

—MATURING IN YOUR WALK WITH GOD—

GROWTH

EPHESIANS 4:13

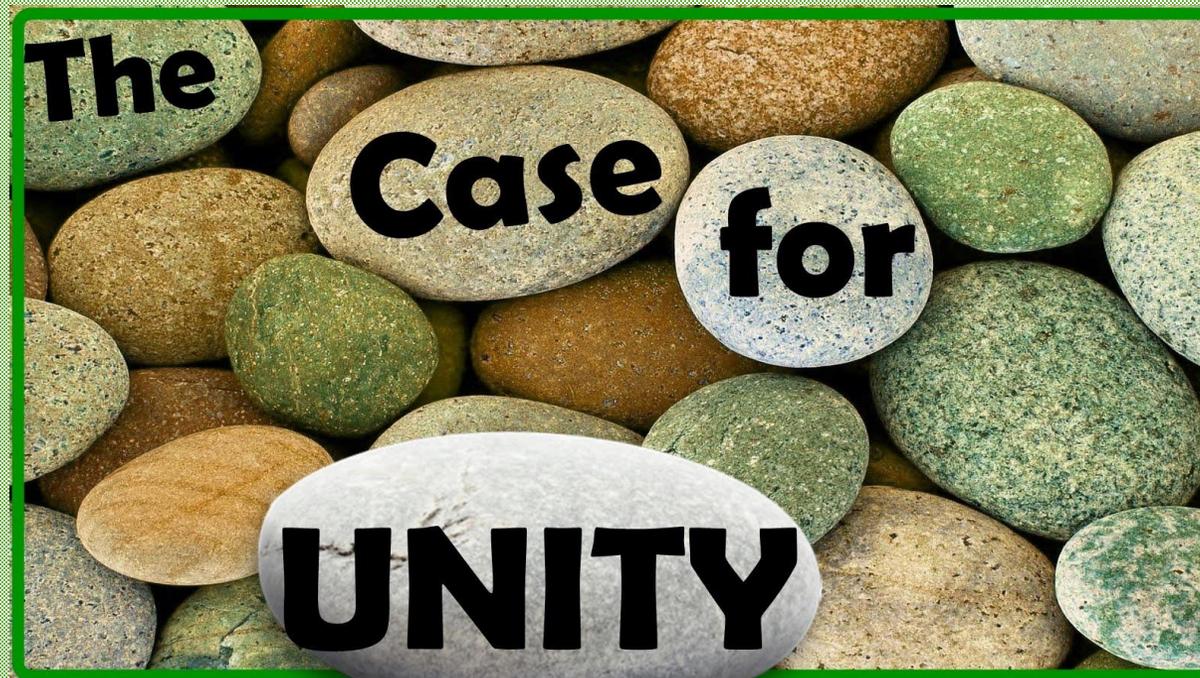


Background:

This section of Ephesians begins a series of ethical instructions firmly based on the preceding three chapters. In those early chapters, Paul has laid out the new reality,

that in Jesus Christ, God has broken down the “wall” between Jew and Gentile, now offering through the blood of the new covenant, salvation and *koinonia* (*communion*) **to all persons.**

In this letter, believers are called to abandon their old ways as Gentiles (Ephesians 4:17) and live in accord with the **new “temple” they have become.**



A question to ponder:

*How has MHCC
abandoned old ways and
become a new temple?*

A CALL TO WALK IN UNITY (1-16)

A. PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (1-7)

1. To walk worthy of our calling (1)
2. With the proper attitudes (2-3)
 - a. Lowliness and gentleness
 - b. Longsuffering, bearing with one another in love
 - c. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
3. The unity of the Spirit defined (4-6)
 - a. One body
 - b. One Spirit
 - c. One hope of your calling
 - d. One Lord
 - e. One faith
 - f. One baptism
 - g. One God and Father of all



The passage begins with “therefore” which implies that the earlier material in the letter leads directly to the “architecture” of this new life, a life worthy of their having been called into new life (cf. Ephesians 4:1 with Philippians 1:27).

