing love
- We love the truth and full of love at the same time.
- Though people may disagree with us, people still know the love of Christ.
- Do people know where you stand and that you still love them?
- Who cares how much you know if they don't know how much you care?

Maturity involves living out the Gospel in every facet of our lives

Ephesians 4:17

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

- Continuing through Ephesians 5

II. How Do We Grow in Spiritual Maturity?

- See Book of Hebrews
 - Context: people got distracted
 - Response: look to Christ who is the perfect One.

Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

- First, recognize be affirmed in basic doctrines.
- Thereafter, grow in maturity

What are the elementary doctrines?

- foundation of doctrine of salvation - repentance/justification)
 - Repentance = change of mind
 - Justification by faith alone in Christ alone
- Instruction of washings, laying of hands
 - What it means to be filled and led by the Spirit
- Resurrection of the dead and final judgment

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

How Grow?

Know God's Word

- you can know God's Word without knowing God
 - Follow a god of one's own imagination
- But you cannot know God without knowing God's Word
 - You cannot resemble One without knowing Him.

Luke 8:15

As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Delight in God's Word

Psalms 1:1-2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

- meditate = think deeply and actively

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Obey God's Word

2 Peter 1:5-8

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- identify a besetting sin and then memorize Scripture attacking that area (ex: anger - find verses on it)

III. What are Common Hindrances that Prevent Spiritual Maturity?

- Satan, the world, the flesh

Satan

Mark 4:15

And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

The world

- non-believing world that do not trust God. Influenced by Satan.

1 John 5:19

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

The flesh

- sinful nature

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“Christian” influences in our lives

- those that view theology condescendingly
- superficial teachers, teachings

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

Application

If a non-Christian: Read God’s Word for yourself

Acts 17:11

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

If a Christian: Prioritize your life in God’s Word (know it, delight it, obey it)

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- see Trinity’s upcoming EquipU program

Matthew 22:37

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”