

SESSION 3

CONNECTED IN GROWTH



*What do you like best
about being a fan?*

QUESTION #1

#BSFLgrowth

THE POINT

Church members need one another in order to grow in Christ.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“Roll Tide!”

I am a fan of the University of Alabama Crimson Tide. Notice I did not say I am a *member* of the Crimson Tide—there’s a difference. I don’t go to spring practices and work out with the team. I don’t study game films or discuss plays with the coaches. On game day, I don’t get on the field and help the team move the ball across the goal line. That’s not my job. I’m a fan—a spectator. I buy my ticket and cheer for my team from the stands or watch them play on television.

Thankfully, church membership is not like football. There should be no spectators. The body of Christ wasn’t designed to operate as an organization where the supporters come and give their money and then watch the hired players do all the work. We’re all participants. Everyone has a role to play. Everyone is needed. That’s how the body of Christ grows and fulfills its mission.

As we’ll see in this session, the question is not: *“Do I have a role in the church?”* The real question is: *“What’s my role in the church?”*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Ephesians 4:11-16 (HCSB)

11 And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

12 for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness.

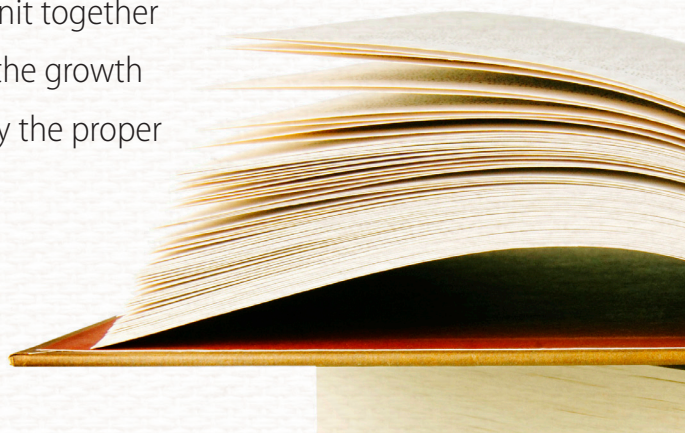
14 Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.

15 But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.

16 From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

Key Words

Fitted and knit together (v. 16)—“Fitted” translates a compound word based in part on the root for harmony. Together the phrase reflects a properly working and smoothly functioning whole.



Ephesians 4:11-12

Jesus supplies the church with people He has gifted in various ways to fill all the roles needed for the church's mission. The roles mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 do not make up an exhaustive list of leadership positions within the church, but they are important.

- ▶ **Apostles and prophets.** These leaders made up the foundation of the early church. The apostles had been with Jesus during His ministry or had witnessed His post-resurrection appearances. The prophets preached the gospel.
- ▶ **Evangelists.** People in the church tasked with sharing the gospel and seeking a response to it.
- ▶ **Pastors and teachers.** These roles likely were combined or complementary; they involved nurturing, protecting, feeding, and supervising the flock.

Church leaders are not gifted to do all the work of the ministry themselves. They are gifted so that they can train the saints—that's all the rest of us as believers—to do the work of ministry. Every member has a function in the body of Christ. Either you're doing the work of the ministry or you're equipping others to do the work of the ministry in some form or fashion. Those are the only options.

The word translated "training" in verse 12 carries the idea of restoring something to its original condition or making something complete. This kind of training, equipping, or perfecting is needed to prepare believers for service in doing God's work.

Paul understood his role as an equipper of other believers. He wrote to the Colossians, "We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). Paul delegated tasks, enlisted people to pray for him, and relied on the help of coworkers.

In other words, Paul understood his role as a servant of Christ. He understood that every member has a role to play in the body of Christ.

When have you felt fully equipped to carry out an important task?

QUESTION #2

What obstacles keep us from equipping others or being equipped ourselves?

QUESTION #3

Ephesians 4:13

Remember when you were a kid and couldn't wait to grow up? Maybe you longed for the day you'd turn 13 and officially become a teenager. Or you dreamed of your 16th birthday and that prized driver's license. But then you realized 18 was the age when society would finally recognize you as an adult. And then you yearned to be 22, finished with college, and on your way to the "real world."

