

# STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

## ***Transformation Card***

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: July 11th, 2010  
Series: The Church of God's Intention  
Part: Part 2 – What God Intends the Church to Do  
Section: Nurture  
Topic: Nurture  
Message Title: **God Intends the Church to Nurture Its Members**  
Outline Title: “We are to Grow Up”  
Short Title: Nurture  
Text: Various  
Key Words: Nurture, Discipleship

### ***Message Outline***

#### **God Intends the Church to Nurture Its Members**

“We are to Grow Up”

- A. God's **Call** to Nurture
- B. God's **Goals** Regarding Nurture
- C. God's **Means** of Nurture

### ***Related Scripture***

1. Eph 4:11-16

### ***Questions for Thought and Discussion***

1. What is nurture?
2. What is God's end goal of your nurture?
3. Who nurtures you in the church?
4. Who would God have you nurture in the church?
5. How does God nurture you directly?
6. How does God nurture you through other members of the church?
7. What do you need to consider further about God's intention regarding nurture?

### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

“...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; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ...” Eph 4:14b-15 (NASB)

## ***B. God Intends the Church to Nurture His People***

### **1. God's Call to Nurture**

#### **a) What Nurture Is**

*(1) M-w.com*

Main Entry: **nur-ture**

Pronunciation: \ˈnər-cher\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *norture, nurture*, from Anglo-French *nureture*, from Late Latin *nutritura* act of nursing, from Latin *nutritus*, past participle of *nutrire* to suckle, nourish — more at

[NOURISH](#)

Date: 14th century

**1** : [TRAINING, UPBRINGING](#)

**2** : something that nourishes : [FOOD](#)

**3** : the sum of the [environmental](#) factors influencing the behavior and traits expressed by an organism

#### ***(2) Natural & Biblical Images***

##### **(a) A Farmer Farming**

(i) Tilling, cultivating, planting, irrigating, weeding, irrigating some more... growing a crop

##### **(b) A Parent Parenting**

(i) Parents Providing Roof and Food

(ii) A Father Training His Teenager

(iii) A Mother Nursing Her Baby

(iv) All efforts at raising a child to maturity

##### **(c) A Gardener Gardening**

(i) Sandy... bringing a beautiful blooming garden out of a bare lot

The Bible uses these images to and several others. One of note is...

**(d) A Shepherd Shepherding**

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

**[John 10:11, 14](#)**

<sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup>"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,

**(3) Nurture Re: Believers in the Church Is**

**(a) The Process of Maturing a Christian towards God's Intention for them**

**(i) Nurture Begins with New Born Infants**

First a person dead in the trespasses of their sin (Eph 2:1) is Born Again by the power of God (1 Peter 1:3) and redeemed from his or her estrangement and is given new life, true life, life as God intended, life Paul describes as a New Creation (2 Cor 5:17).

This is the new born-again stage of our new life in Christ. It is your Christian life likened to your natural life when you were a baby. Look back at those baby pictures you have in some box somewhere when you were that cute little object of your parents adoration full of irresistible charm and potential.

**(ii) Nurture Fosters Growth and Development**

God says of the Christian undergoing nurture, "You are becoming what I've created and redeemed you to be."

**(iii) Nurture Ends with The Person God Created and Redeemed You to Be**

God says of the fully nurtured Christian, "Now that's what I'm talking about."

So nurture is the process of maturing a Christian toward the person of God's intention. Another way of defining nurture is to say that...

**(b) Nurture is the Exercise of Love in the Community of those who have Faith in Christ**

God's call upon the church to nurture the church is the call to be the created redeemed adopted new creations in Christ that God has made us in our relationships with each other in the church.

Once again like so many of the Christian activities God calls us to, nurture is nothing more than living out our lives of faith in love towards each other according to who we are in Christ.

By way of orientation, that is what nurture is, that is what we are addressing this morning as one of the main activities that God calls His church to.

**b) God First Calls Us to Be Nurtured**

[Goal of this section: show that people are first the targets of God's nurturing activities]

***(6) We are to Be Nurtured By Him Directly***

**(a) Father**

**(b) Son**

(i) Come

(ii) Follow Me

(iii) Sitting at Jesus Feed Listening

**(c) Spirit**

(i) Lead/Guide/Bring to Mind... (Jn 14-16)

***(7) We are also to be Nurtured By His Church***

**(a) Specifically & Directly**

(i) That Jesus said to Peter: "Feed My Sheep" (Jn 21:15-17) implies a sheep being fed. As sheep in Jesus' flock we are to be fed by Jesus' under-shepherds like Peter.

