
RECAPTURING THE MASTER'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

(Part 4: Ephesians 4:11-16)

Ephesians 4:11-16 presents the biblical design, model and pattern of the church which is the Master's plan for the church: Gifted and godly leaders equip the believers for ministry for the building up of the church towards unity and maturity. The goal of the building up of the church is its growth in spiritual maturity. Jesus' goal and vision for His church is that of a biblically healthy and spiritually mature church. God calls us to strive towards Christian maturity, and not to get stuck in prolonged spiritual childishness. As we look at the third feature of Christ's plan for the church, we'll consider the four characteristics of a spiritually mature church.

3. The church is built up in unity and maturity.

a. A mature church aspires for unified faith and knowledge of Christ.

b. A mature church aims for continuous growth in complete Christlikeness.

c. A mature church abandons _____.

Our Lord calls us to be childlike in our faith, but not to be childish in our faith. The childishness Paul had in mind is that of spiritual instability and lack of biblical discernment (Eph. 4:14). An immature childish Christian is like an unstable drifting boat in a stormy sea easily tossed here and there by the waves and wind of false teachings. We now live in a world where the old and unchanging truths of the Word of God are being challenged and assaulted. The waves and wind of false teachings are evident not only in the realm of Christian doctrines but also in the realm of Christian ethics (Gen. 1:27; Rom. 1:24-25). Behind these dangerous teachings are deceitful teachers who seek to manipulate God's people by their "*human cunning and craftiness in deceitful schemes*" (Eph. 4:14; Acts 20:29-31). The ultimate source of these distortions of truths is none other than Satan, who led Adam and Eve to sin by deceiving them through crafty words (2 Cor. 11:3; Gen. 3:1). But when the Word of God is upheld, taught and obeyed by the church, the body of Christ is protected from false doctrines and corrupted teachings (Acts 20:32). A mature church which faithfully feeds on the solid truths of God's Word is doctrinally stable and biblically discerning (Heb. 5:14; 1 John 2:14).

d. A mature church assumes the responsibility to _____.

A mature church puts away childish attitudes and seriously assumes the responsibility to advance and progress in Christian maturity. Paul gives us a threefold responsibility when it comes to our growth in spiritual maturity. First, we must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). In order to grow in maturity, we must confess and proclaim biblical and gospel truths with a heart that is loving and genuinely concerned for the welfare of others (1 Tim. 1:5). Second, we must submit all areas of our life to Christ's Lordship (Eph. 4:15). All aspects of our lives must bring glory and honor to Jesus our Lord. Third, we must serve fellow believers in love (Eph. 4:16). Our Lord grows and builds up His church through the mutual service and edification of the saints in Christlike love.
