

Ephesians 4:14–16 | “Grow Up!”

*Preached on August 17, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4:14–16 today, as we just cover a couple verses, but they are jam-packed with depth, so let’s dive into the depths. *[pauseeee]*

*As parents, one goal of our parenting is that we want our children to grow up. [pause]*

It’s cute and sweet to see a 4 year old act like a 4 year old, but it’s not cute and sweet to see a 24 year old act like a 4 year old. *[pause]*

*We all know that people automatically grow up in their age, but they do not automatically grow up in their maturity.*

It takes time and effort to help someone to mature, but maturity is the goal of every good parent for their child. *[pauseeee]*

*Imagine a 45 year old who threw tantrums like a 5 year old, it wouldn’t be pretty. [pause]*

Imagine a 33 year old, who said, “Mine!” when someone else grabbed the donut they wanted. *[pause]*

*What might someone say to a person like that? They would say, “Grow up!” [pauseeee]*

Growing up is important for a variety of reasons, but one reason is so that they can go and live independently on their own someday. *[pause]*

*No good parent wants their child to live in their basement in their 40’s, without a job, playing video games, and mooching off of mom and dad.*

They want them to grow up, get a job, live on their own, start their own family, and succeed in life. *[pauseeee]*

*We want our kids to eventually be prepared to handle anything in life that they may face, so that we don’t have to be there holding their hand through everything. [pauseeee]*

‘Growing up’ is so vital, for it prepares you for a solid, stable life, and helps you to avoid ruin.

*Well like a good parent, the Lord, the perfect parent, wants His church to “grow up”. [pause]*

He doesn’t want us to remain in immaturity, but to press on into maturity, and the good news is that He has given us everything that we need to do so! *[pause]*

*We were just told in Ephesians 4 that Christ has given each of His people a spiritual gift to serve in the church.*

He has also given church leaders and teachers in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And this all leads to the church being built up and mature, but now the question remains: why?  
[pause]

Why is it such a big deal that the church grows up?

Well let's READ the passage to find out. [READ]

A reason why the church is to grow up is because of...

### **I. The danger of being children in the faith.**

Children face a lot more danger than adults do. [pause]

Evie, our 2 year old, has been going up and down the stairs a lot recently at our house.

And at first, I had to hold her hand every time because I was afraid that she would miss a step and fall down the stairs.

But now, she has been getting better and better at it, so I don't have to hold her hand anymore.  
[pauseeee]

There are *physical* dangers that children face, for they are weaker or not yet skilled at doing things well—they could easily get hurt. [pause]

But there are also *mental* dangers that children face, due to their lack of knowledge, wisdom, and discernment. [pause]

A child could easily be tricked into believing something wrong, and as a result, they could face danger because of it.

So also, Paul makes it clear that children in the faith face a certain *spiritual* danger that comes along with their immaturity. [pause]

They could be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” [pauseeee]

So what does Paul mean by being “children” here?

He's talking about believers being children *in the faith*. [pause]

All new believers start out as children in the faith, for they are new to the faith and don't know much yet, but over time they ought to grow and mature.

Yet Paul's statement here shows us that it's possible for believers to *remain* children in the faith, which is not good. [pause]

Over in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul says to the Corinthians...

“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh...”<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

He’s telling the Corinthians that they should be mature and grown up by now, but they are still “infants in Christ” who need to be fed milk, and not solid food. *[pauseeee]*

**Like any child, the goal is to grow and mature—to move from milk to solid food.**

So also, the goal for every Christian is to grow and mature, and to move beyond elementary things.<sup>2</sup> *[pauseeee]*

*Christian, what is your spiritual maturity age? [pause]*

You may have been a Christian for decades, but has your spiritual maturity kept pace? *[pause]*

It’s sad to say, but there are some Christians who have been Christians for 50, 60, 70 years, and yet they are as spiritually unknowledgeable and undiscerning as a 8 year old Christian. *[pause]*

We must move past childishness in our walk with the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

**A child in the faith is a Christian who is low in their Biblical knowledge, lacking in their discernment of what’s right and wrong, and deficient in their wisdom. [pause]**

If you brought up a current false teaching of the day, and asked them what they thought about it, they wouldn’t be able to tell you what’s wrong with it, or even *if* it’s wrong. *[pauseeee]*

*There is a certain spiritual immaturity to them, and Paul points out that a person or church like that is open to danger. [pauseeee]*

Like a child is open to more dangers, so children in the faith are open to more spiritual dangers.

So listen up: there is *real danger* inherent in being a child in the faith—do not ignore or neglect that truth. *[pause]*

You ignore that reality, and you do so to your own demise. *[pauseeee]*

**So what is the danger?...**

You could be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.” *[pause]*

*Paul uses vivid imagery here of a ship in a storm.*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:1–3.

