

## The People of Christian Maturity

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

**MPS** Jesus, the conquering King, measures out His grace so all His followers measure up like Him as Overcomers.

**OBJ** Every person can identify a people of spiritual maturity by Five Characteristics.

### READ Ephesians 4:1-16

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

*<sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>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, <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>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. **Eph 4:1-7, 11-16***

**TRANS** Last week I preached the first half of this series, "Building back...together". Today, the second that forms the whole for Christian maturity.

I begin by **Charting our Course; set our eyes on Jesus**. I began by setting the Word of God as our source of life; HOW we move forward even when we are not sure where we are headed. God's Word directs our walk in God's way, establishes the foundation of life to endure as we stand in Jesus, and anchors our lives with Jesus as the source of all our strength. The more chaotic the world becomes, the more singular our focus on His Word must become as the ONLY source from which we draw strength. *The key to our growth and maturity – how we advance – is only found in focusing on Jesus, knowing He, and all the fullness of His power, grace and truth, is with us and is working.*

Second, I want to **Set our Perspective; live ready** for The Day of the Master's return; an abundance of Jesus! We can, and must, interpret the signs by reading the Word, always knowing that our interpretation is not ultimate nor final, but catalytic to prepare us and ensure we have oil for our lamps at the Master's return!<sup>Matt25:1-13</sup> Do not ask, "**Will God's judgement come to the world for what is taking place?**" "Absolutely" it will. Do not ask, "**IS God judging the world?**" A clear and simple "Yes!" is the only right answer. Whether we are in God's passive judgment, giving us over to the depravity and darkness of our minds, or we see His active judgment, Christians should lament the wickedness and chaos of our world at every instance, all while we pray, "Mercy, God, show your mercy!" Do not ask, "**Will God deliver us from the evil of our day?**" Surely He will, but likely not in the way we think. We do know He walks with us through it!<sup>Psalms23:4</sup>

When questions swirl and uncertainty abounds, the necessity of a **Clear Focus to path to Jesus** is critical. Peter states,

*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **1 Peter 1:13***

**TRANS** Today I invite you to prepare your mind by setting your hope fully on Jesus Christ and His work.

*Jesus, the conquering King, measures out His grace so all His followers measure up like Him as Overcomers.*

**OBJ** Five Characteristics that mark the people of Christian maturity.

1. **Common Aim: walk in a manner worthy of our calling. .1-3**



**Paul begins by urging Christians to walk worthy of our calling.** **And what is our calling?** Luke defines it this way, to deny self, take up our cross daily and follow Jesus Christ. [Luke9:23](#) In salvation, we cease to be a slave to sin and become a slave of God. [Rom6:22](#) **God's call on the Christian life is to count yourself dead to sin (and self), and alive unto God through Jesus Christ so that you walk by faith in obedience to His commands.**

**Five descriptors outline the manner of living out our call in salvation.** *Humility and gentleness* characterize the person who is being ruled by King Jesus. This is our right manner because Jesus lived humbly and gently. The way we live demonstrates how Jesus lived to love us. He is our strength for the life unto which He calls us.

*Patience, bearing with one another in love* also characterize the person who is being ruled by Jesus. We seldom test the limits of our own patience. But we all have times when our patience is tested, and its limitations surpassed. This is good and right, and especially among the local church. We need others to reveal where and when and in what ways we need to let go of our demands, conveniences and comforts, and to put others first. It requires practice to learn to bear with others in love, and growth and maturity cannot come until we've been pressed to new limits by experience.

Finally, *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* captures the fifth descriptor. I want to point out here not the unity aspect, but the eagerness of each person. This is not just an acceptance nor a simple willingness to tolerate it, but to grow eager for our unity so that we pursue it with our lives. Christians should live with an eagerness to keep the unity among fellow believers.

Two important points this first characteristic teaches us. First, if anything should mark a body of people in the local church, it MUST be this common aim, the goal set before us for which we all, each and every one, strive. So secondly, if these characteristics tell us anything it is this, that it is impossible to live out our faith isolated from people. [The importance of Christians living in a manner worthy of our calling reminds us that we are part of a body that holds one common aim.](#)

**TRANS** Our eagerness elevates the importance of our second Characteristic.

## **2. Priority of unity; the Spirit's work for our common bond. .4-6**

Paul's emphasis makes clear that unity is the priority for the church. Unity is our common bond, what holds us together. This is why every person must be eager to pursue it with one another, unity cannot be accomplished isolated from one another.

**Unity is the Spirit's work.** When God's people walk worthy of our calling together, the Spirit produces a spiritual reality that transcends anything we could accomplish cumulatively. We become spiritually one in heart, mind and will to give ourselves to the work of God among us. [When Christians walk worthy of their calling in salvation together, Holy Spirit works among them to accomplish far more than they could ever do individually or cumulatively.](#)

## **3. Mark of grace; Jesus uniquely gifts each person to serve. .7**

Through our calling in Jesus Christ comes His distinguishing mark on our lives, the grace of God for salvation. And this grace is God's forgiveness and cleansing from sin, and our power to live and walk as He commands. How often we reduce and misconstrue grace as some type of "get out of sin-jail free card" to rationalize the excusing and overlooking of sin. Surely grace is never "less than" our forgiveness, though never accommodating of sin, but grace is so much more. Grace is God's power through Jesus Christ to live and serve one another. No one is unimportant in the congregation. All are marked by grace to be used by Jesus for others. [This is our power, our strength, and confidence, that Jesus has marked every believer with grace to serve.](#)