4: 1-16:believers are **called to a unity that is created by and grows in love.**

The unity is based not in similarity of gifts, but in connections created by the Spirit given and shared in baptism.

All has been given; believers have not attained or reached or otherwise brought upon themselves the great gifts of God. (Notice the **passive verbs** in 4:1, 4, 7, &16.)

Even as all **has been given**, the one Spirit, Lord, baptism, and so forth (Ephesians 4:4-6) such that everyone **has been filled** with a whole new life (see especially v. 6).

The activities of those called and in-spirited by God, summarized by living worthily (Ephesians 4:1), include bearing with one another, maintaining the unity of the Spirit, speaking the truth in love, growing up into Christ.

(Eph 4:2-3) The character of a worthy walk.

- a. A worthy walk before God will be marked by **lowliness and gentleness**, not a pushy desire to defend our own rights and advance our own agenda.
 - i. Before Christianity, the word **lowliness** always had a bad association to it. In the minds of many, it still does.
 - ii. **Lowliness** means that we can be happy and content when we are not in control or steering things our way.
- b. **Longsuffering, bearing with one another**: We need this so that the inevitable wrongs that occur between people in God's family will not work against God's purpose of bringing all things together in Jesus.

Chrysostom defined **longsuffering**

- as the spirit that has the power to take revenge, but never does.

Richard Rohr re Ephesians 4: Seek Ripening

We learn wisdom and have no need to judge others when we allow ourselves

- to ripen in God's image,
- to mature in Christ's love,
- to grow in the Spirit's patience and perseverance.



“If we are to speak of a *spirituality of ripening*, we need to recognize that it is always characterized by an increasing tolerance for ambiguity, a growing sense of subtlety, an ever-larger ability to include and allow, and a capacity to live with contradictions and even to love them!” (Rohr 346)