<sup>2</sup> Over in the Hebrews 5:11–14 the author of Hebrews talks about this.

It's this image of a ship that is tossed to and fro by the waves, and carried away by the strong winds. *[pause]*

The ship is not anchored, but is taken where it doesn't want to go.

So also, that is what a child in the faith is like...

Instead of being anchored on the truth, they are easily moved by any new, intriguing-sounding teaching. *[pause]*

Instead of being calm and firm in their beliefs, they tumultuously change their beliefs as often as a new one comes along. *[pauseeee]*

You talk to them one day and they are all about this one belief over here, and then the next week, they are all about some other new religious teaching they heard. *[pause]*

Like a ship tossed by the waves, they are no one place very long, but all over the place.

And trying to nail their beliefs down is as hard as trying to nail water to the wall. *[pauseeeee]*

Not only are they tossed by waves, but they are carried away by winds. *[pause]*

Have you ever thrown a feather into the air, when it's very windy?

It's carried away by the wind, whichever direction it's blowing. *[pause]*

That's what immature Christians are like—they are carried away by the winds of any teaching that they hear. *[pauseeeee]*

When it says “the winds of doctrine” here it doesn't mean the *true* doctrine of Scripture, but it's pointing to any teaching or instruction given. *[pause]*

So a child in the faith hears something taught on social media, and they believe it, even if it's wrong. *[pause]*

They hear a sermon at a church, and trust it, even though it doesn't come from the Bible at all. *[pause]*

They are carried about by any teaching that sounds good to them.

And the default grid that they use when they hear something isn't, “Is it Biblical?” but it's, “Does it sound good to me?” *[pauseeee]*

This is why we have myriads of people who claim Christ in our day, and yet they are believing things that are very clearly against Scripture. *[pause]*

Those professing Christians who are for abortion, transgenderism, and homosexuality are clearly carried away by winds of doctrine because you can't get there through Scripture's teachings, no matter how much you try. *[pauseeee]*

Like a ship without an anchor is carried away by the winds, so they are carried away by the winds of lies to places they ought not to go. *[pause]*

Those who are spiritually immature are carried away from the truth, and some are even carried away from the faith altogether.

And it's because these "winds of doctrine" are like wind for they have no depth, substance, or meat to them. *[pause]*

You try to grasp them and get what they are promising, yet you come up with nothing. *[pauseeee]*

People like this are blown away from the truth because they are not stable, anchored, and firm upon the truth of Scripture.

They have no foundation that they seek to stand upon, but are *too open* to whatever they hear. *[pauseeee]*

Not being rooted and anchored, according to the Bible, is not a good thing at all.

In fact, the wicked are "like chaff that the wind drives away," according to Psalm 1.<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

The foolish man doesn't build his house on the rock, but on the sand, and it falls, according to Jesus.<sup>4</sup> *[pauseeee]*

The danger of a Christian not being firm on the truth is that they are carried away by things that *sound* good, new, exciting, and interesting.

And this is why some Christians and churches are always morphing to change what the current winds of culture say. *[pause]*

They are not mature enough to discern, know, and stand upon what's right, so they are led away like an unanchored ship in a tempest, and end up in ruinous places. *[pauseeee]*

Paul is showing us here that a prime indicator of your maturity is your ability to discern truth from error, and not be easily led astray. *[pauseeee]*

Now why is it that they are so easily taken by these "winds of doctrine"? *[pause]*

On the one hand, it's because of what they are lacking—they are immature and undiscerning, but there's another reason...

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 1:4.

<sup>4</sup> A reference to Matthew 7:24–27.

They are also carried away because these winds of doctrine are *deceptive*. *[pause]*

Paul says here that they carried about “by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” *[pauseeee]*

A reason why people are carried away by things that aren’t true is because they *seem* true. *[pause]*

If they were clearly and obviously wrong, then more people wouldn’t take the bait, but they are deceptive. *[pauseeee]*

Think of any type of trap—traps are successful when they appear harmless, and so draw in their prey.

This is why our culture as a whole can believe things that go against plain common sense—*people have been deceived*. *[pauseeee]*

The word “cunning” here is speaking about someone using trickery or sleight of hand to get you.

Likewise, “craftiness” here has a similar idea—the person is using cleverly devised tactics to lead people astray. *[pause]*

Reflecting Satan’s craftiness, false teachers craftily trick and trip people up by making certain teachings appear so good, loving, and beneficial, but they are lies that lead to destruction.

And we must not be naive—there is an ocean of false teaching in the world, and we would be wise to be on the lookout for it. *[pause]*

We must be alert and vigilant, or we may be deceived by them.

For they won’t always look straight-out wrong, but they will appear so good, yet they are not. *[pauseeee]*

These false teachers will proclaim their teachings as the good and loving thing to do, but do not believe them. *[pause]*

They will say, “Those teachings you believe are so outdated and hateful, but ours are so loving to people,” but do not take the bait.