(ii) That Jesus said to His Disciples: "Make Disciples" (Mat 28:18) implies disciples being made. As disciples of our Lord Jesus we are to be "made" by those who have come before us in Jesus' name.

(iii) That the Apostle Paul said to Pastor Timothy

*(a) "Entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2) and that Paul also said "older women are to teach younger women" (Titus 2:3-4) implies learners being taught. We are to be taught the things of God by the people of God who have followed God before us.*

*(b) "Preach the word; Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort..." (2 Tim 4:2) implies people receiving reproof, rebuke, and exhortation for their own growth. We are to be*

those recipients and we are to regard such as the nurture of the church.

**(b) Generally and Arguably More Significantly**

God calls us to:

(i) **“Love One Another”**

*(a) Jesus*

[John 13:34](#) -- "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have **loved** you, that you also **love one another**."

[John 15:12](#) -- [ *Disciples' Relation to Each Other* ] "This is My commandment, that you **love one another**, just as I have **loved** you."

[John 15:17](#) -- "This I command you, that you **love one another**."

*(b) Paul*

[Galatians 5:13](#)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through **love** serve **one another**.

[1 Thessalonians 4:9](#)

Now as to the **love** of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to **love one another**;

*(c) Peter*

[1 Peter 1:22](#)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere **love** of the brethren, fervently **love one another** from the heart,

[1 Peter 4:8](#)

Above all, keep fervent in your **love** for **one another**, because **love** covers a multitude of sins.

*(d) John*

[1 John 3:11](#)

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should **love one another**; (See also [1 John 3:23](#))

[1 John 4:7](#)

[ *God Is Love* ] Beloved, let us **love one another**, for **love** is from God; and everyone who **loves** is born of God and knows God.

[1 John 4:11](#)

Beloved, if God so **loved** us, we also ought to **love one another**.

[1 John 4:12](#)

No **one** has seen God at any time; if we **love one another**, God abides in us, and His **love** is perfected in us.

Implicit in God's abundantly clear and emphatically repeated call to love one another is His call to be nurtured (and to nurture as we will see in just a bit). Love calls forth care. Similarly the call to be nurtured is implicit in the inspired exhortations to...

(ii) Be kind to one another

[Ephesians 4:32](#)

Be **kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving** each other, **just** as God in Christ also has **forgiven** you.

(iii) Serve One Another

Jesus washed His disciples feet and called them to follow His example of humble service one to another.

[John 13:13-15](#)

<sup>13</sup>"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>"If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>"For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

[Galatians 5:13](#)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love **serve one another**.

(iv) Prefer One Another

[Romans 12:10](#)

Be devoted to **one another** in brotherly love; give **preference to one another** in honor;

[Philippians 2:3](#)

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard one another as more important than yourselves**;

(v) Tolerate Each Other

[Ephesians 4:2](#)

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **showing tolerance for one another in love**,

(vi) Use of gifts for the good of the body (Eph 4)

All these imply that we are to receive the nurture of the community of faith that is God's Church.

But you would be quick to note that all these "one anothers" imply a mutual, synergistic, organic, member-to-member giving of one's self to another for each other's good growth. So we are first called to be nurtured By God and the people of His Church and we are also called, even at the same time, to nurture the other members of the church as we are able and gifted to do so. First God calls you to **be** nurtured...

### c) Then God Calls Each of Us to Nurture the Other Members of the Church

#### *(6) Each of Us in the Church is Called to Nurture Each Other*

I want to answer Cain's primeval question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" with a resolute, "Yes! Absolutely!" Each of us is called to nurture each other, to care for each other and see each other grow up to be the people God intends us to be.

As the different parts of our own bodies care for the other parts -- as your hand feeds your stomach and your stomach breaks down the food and sends its nutrients back to the hand -- we are to care for each other in the body of Christ.

Let's say the hand has fed the stomach and now the body wants to go for a walk around the block on a Sunday afternoon. The ear hears a car approaching from behind and sends the audio signal on to the brain which in turn sends signals to the muscular system to move off the road. But without the skeletal system to channel muscles contractions providing leverage to move the body we would just be a pile of jello on the road wiggling around waiting to be squished by the approaching car. Thank goodness the hand decided to feed the mouth that fed the stomach that nourished the muscles that relied on the bones... so we can all take a walk down the street and not think a thing of it.

If any part opts out of the body, the whole body suffers. This is true whether we are talking about the human body or the body of Christ which is the church.

Therefore, we must not only get the concept of the interrelatedness of the body of Christ but we must also ...

#### *(7) Nurture Each Other in Fact*

Which part of your physical body would you call unnecessary and give up? Alright, which non-fat part of your body would you be willing to give up? Maybe your hand? How about a foot? How about your eyes? What about your liver? We need it all in order to function as designed, don't we?