<https://thenoontimes.com/2017/12/01/ephesians-4-seek-ripening/>

Richard Rohr re Ephesians 4: **Seek Ripening**

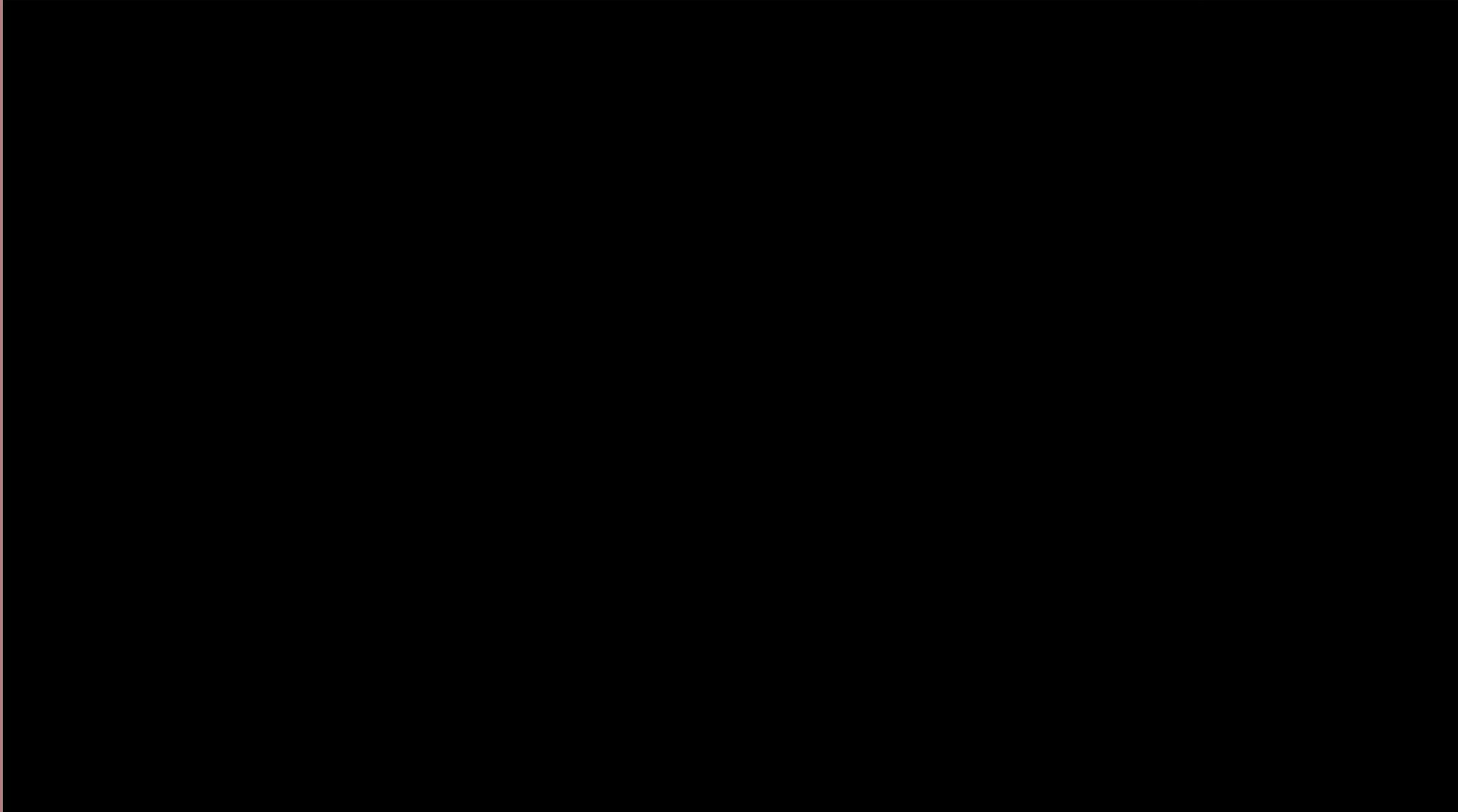
If truth is one (Ephesians 4:4-6), we must recognize we are all approaching that one divine truth from different angles, with different needs, in different eras, and with different starting points. But I find the final goal to be the same. We are moving toward ever greater union.

If we can remember that we all came from God and are headed back to God, whatever circuitous route we take, I think it will help us be more humble and patient with each other.

Each group and era has its own preferred symbols, rituals, scriptures, and words for things, but let's not ever let them get in the way of what they are all pointing to and leading us toward—union of the soul with God.

The most common mistake of religious people in all religions, clergy and laity alike is that we make means and gifts (e.g., Bible, Sacraments, priesthood, church) into *ends in themselves*; the means then become idolatrous, and we lose our absolute God-centeredness and true perspective.