They are using “deceitful schemes” that draw people away from the truth. *[pauseeeee]*

If we are not mature in the faith, we could be taken by these schemes, so that’s why being grounded in the Word of God is so vital. *[pause]*

The saints need pastors and teachers to equip them with the truth, and so to be prepared and ready to discern truth from error. *[pauseeee]*

If you follow Paul’s argument, that’s really what he’s pointing out...

The leaders and teachers equip the saints for ministry, so as to be built up, and therefore, not tossed to and fro.

And this reminds us of the importance of sitting under the regular preaching and teaching of God's Word. *[pause]*

You can't ignore the regular preaching and teaching of the Word, and expect to be mature in the faith.

You need to be taught and trained, and you can't get that by a lackadaisical approach to church attendance and getting involved. *[pauseeee]*

There are dangers that come along with being a child in your faith—you could easily be deceived and led away from the truth. *[pause]*

That's a serious thing because to be led away from the truth is to be led *to* lies, which only bring disaster.

And it could also lead some away from the faith altogether, which is extremely serious. *[pauseeee]*

So are you mature in the faith, or a child in the faith? *[pause]*

Can you discern false teaching, or do you always follow the latest theological trend? *[pauseeee]*

*There are dangers to not growing up in the faith, but now let's look at...*

## **II. The benefits of being grown up in Christ.**

Let's say that someone sat down with you and presented two paths. *[pause]*

One path had danger down it the whole way, but the other path had only benefits—which would you choose? *[pause]*

I'm sure we would all choose the path of benefits over the path of danger.

So also, the Bible is showing us that there's two paths—the path of danger of being children in the faith, and the path of benefits when you grow up in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Now first, before we get to the benefits, *how* can we grow up in the faith? *[pause]*

Paul already made it clear that a part of growing up is being equipped by shepherds and teachers, but now we see another way to grow up...

Instead of being tossed and carried about, verse 15 says, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." *[pauseeee]*

In contrast to being carried away by winds of doctrine, we speak the truth in love with one another. *[pause]*

You see the difference?...

On one side, immature Christians are led away by lies, but on the other side, Christians grow up by hearing and speaking the truth to one another. *[pause]*

It's the truth that makes the difference, and this truth is the Scriptures, the Word of God.

It's the Word of God that grows us up! *[pauseeee]*

Shepherds and teachers equip people by using the Word of God, and then each believer speaks the truth in love to one another to help us all grow up in Christ.

And this is why we are so big on the Bible here at First Baptist—we see it as inerrant, infallible, sufficient, and authoritative for all of life.

And so some people may wonder, “Why even have preachers and teachers? Why can't we just come and hang out?” *[pause]*

Some may think, “What's wrong with a church that merely comes to meet physical, social needs of their community, and then goes home?”

Because a church grows and is built up when they are equipped with God's Word and then speak God's Word to one another in love! *[pauseeee]*

If you aren't grounded in the truth, you can't expect to be anchored, but you will be carried away by every wind of doctrine, and who knows where you'll end up! *[pauseeee]*

Oh, how we need the truth spoken to us in love over and over again! *[pause]*

Do you love Scripture? *[pause]*

Do you want to continually hear it proclaimed, taught, and spoken? *[pause]*

Is that reflected in your life then?

Like are you eager to hear it taught and preached at church? *[pause]*

Do you hunger to read it at home?

Are you longing to know it deeper and to be encouraged by it daily? *[pauseeee]*

Notice, also, that this speaking the truth in love is a statement about what the whole church ought to be doing.

We are *all* called to speak the truth in love to each other. *[pause]*

Each of us has a responsibility and a privilege of speaking God's Word to others, and that means that we each have an important role to play in building others up! *[pauseee]*

When someone else is going through a trial, God's Word should flow off of our lips to encourage them. *[pause]*

When someone is living in sin, Scripture should be used to call them back to the Lord.

We should radiate with God's Word! *[pauseee]*

Someone comes to you for advice, your advice ought to be grounded in Scripture. *[pause]*

Someone asks you why you are so joyous today, God's Word ought to inform how you respond.

Could your life be characterized as one that speaks the truth in love? *[pauseeee]*

Another vital way that we grow is by Christ. *[pause]*

In our passage it talks about how we grow up *into* Him, who is the Head, and then *from* Him, the body grows.

So as we are connected to and unified in Christ, so we grow into Him. *[pause]*

We grow in our likeness of Christ, in our dependence on Christ, in our knowledge of Him, and so much more.

It's all of our connection to Christ together that grows us! *[pauseeee]*

To try to grow in your walk with the Lord without Christ is like cutting off your head and expecting to thrive.

Church, it doesn't work like that—He is our Head! *[pauseee]*

For some people: vague, spiritual experiences are more important than Christ.

