“The City of God: The Goal of Our Instruction”

**Eph. 4:11-16**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Sean Hoisington, Hayden Bible Church, 10/17/21)

“Grow up!”

Oftentimes, when I was a young boy crying or whining about something, my dad would bark, “Grow up!” I never wanted to hear it, but I usually needed to hear it. Our loving Heavenly Father not only uses the same phrase in Eph. 4:15, but in the surrounding verses He graciously explains **why** we should grow up and **how** we should grow up. Pastor Sean clearly and succinctly laid it out for us on Sunday.

Pastor Sean described a lady he knew who was a discipler of women- she helped them grow more like Jesus. Her lifetime of pursuing a Holy God helped others to grow up to be more like Jesus. The more this woman matured, the more fruitful she became. She was someone who was stable, not tossed around by false teaching. She became equipped so that she could equip others. (Q1) She knew that God’s Holy Word was the pathway to becoming like Him. She knew the key to today’s lesson: **God’s church matures by growing in the knowledge of Christ**. (Q2)

What is the goal of our instruction in the knowledge of Christ? Why should we grow up and how should we grow up? Read Eph. 4:11-16 and get ready to grow!

Read 4:11-13 again. God is **preparing** a host of holy ones for **service**. Our women’s “Equip” classes are a great example of this. They are not about an emotional rush; they are all about maturity and unity. We become more mature by growing in the knowledge of the Son of God. Someone once said that the Bible is full of more reminders than instruction. The church also uses reminders like the Apostle’s Creed. (Q3) Creeds and confessions remind, teach, and prevent apostasy. Verse 13 talks about **orienting** or **aligning** us in the same direction, **unifying** us. The more we see Him, the more we become like Him.

Verse 14 talks of the need for the **right doctrine**. The right doctrine stabilizes the church. Immaturity opens the door to being gullible and being deceived by the deceitful schemes of false teachers. Counterfeits try to draw you away. Some put an inordinate focus on emotional or sensational experiences in the church. The result is a focus on us, not Christ. Some preach being a Republican or a Democrat. Some continually try to guess who the Antichrist is. Some focus on vaccines or… you name it! The point is, our emotions are engaged, but we’re not growing. We’re starving because we’re eating spiritual junk food instead of the Bible, the true Word of God. (Q4)

Read verses 14-16 again. It takes the **right hearts** to effectively build up Christ’s church. In the 1800’s, George Whitfield had the right doctrine AND he loved people so much that he crossed the Atlantic 13 times in sailing ships to preach the gospel to keep people from going to Hell. He **spoke the truth in love**. Speaking the truth in love builds up the body, the church.

Let us not be tossed to and fro by false doctrine. Let us speak the truth in love to one another for the glory of Jesus. Let us be united as we are equipped for works of service. Your Bible is your most important possession… USE IT! (Q5) (Q6)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What would it look like if you were to start discipling someone this week? (Hint: Look again at Matt. 28:19-20)
2. What are the characteristics of a mature Christian? (One example is in Heb. 5:14)
3. Thoughtfully and prayerfully read the Apostle’s Creed at your group meeting. Discuss how each phrase is a reminder of basic Christianity.
4. Why does doctrine matter?
5. Why do you come to church on Sundays? Why do you attend a Bible Study?
6. In your own words, how does God mature His church?

“How Firm a Foundation” (George Keith)

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,

Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!

What more can He say than to you He hath said,

To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

“Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,

For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;

I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,

Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.”

“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,

The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;

For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,

And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,

I will not, I will not desert to his foes;

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,

I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake!”