Richard Rohr: Christian Unity



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pee4Be70e7c>

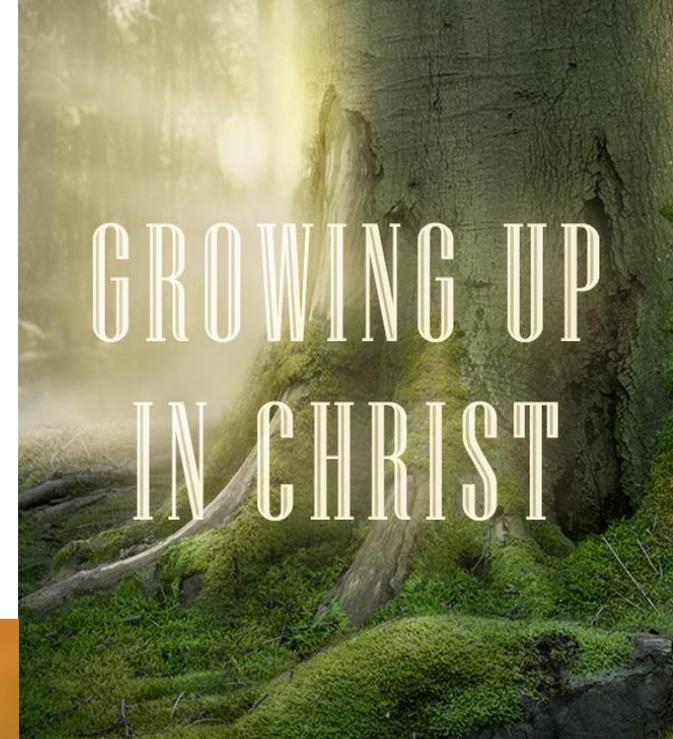
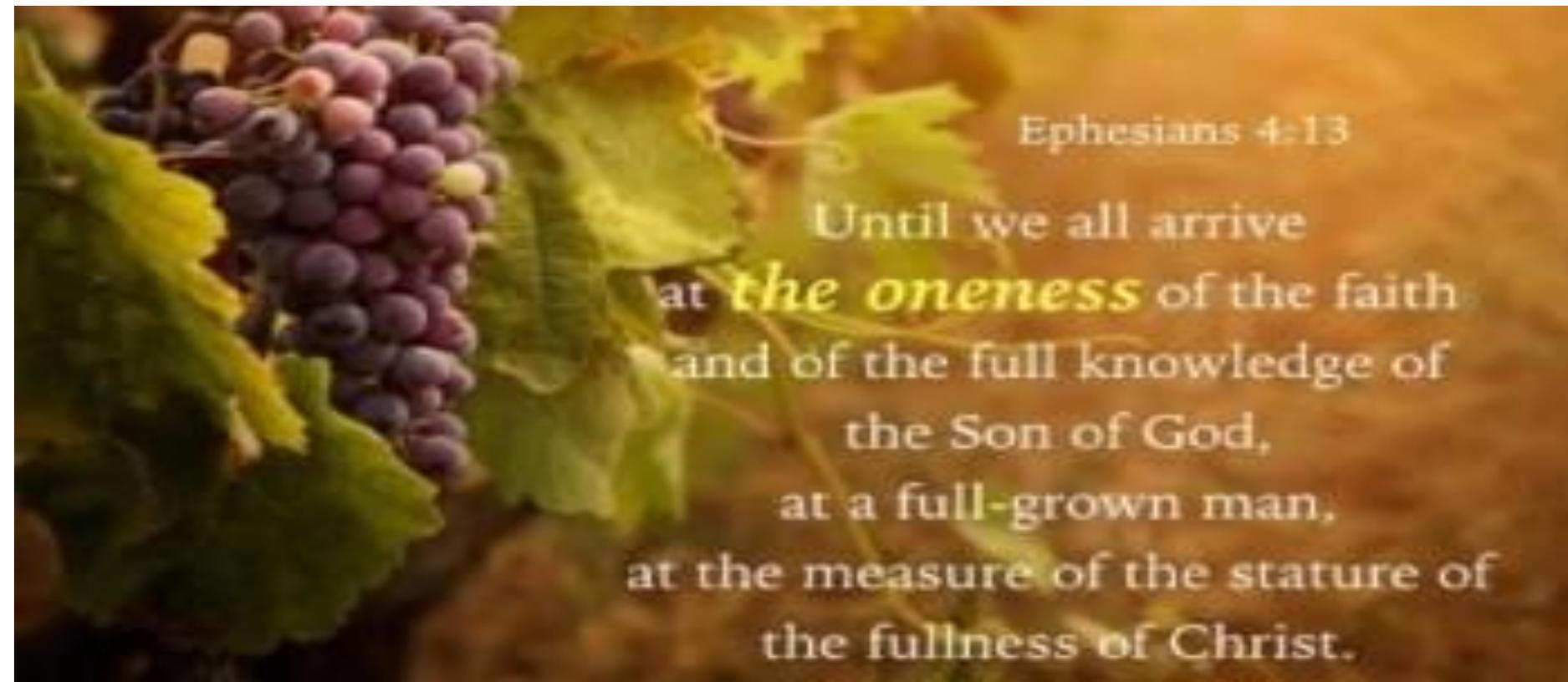
Tom Wright summary headings for Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4: 1-10: Live up to your calling!