Or they push Christ to the side, and seek out some new, exciting teaching. *[pause]*

They push Christ to the side, and try to live a moral life.

Or they push Christ to the side, and make their "church" all about social events and only caring for social needs.

It doesn't work like that, for we are the *body of Christ* and He, the head. *[pauseee]*

We need Him, so we depend on Him, look to Him, abide in Him, and get our growth from Him.

Let's hold fast to our Head, Christ,<sup>5</sup> who we are joined to. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>5</sup> A reference to Colossians 2:19.

So we grow because we are connected to Christ, our head, but there's another vital component of growth given in verse 16...

“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.”

*[pauseeee]*

In Christ, we are like parts of the body connected by joints—so we may be different parts, but we are connected and joined and held together as one body.

But here's the thing, every body part is called to do its part—it's called to “work properly”.

*[pause]*

An eye can't act like an ear, or the body won't function well. *[pause]*

The foot can't act like the mouth, or it's not going to work...

Every believer has a different role, gift, and function in the church, but they must work properly in order for the church to grow and thrive. *[pause]*

We cannot and are not meant to be the same thing, but we each have different gifts and roles.

*[pauseeee]*

By God's enabling, you have been given a spiritual gift and role to be used in the church, but you must use it! *[pauseeee]*

What we see here is that if you are not using your gift for the good of the church, it actually *hinders us all* from growing even more.

Each part is vital to the whole! *[pause]*

We need each other, and that means that we need *you* to step up and use your spiritual gifting in the church! *[pauseeee]*

“Am I attending church?” is a good starting question for any new believer, but that shouldn't be the question on your mind after you've been a Christian for some time. *[pause]*

That question should be given, ‘Of course I ought to be regularly attending,’ but then the next question should be, “Am I serving?” *[pauseeee]*

We need individuals who show acts of mercy, we need encouragers, we need ultra-generous givers, we need behind-the-scenes servers, leaders, teachers, organizers, and more. *[pause]*

Just a small group of us can't do everything without being hampered and strained...

For imagine a person who is going to pick something up that's super heavy, but only 2 out of their 10 fingers are used to pick it up, it's not going to go well. *[pause]*

We need each one, everyone, and that means we need you. *[pause]*

Like body parts connected by joints, so we are all interconnected, and so need each other—we contribute, supply, and support each other. *[pauseeee]*

Like many other local churches, a small group of us has been doing most things—that ought not to be.

There are some in this room, who haven't done much in the church, but we *need* you! *[pause]*

You have been given a spiritual gift, but you haven't been using it, you aren't “working properly” as you should.

And we can't grow and flourish like this, but each of us is needed. *[pauseeee]*

I encourage and challenge you, based on God's Word, to step up and be used by God here.

Because what's the beautiful result, the wonderful benefit of growing up in Christ? We are built up in love. *[pauseeee]*

We are built up, and have stability and strength, so that any storm of trial that comes our way doesn't flatten us. *[pause]*

We as a body grow strong and healthy, so that we function as we should, growing mature in the faith, and anchored amidst the winds of doctrine. *[pause]*

We become a place of unity in Christ, and division fades away.

We become a place where truth is spoken in love, and cunning deception is nowhere to be seen among us. *[pauseeee]*

If we follow God's way, we become so built up in love that our love is growing, expanding, and evident everywhere. *[pause]*

As we grow up, Christ is clung to more and more, and not disregarded.

And when all of this happens, God is glorified. *[pauseeee]*

What wonderful benefits of growing up in Christ, but we can only thrive like that, if we are being equipped...

If we are speaking the truth in love to each other, if we are holding fast to Christ, and if we are all working properly, using our gifts for the good of the church. *[pauseeee]*

Knowing these things, what needs to change here at our church? *[pause]*

*What needs to change in your life, because the truth is that...*

**Christ gives us what we need so that we can avoid the dangers of immaturity, and grow up strong in Him.**

Christ has given our church everything we need to thrive. *[pause]*

He's given this church shepherds and teachers to equip the saints. *[pause]*

He's given us the truth of His Word to speak in love to one another. *[pause]*

He's given us each spiritual gifts that we can use to serve, and most importantly, we have Him, our Head. *[pauseeee]*

We have everything we need, so that we aren't tossed to and fro and carried about by the winds of doctrine, for there are definitely crafty, deceitful schemes out there. *[pause]*

**And we have everything we need to mature, grow up, and be built up in love.**

So now the question is: will we use what we have been given, or neglect it all? *[pause]*

Will we follow the blueprint that He has given for His church, or make up our own? *[pause]*

Let's follow the Lord's way, church. *[pause]*

Let's cling to our church's head, Jesus Christ, who died for us, rose again, and ascended on high.

For only through Him, do we have forgiveness and life, gifting and growth, purpose and power.