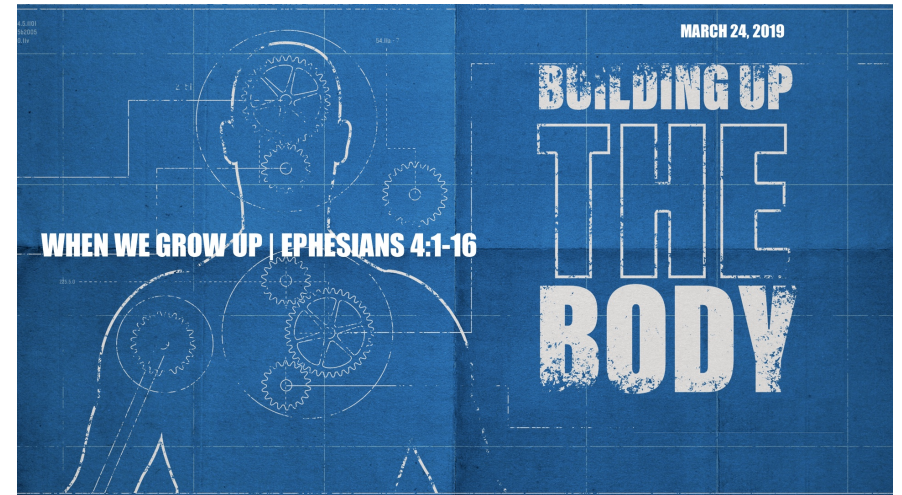


1.



I once heard a comic quip, “The reason adults always ask children what they want to be when they grow up, is they’re looking for ideas.” But I am not so sure we are even looking for ideas. For the most part we are perfectly content being big kids with grown up toys. But there has to be more to life than a garage full of toys and living in a suspended state of adolescence. What does it mean to grow up? What would it look like if we did?

Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. Instead of asking, “What do we want to be when we grow up?” we should ask, “What does God want us to be when we grow up?” It is a scary question, so we ask it with fear and trembling and in deep faith. We are convinced from the outset that his vision for our lives will be different from ours. There will be some dreams that will have to die along the way. We are also convinced that his vision for our lives is eminently superior to ours. We ultimately know that what he wants for us will be far more satisfying than anything we could ever desire or achieve for ourselves.

In Ephesians 4-5, Paul offers a stunning vision for maturity. His vision is far more corporate than it is individual, but it calls for all of us to be fully engaged in the process. Paul shows us what we can be when we grow up.

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EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

EPHESIANS 1:18-23 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

EPHESIANS 3:17-19 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

EPHESIANS 4:11-13 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1. What usually comes to mind when we think about spiritual maturity?
2. What does Paul have in mind when he thinks about spiritual maturity?
3. What do you think it means to be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” or to attain “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ?”
4. Does Paul seem to be more concerned with the maturity of the individual or the maturity of the body as a whole? Explain your answer.
5. How does the body contribute to the maturity of the individual?
6. How does the individual contribute to the maturity of the body?
7. How is Paul's vision of maturity radically different from what usually comes to mind when we think of spiritual maturity?

MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

EPHESIANS 4:1-3 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1. What is Paul's chief concern in this passage?
2. How would you describe the unity of the Spirit?
3. How would you describe the bond of peace?
4. According to Paul how do we maintain the unity of the Spirit?
5. According to Paul why should we maintain the unity of the Spirit?