

Walk Worthy

of the calling with which you were called. – Eph. 4:1

EPHESIANS 4:1-5:21

LESSON 9 – FIVE RESULTS OF PROPER CHURCH GROWTH– EPH. 4:13-15

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Ephesians 4:13-15

- ▶ ...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...
- ▶ When members of the church use their gifts (both individually and corporately), the saints are equipped to do the work of the ministry and thereby edified in the body. This is church growth.
- ▶ It is the maturing of the Body of Christ through the means He has provided and prescribed. And when the church grows there are certain things that the Bible tells us will happen within that Body. This then is a picture of what church growth really looks like.

Marketing to Consumers

- ▶ We need to pay attention because so much of what we see today that is said to be church growth really is not about the church, or about growth! It is about marketing. It is about drawing people in and enabling them to use God as a mystical ATM machine that bestows blessing whenever they feel a need. It is about giving the people what they want. The congregation consists not of worshippers, but consumers.
- ▶ But when the church truly grows, as people mature in the faith and learn how to live the Christian life certain markers are there that we can see and measure. If these are there then the church is growing. If they are not there, then the church is not growing, no matter what things look like on the outside.

Five Results of Proper Church Growth

- ▶ Ephesians 4:13-15 gives us five results of proper church growth. We will look at them briefly today and then take a more in depth look in the days to come. This is what a church looks and acts like when it is really growing:
- ▶ 1. The Unity of the Faith
- ▶ 2. The Knowledge of Christ
- ▶ 3. Spiritual Maturity
- ▶ 4. Sound Doctrine
- ▶ 5. Speaking the Truth in Love

The Unity of the Faith

- ▶ The Unity of the Faith - The Message of the Cross
- ▶ When a church is growing and maturing there will be a unity around and in the faith. Faith here is the sum of all Christian Doctrine, specifically the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is our foundation, and this will be the starting point of all true and lasting unity.
- ▶ A church may be unified around many things. There may be unity about liturgy, music style, and even the personalities that lead a church, like the pastor. If one of these things changes people may no longer be in unity. But these are all surface issues really.

The Unity of the Faith

- ▶ True unity is found only as we fellowship in the gospel. The Message of the Cross must be central and foundational or there can be no true or lasting unity. Whatever else we may agree or disagree upon, we can and should be unified around the truth of the gospel, and if the gospel is our primary concern, then there surely will be less fighting and strife about some of these hot button secondary issues.
- ▶ A church that is growing will have the gospel right, and there will be unity around the preaching of and obedience to that gospel. Otherwise, there is no foundation for growth.
- ▶ Without the gospel there is no church, only a religious social club. Without the gospel the only unity to be found is a unity in rebellion to the Word and Will of God.

The Unity of the Faith

- ▶ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

– 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

The Knowledge of Christ

- ▶ The Knowledge of Christ – Intimacy
- ▶ Beyond the gospel, after saving faith, this is full and correct knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ. Our goal in the Christian life is to know Christ as we are known. Jesus even defined eternal life as knowing Him (John 17:3).
- ▶ This is personal and intimate knowledge. It is a real and lasting relationship. We know Him just as He knows us. This intimacy is developed by communication, spending time together in prayer and reading the Word. Too often when we pray, we talk and then leave. We need to learn the discipline of listening when we commune with God.
- ▶ It is hearing His voice in His Word, recognizing what He is leading us to do, and obeying Him. His sheep hear His voice, He has told us, and they follow Him. Do you hear? Do you follow? Obedience is a mark that we are His in the first place.

The Knowledge of Christ

- ▶ A church that is growing is a church that is more and more in love with Jesus Christ. A church that is consumed with love for Him. It is interesting then that a church that is not growing is accused by Christ in Revelation to have left their first love. (Rev. 2:4). It is not that they lost it. They left it. They abandoned it. They forsook Him.
- ▶ Growth in any relationship requires intimacy. Here, it requires knowing Jesus. How well do you know Him?
- ▶ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. – John 17:3
- ▶ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. – John 10:27
- ▶ John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. – John 3:27

Spiritual Maturity

- ▶ Spiritual Maturity – Sanctification
- ▶ A growing church is a church that is being sanctified. There is spiritual maturity and maturing.
- ▶ The phrase here in Ephesians is that we are being made into “a perfect man.” We are being made complete. This is not sinless perfectionism, though that is in fact where our salvation will conclude at our glorification. But for now, even though we struggle against sin, we are being matured and perfected.
- ▶ This means that a church that is growing is a church that is being built up and edified. They are more and more like Christ. Salt. Light. A witness with a strong testimony.