Ephesians 4: 11-16: Grown up Christianity

Ephesians 4: 17-24: Off with the old, on with the new

Ephesians 4: 25- 5.2: The kindness that imitates God himself



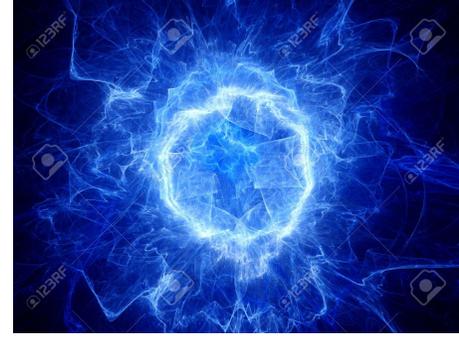
Ephesians 4:1-7

*Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called**, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*



There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. NASB

Richard Rohr says “I like to picture the unity of spirit described here as an energy field, a dynamic force field, created by sharing the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Love.



An autonomous Christian is as impossible as an independent arm or leg. Arms and legs exist only as parts. If they are given the status of an independent whole by amputation, they are no longer an arm or a leg. For a while they may look as if they were, but corruption has begun, and they can neither grasp nor walk.

The same is true of believers. Their existence is loving—“without love I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2)—which necessarily implies a relationship to another person. To love and be loved is of the essence of Christianity and is constitutive of the being of the believer. They are bound together by what makes them be what they are.

Only now does it become clear what Paul tentatively envisaged when he said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).



For Paul, this is what he means by Christ: the participatory mystery of Jesus continued through space and time *in us*. This “energy field” is created by all those who pass love back and forth and is thus an infinitely expanding force field. **The “church” was intended to be the group that consciously lived and exemplified this different quality of being.**

When Paul addresses his letters to “**the saints**” he is clearly not speaking of the later Roman idea of canonized saints. **He is speaking of the living communities of love who make up his audio-visual aids** all over Greece and Asia Minor.

Social scientists now tell us that **Paul was unbelievably successful in a mere ten year period largely because he gave people back their dignity and self-esteem by telling them they were equally and fully “children of God.”**

Tom Wright summary headings for Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4: 1-10: Live up to your calling!

This is not referring to the specific calling that different Christians have... he is referring to the **basic call of the Gospel itself..**



Question: What is the basic call of the Gospel *for you*?

Tom Wright:

‘summoning people to believe in Jesus as the Risen Lord and king and give God complete and undivided allegiance for the rest of their lives’.

What is the Gospel? David Platt

Notice your reactions/responses



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHTt6ZchKPw>

EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST (12-16)

1. For to each one grace was given as measured out by Christ (8-10) all things

2. Gifts Christ gave to His church (11)

a. Apostles b. Prophets c. Evangelists d. Pastors e. Teachers

3. **Purpose of such gifts** (12-16)

a. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry

b. Edifying the body of Christ, till we all come to:

1) The unity of the faith

2) The knowledge of the Son of God

3) A perfect person

4) The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

c. That we might no longer be children

d. That we speak the truth in love...