We should also strive for spiritual maturity as believers in the body of Christ. God provides His children with various gifts so we can help one another grow. In Ephesians 4:13, Paul said God's goal in providing His church with workers—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—is to build up the church so that we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus and become mature.

How do we assess our spiritual growth? How do we measure maturity? The answer comes in verse 13: "With a stature measured by Christ's fullness."

The life of Christ is our target. It was Paul's consuming goal to know Christ more, to know the power of His resurrection, and to share in the fellowship of His suffering (see Phil. 3:10). He wrote, "Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12).

Therefore, we measure our spiritual maturity by gauging our actions and attitudes in comparison with the actions and attitudes of Christ. Jesus lived to please God. He put others above Himself. He patiently endured suffering. He loved the unlovable and forgave the undeserving. That's our goal for spiritual growth and maturity. Thankfully, we don't work toward that goal on our own. God equips His people with gifts that enable them to help one another grow to be like His Son.

What does it look like to measure spiritual maturity based on the fullness of Christ?

QUESTION #4



Ephesians 4:14-16

Having a poor foundation in the truth of Scripture makes you susceptible to all kinds of false teachings that can lead you away from God. This is another reason we need one another within the church. Paul constantly battled false teachers who infiltrated churches and led people astray. His remedy, identified in Ephesians 3:11-14, was to ensure churches were built up with mature believers grounded in the truth. Knowing the truth is key to discerning falsehood. In Ephesians 4:15, he contrasted the lies and deceit of false teachers with the importance of believers speaking the truth in love.

Speaking the truth in love means being honest with people about realities such as sin and how God views our rebellion against Him. It means we communicate that message with humility, but it also means we don't compromise the teachings of Scripture when it comes to essentials of our faith—essentials such as:

- ▶ Jesus is the only way to salvation.
- ▶ We can't save ourselves by our own good works.
- ▶ We can only be made righteous by repenting of our sin and trusting in Jesus for our forgiveness.
- ▶ God expects His children to live holy lives.

With Christ as the head of the church and with each member working together in submission to Him, the whole body gets stronger.

What advice would you give someone seeking to balance speaking truth and showing love?

QUESTION #5



"The concept of an inactive church member is an oxymoron."

—THOM RAINER, *I AM A CHURCH MEMBER*

WHO HELPED YOU GROW?

Record the names of individuals who contributed to your spiritual growth during the following seasons of life.

Childhood:

.....

Adolescence:

.....

Adulthood:

.....

How are you currently contributing to the spiritual growth of others?

LIVE IT OUT

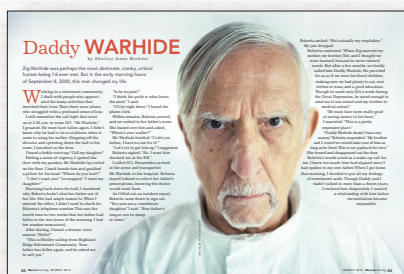
You have a responsibility to equip others for ministry or engage in ministry yourself. Here are some practical ways to fulfill that responsibility and join the movement toward spiritual growth:

- ▶ **Be a participator, not a spectator.** Identify a specific and practical way to serve others in your church and community.
- ▶ **Get equipped.** With the Holy Spirit as your guide, seek out someone older and wiser you can ask to pour into your life as a spiritual mentor.
- ▶ **Balance your speech.** When issues or conflicts arise during the week, make a conscious effort to speak the truth in a way that also demonstrates love.



What's your role in the church? Answering that question is key to getting on the field and helping your team—the body of Christ—strive for growth and spiritual victory in the world today.

Daddy Warhide



Zig Warhide was perhaps the most obstinate, cranky, critical human being I'd ever met. But in the early morning hours of September 8, 2000, this man changed my life. Working in a retirement community, I dealt with people who appreciated the many activities that enriched their lives. Then there were others who struggled with a profound sense of loss. I still remember the call light that went on at 2:30 a.m. in room 257. "Mr. Warhide," I groaned.



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