Spiritual Maturity

- ▶ This means too that the church should be known more for what they are for than for what they are against. In other words, too often churches that are not really growing are just expanding their presence in the community as they gain a reputation for the things that they are against. But a growing church is making a positive impact on lives through the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of saints, and that means that as we are sanctified, conformed into the image of Christ, we should be known for what we stand for and believe in because that is how we live.
- ▶ Sanctification is evidence that we are being saved. It is the outworking of grace as we do the good works that He has prepared for us. It is fleeing sin and pursuing righteousness. It is bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Spiritual Maturity

- ▶ Simply put, a growing church looks like Jesus. And what is truly maddening is the truth that most “churches” today would not recognize Jesus if He walked in the door! Evidence to the fact that for many, He is indeed standing at the door, locked out, knocking for the door to be opened.
- ▶ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: – 1 Thess. 4:3a
- ▶ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
– Romans 8:29-30

Sound Doctrine

- ▶ Sound Doctrine – Understanding
- ▶ Notice that this is next to last in the list. We come to properly understand doctrine as we are equipped, serve, and edify. We grow up into it. We learn by doing.
- ▶ Doctrine is very important, because teaching doctrine is teaching people how to know Christ. The Christian life is about a relationship. It is about knowing Jesus. And the trap that has been set in churches that do not grow is the trap that says that we can know about Christ and that is enough. But knowing about is not the same as knowing.
- ▶ We should teach the babes in Christ first about Christ. As an illustration from school, we do not teach calculus in kindergarten! We start with the fundamentals.

Sound Doctrine

- ▶ We need to teach new believers how to feed themselves (read the Word) and how to talk (prayer) and how to walk (obedience). Sound doctrinal understanding will follow sound practice. Let me say that again. Sound doctrinal understanding will follow sound practice. When new Christians imitate mature believers, they learn mature behavior. As they then grow, they come to understand the reason behind the behavior (sound doctrine).
- ▶ Too often we expect people to pass a pop quiz on the church confession of faith or to be Bible trivia champions before we embrace them as fellow church members and co-heirs with us in Christ. But the first test, the first question, the first requirement is knowing Jesus. If we teach people sound doctrine but do not model it for them, then they may know the truth in their heads, but they will not live it out in their lives.

Sound Doctrine

- ▶ The bottom line here is that sound doctrine will work its way out in how we live. So a growing church is a church that believes and practices sound doctrine, beginning with the gospel, which is after all the foundation of all sound doctrine. Get the gospel wrong and nothing else can be sound or right.
- ▶ But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine – Titus 2:1
- ▶ I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
– 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Speaking the Truth in Love

- ▶ Speaking the Truth in Love – Growing up in Christ
- ▶ Finally, we see that a church that is growing is a church that is full of people who speak the truth in love. Sound doctrine, the gospel, the Word of God is not just something that they pay lip service to, but it is in their hearts and comes out of their mouths.
- ▶ This is the lesson titled “Knowing, Doing, Being.” It is not enough to know the truth. It is not enough to do the truth. We must be true.
- ▶ People in our churches can know the truth. They can know how a Christian is supposed to act and talk. With proper motivation they can do the truth, even if it is just a good imitation of real believers. But the Christian life and church growth is not about what we know or even what we do. It is about what we are. What have we been called to BE?

Speaking the Truth in Love

- ▶ We are to BE salt and light, to BE like Christ, to BE filled with the Spirit. We are to BE TRUE in every respect. What we think, say, and do should be altogether true because these things flow from what we are.
- ▶ Listen to the way people in a family talk to each other. That will tell you all you need to know about the relationship that they have with God and with each other.
- ▶ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. – Gal. 2:20

Conclusion

- ▶ We see then that these verses give us five results of proper church growth. A church that is missing these things cannot claim to be growing. No matter what else they have, no matter what else they know, no matter what else they do, if they do not follow this pattern then they are fooling themselves if they think that their church is growing. They really do need to grow up!
- ▶ A true church is a growing church – the church is true when we are BEING the church. The Temple of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Next Week: The Purpose of Unity – Ephesians 4:13-15