So too in the church; each member nurtures the others so that as a body we may live according to God's design. Let's hear it for the bones! Let's hear it for the eyes! Give a shout out for the ears!

Alright, enough of that I just wanted you to see that God calls each of us to join Him in His nurture of the church, i.e., God calls the church to nurture – to be nurtured and then to nurture. So what are...



## 2. God's Goals of Nurture

I have tried to allude to them only generally so far so that we might focus on them here. I have said that the end of nurture is us as God intends us to be. Well now a bit more specifically...

### a) God's Goal of Nurture is My/Your Individual Growth

#### (6) *Clowney Identifies 3 Goals*

- (a) **To Know the Lord**
- (b) **To Do the Lord's Will**
- (c) **To Be Like the Lord**

#### (7) *Individual Christ Likeness*

(a) **Stone Harbor Mission Statement: To help people like you and me be people like Jesus Christ**

(b) **Jesus Christ is the True Man and our Goal**

He is the last Adam who did not fail like the first Adam. He not only perfectly represents and explains God so that we might know Him, He also represents and illustrates God's intention for mankind that we might know ourselves as God intended us to be.

We are to be like Him. We become like Him by the process of nurture.

(i) Examples of Christ as our Likeness Goal:

- He was in perfect union with God the Father and God the Spirit. We are to be in perfect union with God the Father and God the Spirit. To the degree that we are not yet living in the reality of that goal, there is need for further nurture.
- He was the perfect devoted son to His Father. We are to be devoted sons to our heavenly Father. To the degree that we are not like Christ in this area, there is room for growth and the need for further nurture.
- He was the quintessential servant. "**Not my will but Thine be done**" (Mat 26:39). "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**" (Mark 10:45). To the degree that we still seek our will apart from God's will, there is room for development and the need for nurture.

**(c) Paul's Labor**

The Apostle Paul gave his all not only to preach salvation by grace through faith alone but also to the hard work of the nurture of the church towards Christ-likeness. Read Col 1:28-29 and be reminded of Paul's diligent nurture.

God did not intend only your personal individual growth,...

**b) God's Goal of Nurture is also Our Corporate Growth**

***(6) Corporate Christ Likeness***

We were not created to exist alone. We were created and are intended to live as multiple parts of the one unified body of which Christ is the one singular head.

**1 Corinthians 11:3**

But I want you to understand that **Christ is the head of every man**, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

**Ephesians 5:23**

For the husband is the head of the wife, **as Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Eph 2 speaks of our corporate growth:

- 19 So then you [plural] are no longer strangers and aliens,  
but you [plural] are fellow citizens with the saints,  
and [you plural] are of God's household,
- 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
- 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together,  
is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
- 22 in whom you [plural] also are being built together  
into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

1 Peter 2 picks up on this same goal of nurture towards corporate growth

- 1 Therefore,  
putting aside all malice and  
all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and  
all slander,
- 2 like newborn babies,  
long for [imperative] the pure milk of the word,  
so that  
by it [the pure milk of the word]  
you [plural] may grow  
in respect to salvation,
- 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.
- 4 And coming to Him

as to a living stone  
 which has been rejected by men,  
 but is choice and precious in the sight of  
 God,  
 5 you also,  
 as living stones,  
 are being built up  
 as [so as to become] a spiritual house [singular]  
 for a holy priesthood,  
 to offer up spiritual sacrifices  
 acceptable to God  
 through Jesus Christ.

Eph 4 is our anchor in the bedrock of truth regarding corporate nurture. As we read this together listen for the plurality of the members and the unity of the one body of Christ of which we are a part.

**Ephesians 4:11-16 (NASB)**

11 And He gave some as apostles,  
 and some as prophets,  
 and some as evangelists,  
 and some as pastors and teachers,  
 12 for the equipping of the saints  
 for the work of service,  
 to the building up of 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 a mature man,  
 to the measure of the stature  
 which belongs to the fullness of  
 Christ.  
 14 As a result,  
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;  
 15 but  
 speaking the truth in love,  
we are to grow up

in all aspects  
into Him  
who is the head,  
even Christ,  
16 from whom  
the whole body,  
being fitted and held together  
by what 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.

God's goal of nurture is both our individual and our corporate growth into Christ! We are not to stay as we are individually or collectively, rather, we are to grow! And particularly that growth is to be into Christ (v.15) – into the likeness of Christ. Well how do we grow? That is the process of nurture. What is the means to the end of Christ formed in us?

