



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

'Truth-ing': the Means to a Mature Church

Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:11-16

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

[Join our citKids Connect discussion at 11am](#)

SUMMARY: The Bible repeatedly urges Christians to progress from the basics, 'milk,' to 'solid food' (profound life-changing truths). Moreover, God wants a mature church, not just a few, full-grown Christians. Ephesians provides the key to a mature church—it's *'truth-ing in love'* (Eph. 4:15 literal). *'Truth-ing'* is not merely speaking the truth; it also includes doing, living & practicing biblical truths in our personal & community life. Guided by the Spirit of truth, let's walk the way of truth together, step-by-step developing godly habits which will gradually change our disposition, enriching our church life until we all, as a church, arrive at maturity.

"Spiritual maturity as absolutely necessary & the lack of it as a dangerous state for the church to be in..."—Mbennah

"A Christian [could] participate...in Church activities & yet be spiritually immature...One could reflect good observable [Christian] behaviors, actively participate in church activities...& contribute financially...[to] the church without [becoming] spiritually mature." —Emmanuel Mbennah

Marks of the Church's Maturity

A. Not individual maturity, but a Mature Church—*"until we all attain to...a mature person..."* (Eph. 4:13 NET)

- *"The focus is on corporate maturity. We're accustomed to thinking...in individual terms, but here the emphasis is on the Church...[Ask:] What would a mature [church] look like?"* —Peter Williamson

B. Arrive at "the unity in the faith & in the knowledge of God's Son" (Eph. 4:13)

1. "unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:13) [see Jude v3 for "the faith"]
2. "unity of...the knowledge of God's Son" (Eph. 4:13)

3. Arriving at Conformity to Christ—"with a stature measured by Christ's fullness" (Eph. 4:13) 4. Indicators of maturity (Eph. 4:14-16)

Symptoms of Immaturity

- A. Unstable & Susceptible to Error (Eph. 4:14) "*Stability in the truth is a mark of maturity*"—Peter Williamson
- B. Blown about by Winds of Doctrine (Eph. 4:14) –Two Current Examples
1. Universalism—Ultimately All People will be Saved (e.g. Rob Bell, *Love Wins*)
 2. Trinity—EFS: the Eternal Functional Subordination of the Son to the Father
- C. Vulnerable to Satan's schemes behind Deceptive Doctrines (Eph. 4:14; 6:11)
- D. Personal preference & allegiance; divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-3)
- E. Not Progressing from 'Milk' to 'Meat' ['solid food'] (1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14)

'Truth-ing' in Love—the Means to Church Maturity (Eph. 4:15, 25)

- A. Central, Summary Statement—"Speaking the truth in love...we grow..." (Eph. 4:15)
- "To summarize in just a few words [Paul's] instructions...it's '*speaking the truth in love*'." –Peter Gentry
- B. 'Truth-ing': More than 'speaking the truth' (Eph. 4:15)
- Eph. 4:15 is "usually rendered '*speaking the truth*.' But...the [Greek] original is *not* 'to speak,' but 'to truth,' which in addition to speaking the truth may mean...*maintaining, doing, or living the truth*...Speaking is only part of what we do with truth...living the truth is...equally important." –Miroslav Volf
- C. Paul's 'Truth-ing' equals John's "practicing/walking in the truth" (1 Jn. 1:6; 3 Jn. 3)

'Truth-ing in love'—Pitfalls & Challenge

- Eph. 4:15 [is] *one of the most challenging verses in the Bible*. If this verse were all I knew in the Bible, it'd keep me busy the rest of my life...The Greek [is]...'*truth-ing in love*'...As someone who...wants to 'be nice,' I'm...more likely to be 'loving,' than 'truth-ing.'...Direct truth-speakers...find it easier to speak the truth than to be loving. Yet, *Paul calls us to both*... There are no shortcuts to 'truth-ing in love'...[It's a] constant process of transformation." –Irene Alexander

A. **Incremental Steps**—From a Single Step to Habit to Disposition/Character

B. **Application**—take a definite Step this week; start today

- Think of one concrete step you can take to deepen your grasp on the truth in the Bible [e.g. carefully read one (additional) chapter in the OT & the NT; e.g. study the Bible passages referenced in this *Study Guide*; pray over/about what you read]
- Think of one concrete step you can take to enhance your experience of Jesus Christ (e.g. increase your personal prayer time by 5 min., 10 or 15 min, etc.; e.g. sing one (additional) hymn or worship song & pray over the lyrics)
- Take time before the Lord to consider—Have you made progress over the last (pandemic) year in terms of your grasp on Bible truth, your personal walk with the Lord, your service to the Lord? What areas need your attention/resolution? ? How can you bring the benefits (or frustrations) of the steps above to other believers (e.g. your ZOOM group, friends, etc)?
- How can you help someone else in your church in any/all of these steps?
- Pray that God would enable you & the rest of the CIT community to take these steps this week.

QUESTIONS:

- A. In Eph. 1:11-16 the church takes 'center stage;' it's not just about individual spiritual growth/maturity; the main focus is corporate growth, resulting in a mature Church
1. In the text (Eph. 4:11-16) where do you see corporate growth (in words, phrases)? Where does the individual believer fit into this picture?
 2. Compare this Ephesians' picture of corporate growth with your own idea of spiritual growth as a Christian; what adjustments might be warranted? What action points does it suggest?

- B. Several passages—e.g. 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-6:1—refer to our 'diet of Christian truth' in terms of a "liquid diet —'milk'" vs. "solid food"—'meat'
1. Where would you place yourself on a spectrum running from 'milk' to 'solid food' in terms of spiritual appetite?
 2. What practical steps could you initiate to make progress towards a more 'solid diet'?
- C. Eph. 4:15 charges us to "*speaking the truth in love*"
1. What practical situations have you experienced where you "spoke the truth in love"? How did it go?
 2. When have you experienced others attempting to "speak the truth in love" to you? How did it go?
- D. Eph. 4:15 typically reads: "*speaking the truth in love.*" But scholars point out the literal Greek is "*truth-ing in love*"
1. What difference in understanding/application (if any) does the literal Greek imply? Discuss
 2. In this context, consider the importance of our Christian life/living needing to 'back up' our speech
- E. In view of the charge to be "truth-ing in love," Irene Alexander says, "I'm...more likely to be 'loving,' than 'truth-ing.'... The direct truth-speakers...find it easier to speak the truth than to be loving."
1. Think about yourself: are you "more likely to be 'loving,' than 'truth-ing'"? Or do you "find it easier to speak the truth than to be loving"?
 2. Within your small/ZOOM group which category do most people fall into?
 3. How might you find the correct balance between the two?