1) So we may grow up in all things into Christ, the head

2) To cause growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love

a) As we are joined and knit together by what each joint supplies

b) As every part does its effective work in doing its share

Tom Wright summary headings for Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4: 11-16: Grown up Christianity

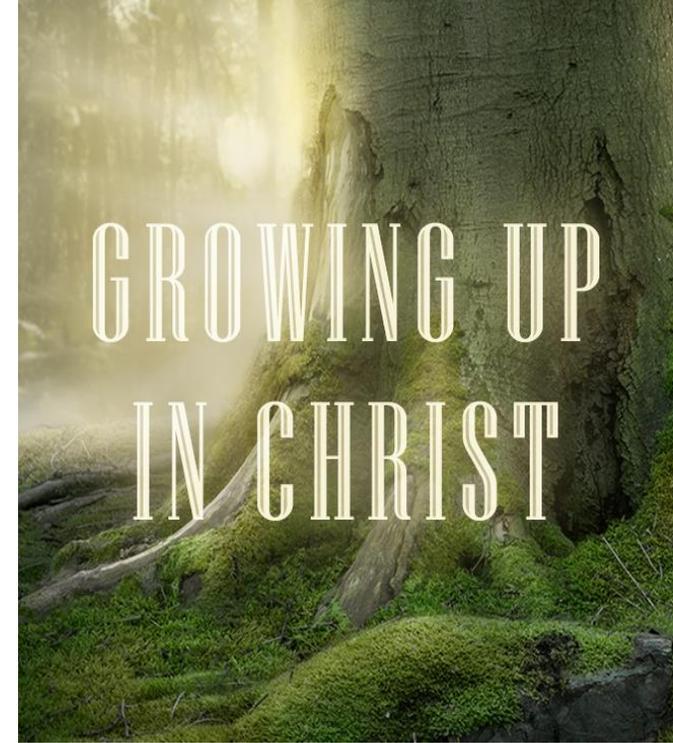
- Where does MHCC need to grow towards maturity?
- What gifts has God given to enable this to take place?
- What challenges, what cunning tricks and false teaching do we need to watch out for, and how can we address this?



Tom Wright summary headings for Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4: 17-24: Off with the old, on with the new

‘Genuine Christianity opens the mind (as Paul has been saying throughout this letter) **so that it can grasp truth at deeper and deeper levels.** This isn't a matter of university degrees and paper qualifications...**it's a matter of the heart and mind being open to the ever wider range of insight and imagination** that comes from **‘learning the king’** (4:20)



Fundamentally, Paul says that for the Christian, there must be a break with the past.

Jesus isn't merely *added* to our old life; the old life dies and

Jesus *becomes* our new life. The new person is the *new creation* (2 Corinthians 5:17) created according to the image of Jesus Christ. www.blueletterbible.org

What are the main points of this chapter?

A call to walk in purity (17-32)

https://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/ep/ep_04.htm



Walk in purity = free from addiction

A question to ponder:

What behaviours/things am I addicted to that keep me from growing 'up' into the fullness of Christ ?

Tom Wright: Ephesians 4: 25- 5.2: The kindness that imitates God

Truth-telling: If we belong to one another in the way the letter has so far indicated, telling lies is a form of corporate self-deceit. NB:

Truth and Justice Commission in South Africa

Anger: Paul quotes Psalm 4:4 doesn't say we shouldn't be angry; it's a natural human emotion. But we mustn't let it lead us into sin- we must learn to tame it, to deal with it before we lie down to sleep.