## **4. Participation by all; each one serves to grow and mature all people. .11-14**

According to Scripture, the Christian life is revealed by the way one identifies with to actively minister among all and for all. Jesus has uniquely gifted each person by His grace to serve one another. He has bestowed gifts of leadership to equip the body to minister so all can grow and mature. ALL must participate for each one to grow and grow up. [The grace of God placed on every person is essential for the growth, health and spiritual safeguarding of all.](#)



## 5. Centrality of Gospel; the gospel fuels all growth, strength, ministry and development. .15-16

And the centering dialogue by which all this is sustained is the gospel. Building on the first four characteristics, the most important, sustaining practice of the church for the health and well-being of the church is the regular practice of speaking the truth in love. This fifth characteristic is only possible as the first four are embraced and practiced. In the Great Commission, Jesus said we are to teach disciples to obey his commandments". <sup>Matt28:20</sup> As the teaching of Jesus is shared with one another throughout the church, the Spirit brings greater work through the whole congregation. As the Word of God permeates to every person, it accomplishes the purpose for which God sent it forth, the purpose for which Jesus died to save.

**ILLUS** Christian history records when martyrs of the faith were stoned, crucified, impaled, burned at the stake, and subjected to countless other forms of wickedness, the church didn't run and hide, but gathered to pray and praise. Many martyrs shed their blood and breathed their last to the sound of Christian brothers and sisters praying and singing praise to God.

*"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." -Jesus in John 16:33*

*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4-5*

**APPL** Sing loud with all your might, LifePoint, for someone needs to hear it!

**Jesus, the conquering King, measures out His grace  
so all His followers measure up like Him as Overcomers.**

**APPL** **HOW will we, LifePoint Church, build back...together?** Today I call each one of us back to the people of God through which He has ordained your life to made more like His Son, Jesus Christ. **What do I mean?**

First, I recognize that we are still in a pandemic and appropriate measures should be taken. I also recognize, as we have done from the beginning, how severe the pressure that so many are under in these days; of fears, and of threats and demands to conform from countless angles that only stoke more fear and anxiety. LifePoint will not be a source of pressure upon you. LifePoint will respect and trust your decision for you and your family, and to honor one another. We will serve to encourage and strengthen you in the Lord Jesus, to provide a refuge for you, so that when you can and do return you will find a welcome celebration to greet you. And though we will not do everything right, we will do all we can to minister to you in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What LifePoint IS doing is this: we are making every preparation for full ministry moving forward. As deeply as we have dived in this pandemic, your leadership is looking to the surface and moving in that direction. We are launching ministry now, and will continue to build into the Spring season, for a full and active engagement for the summer. I really want you to be together here with us. I pray you can and will be.

**Until then, I offer Five Priorities of counsel and direction for us all.**

**1. Pursue deeper immersion in the Word.** Spend more time in Scripture study, meditation and memorization, instead of more time in more books. I am leading the staff and leaders in scripture memorization this year, beginning with Psalm 90.

**2. Give priority to local over accessible.** If you feed from many troths, you will commit to none. Everything you can get there may be better, but it will not be better for you than the local church. You may not hear all you want to hear, but I assure you that God guarantees that you will hear all you need to hear. And, have it ministered TO you in a way that is FOR you, because of how He is working through those around you.



**3. Commit to centralized over partitioned community.** We have a tendency to partition our life according to our needs and approach the Christian life in this same way. So, we read the Bible here with this group, study another place, socialize / fellowship still another place, and likely, attend service still another place. **But consider if the Word, by which God wants to transform your life, that you read, study, learn, know and do, had one central place where everything came together?** Imagine the potency of one “place” where you read / studied / sat under the Word was the same place you discussed, listened, celebrated, shared, and confessed. In that place those who listened could respond with words of affirmation and encouragement. As well, in response to struggles and sin they could ask, **“Why did that happen?”**, **“Why do you keep doing that?”**, **“Do you see that pattern in your life?”**, **“What are you thinking / experiencing when that temptation habitually arises?”** And when they asked, because you knew them and they knew you (i.e. trusted), you would listen and receive. I petition you that it does, not only but primarily. God’s Word comes to us through our relationship with Him, and it should be digested by us in as much the same way as possible. The local church, your faith community, fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ, is just such a “place”. One all-too-common mistake is we get too little Bible and too much immersion in community. When what we need is NOT more community but better community that is intentional to increase, expand and maximize our Bible immersion to full impact! When you partition your life by multi-faceted participation, you neglect (even reject) the very sources (relationships) that God established through which you are to grow and mature. The more partitioned your life, the more central self becomes, the more sin gets managed, and God becomes more difficult to hear, to believe and trust, so that He seems less reliable, and even necessary. When you live partitioned you end up isolated, exposed, and easy picking for the enemy. The more centralized your community, the more multi-faceted your reception to, immersion in, accountability for, and application of the Word for faithful obedience becomes. **Salvation means “to know and be known by God”<sup>Gal4:9</sup>, so how we walk with God’s people to live out our faith should reflect that relationship with Him.**

**4. Contact a person to pursue ministry before & more than you post to all on social media.** When you have a need that arises in your life, for prayer or some other manner of ministry, don’t post it to the world before you have given the Lord an opportunity to work through your church.

**5. Train your children IN this time more than only sheltering them from it.** If you want to teach and train your children how to follow Jesus in hard times, then be careful not to hide reality from them and don’t let it be shoved down their gullet from somewhere else. Immerse their life in a community where people are pursuing Jesus in the midst of hardship, trial, and calamity, and finding joy, encouragement, strength and wisdom in Him.