### 3. God's Means of Nurture

Again we rely on our anchor text, Eph 4

#### a) The Body Causes the Growth of the Body

Look again an Eph 4:16. Paul's language which so wonderfully describes the details of how it works can hide the fact that it is the body that causes the growth of the body. Read it again:

the body, causes the growth of the body  
whole

[How?]

being fitted and held together  
by what every joint supplies,  
according to the proper working  
of each individual part,

[What is the end?]

for the building up of itself in love.

We see here that God has ordained that the nurture, the growth, the building up of the body is the result of the proper fitting and working of its individual parts. God wants us to be nurtured to grow up into Christ-likeness and the means to that end is the proper working of each one of us in relation to each other. I contribute to your growth, and just as surely you contribute to mine. And as we function according to how God Has intended and gifted us to function, the church body also grows up and matures into the body of God's intention.

## **b) Ultimately God Causes the Growth**

### **1 Cor 3:6**

I [Paul] planted, Apollos watered,  
**but God was causing the growth.**

But, in union with Christ Jesus by virtue of His indwelling Spirit, God uses each of us to nurture, to build each other up.

## **c) How do I receive and give the nurture of the church?**

It is easy to see this nurture at work in the direct nurturing events of the church.

There is no question that the primary normative instrument God has given us for our nurture is His Word, and that ministered by His Spirit and by those He has given to the church as pastors and teachers.

### ***(6) Sunday Morning***

The Sunday morning preaching/teaching serves not only our worship of God, but also our nurture of His people. It does so especially as the preaching communicates the God's gospel of Jesus Christ – the orthodox apostolic gospel we have previously noted – for it is in that gospel that we find and God chooses to deploy His power unto salvation.

But Sunday is not the only time and place nurture happens. When and how else can you give and receive the nurture of the church?

### ***(7) Weekday Gatherings around God's Word***

We should not be shy about our diligent and thoughtful study of God's word. In light of what we have said today, it should not be surprising that when the body gathers together and seeks to understand God as presented in His Bible, growth is the product. Our weekday community group gatherings around the word of God are custom made to foster nurture. We come as learners and teachers, receivers and givers of nurture. Each of us holds the understanding of God we have gleaned so far in our Christian walk, and in the discussions had, we bring what we have and offer it to each other. The less mature is ministered to by the more mature by the explanations of Biblical truth. The more mature is ministered to by the less mature by the questions asked that show that even the more mature have so much more to learn. Community groups are rich times beautifully suited to nurture. Make sure you avail yourself of them. "There is more to church than Sunday mornings."

### ***(8) Informal Meetings***

Phone calls, cups of coffee shared, emails all can be nurturing events when we see that God intends the body to build up the body. It doesn't have to

be and it should not always be direct instruction in Bible. But neither is any old meeting between two Christians rightly to be considered nurture. Nurture takes place in the encouragement of the truths of the gospel.

Fundamentally, as we have seen it is love. We must simply love each other. Love seeks one another's best. And there is nothing better than Christ-likeness.

### ***(9) Trials***

James 1 clearly indicates that God also uses the various trials we face for our perfection, our completion.

### ***(10) Discipline***

Guarding against and responding to both immorality and false doctrine

Conclusion: Enough said. Suffice it for this week to understand that God calls us to nurture, i.e., first to be nurtured (by Him directly and indirectly through the nurturing ministry of others) and then to nurture others. The end of nurture is Christ-Likeness. The means to nurture is God and His love to us and through us to each other.

You will not grow to Christ-likeness without receiving the nurturing service of the other members of the church. The other members of the church will not grow to Christ-likeness unless you nurture them! That is right, I mean what I said, you, each of you, must nurture each other.

Stone Harbor Church will be only a shadow of what God intends it to be unless we live out in the church the reality of who we are in Christ – spiritually gifted, essential, members of Christ's body divinely designed and called to contribute to the whole. If you are engaged in the body life of the church actively loving the other members, you and the church will flourish. If you are disengaged from the body life of the church, you and the church will flounder. Let's flourish.

Let's Pray! Lord, I know there are questions that this raises. How am I to nurture those around me? How am I to receive the nurture of those younger than me in their spiritual maturity? How can I turn the corner on what seems to be a non-nurturing relationship? How do we move from where we are to what you want us to be as a nurturing community? Help us to think your thoughts after you in regards to these questions. Give me insight that we might hear Your wisdom on these issues next week.

But for this morning Lord, we hear Your call to love each other and in that call we hear Your call to nurture. Help us to be receptive to the nurture You bring our way directly and indirectly through the other members of the church. Then help us also to step into the role of nurturer to which You have called each of us. Help us

to realize the bounds of the nurture we are prepared to offer and then bring all of that to the other members of the church.

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