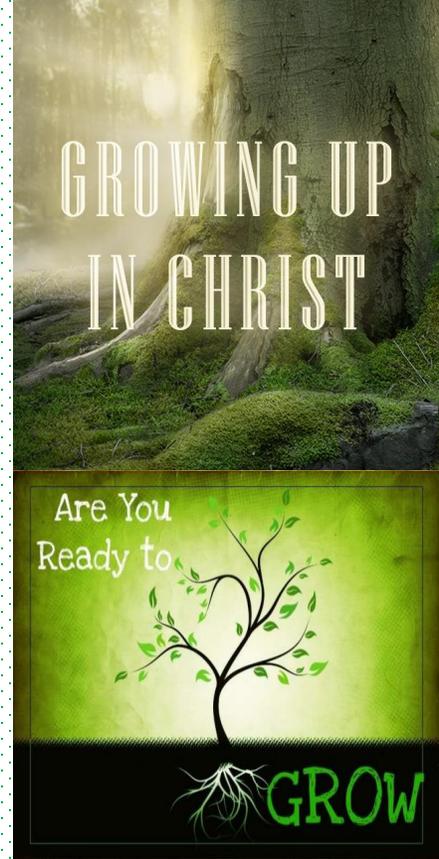
NB: angry patient

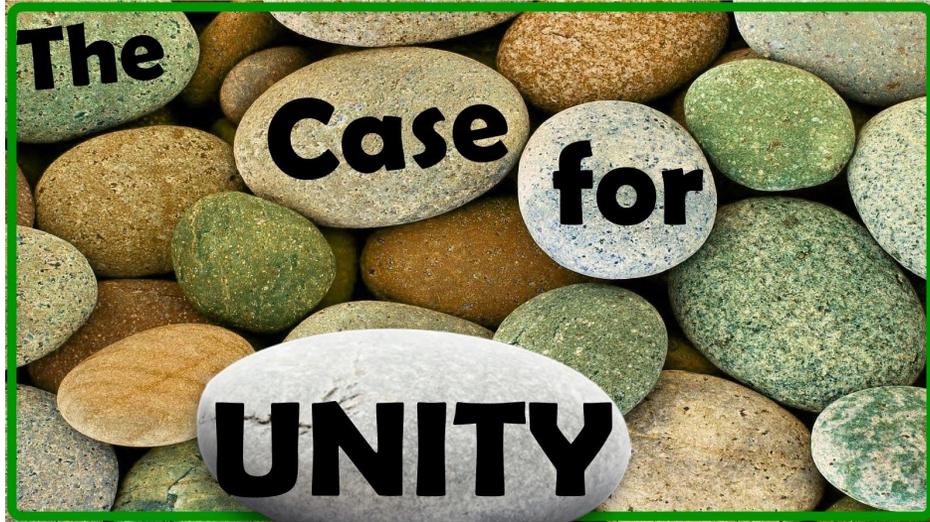
The name **devil** literally means "slanderer." Paul may be saying that when we hold on to our anger, creating bitterness, we give place to the slanderer - either because we become one or because we provoke their slander.

Aristotle defined **bitterness** as "the resentful spirit that refuses reconciliation."

www.blueletterbible.com

Bitter speech isn't just to be avoided. We can bring God's grace to people, by what we say and how we say it, and it's a shame to pass up this chance(4:29)





Paul makes clear that the perfection of the church is a process and not a completed event.

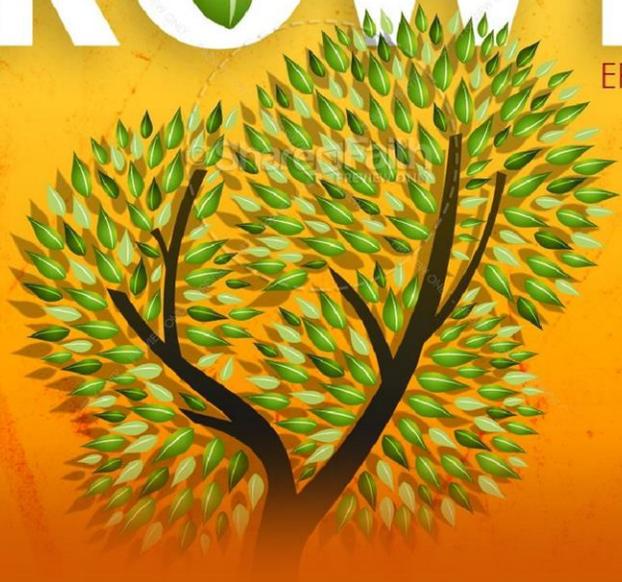


Christ has equipped the church with gifts (4:7, 11) so that the church as Christ's body may reach maturity.

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Ephesians 4:1-7

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