Study 4
Ephesians 4:1-16
A changed Life

What do you think is an indication of Christian maturity?

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Read verses 1-16 and underline any words or ideas which you think are important for understanding this passage.
(Discuss your reasons afterwards).

1As a prisoner for the Lord, then, ***I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling*** you have received.
2*Be* completely humble and gentle; be patient, ***bearing*** with one another in love.**3**Make every effort to ***keep the unity*** of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4**There is ***one*** body and ***one*** Spirit—just as you were called to ***one*** hope when you were called— **5*one*** Lord, ***one*** faith, ***one*** baptism; **6*one*** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7*But* to each one of us ***grace has been given*** as Christ apportioned it. **8**This is why it[a] says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."[b] **9**(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? **10**He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

11It was he who ***gave some to be*** apostles, ***some to be*** prophets, ***some to be*** evangelists, ***and some to be*** pastors and teachers, **12*to prepare God's people for works of service***,

so that the body of Christ may be built up **13**until ***we all reach unity in the faith*** and in the knowledge of the Son of God ***and become mature***, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14*Then we will no longer be infants*, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. **15*Instead, speaking the truth in love***, ***we will*** in all things ***grow up into him*** who is the Head, that is, Christ.

16*From him* the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Read verses 1-4 again.

In verse 1 Paul urges his readers to live a life *worthy of the calling.* What does this mean and how does Paul understand this in terms of how we should treat each other? (v2-4)

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In Paul's mind unity in Christ is very much tied up with the notion of peace. If we really see ourselves as united under Christ then there ought to be a spirit of oneness (v4-6). This unity is reflected in the commitment to peace (v3).

Q. Where or when do you think we struggle to keep the peace as God's people in and out of church?

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Read verses 7-12 again. How does the grace of God benefit God's people?

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What are the types of gifts that have been apportioned to the equippers of God's church?

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Why do you think there is a distinction between those who equip (apostles, evangelists etc) and those who are being equipped?

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What does it mean to be mature, from the verses read? (v15)

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What does Paul teach to be the goal of a Christian in terms of maturity in verses 15 and 16, and how does this shed light on what is the focus of sound teaching?

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Paul shows that the true gifts given to God's leaders will always benefit God's people by bringing them to maturity in Christ. As mature Christians, these equipped saints will be able to discern false teaching and in doing so will not be swept away by false teachers. This will also give good grounding to the church of God. Good Christian Maturity will always lead to growing under Jesus and His lordship. Any headship in a church which focuses on being built into the headship of any other person is at odds with Christ.

What do you think might be 'winds of teaching' that God's people must be aware of in today's context?

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This passage of scripture is where Paul urges God's people to live a life worthy of their calling. In a religious world which continues to be desecrated by division and factionism, Paul urges God's people to be very different as examples of unity in Christ. This unity is demonstrated by their ability to live peaceful lives in view of their very different cultural backgrounds (Jews and Gentiles). Paul shows that although there may be a variety of leadership gifts, we can still have unity. This is seen firstly in the purpose each gifting has which is to equip God's people for works of service. Secondly their equipping of God's people will lead to a Christian maturity as they grow into Christ. As each part does its work in the service of God, the body functions as it should, a living testimony to the headship of Jesus Christ. It is a united and fully functioning body even though it is so diverse. This wonderful testimony which displays Christ to the world is displayed fully in peaceful living through the love we show one another. The world sees Jesus' lordship through our lives of love.

Where do you think the process of becoming mature begins after looking at these verses?

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Some Christians will tell you that the filling of the Holy Spirit at conversion gives us all the wisdom and maturity we need in Christ immediately. What are the dangers of this kind of teaching?

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Prayer

1. Spend a few moments praying for those who equip the church for service. Pray for discernment that their gifts are in line with the headship of Jesus.

2. Pray for friends who still do not know the lordship of Jesus in their lives.