

Is this Church Growing Spiritually?

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION.

- A. The spiritual growth of a local church...
 - 1. is crucial to the spiritual well-being of all the members of that local congregation.
 - 2. is only possible when the members are *“endeavoring to the keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*
- B. The Lord has given the local church everything it needs to function in a way that promotes the spiritual growth of all the members.
- C. In this lesson we will consider what is necessary for this local church to continue growing spiritually.

I. THE NEED TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.

- A. In the beginning of Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul encouraged the brethren to *“walk worthy of the calling with which”* they were called. (Ephesians 4:1-3) This involves the following:
 - 1. *“Walking with all lowliness (humility) and gentleness,”*
 - 2. *“Walking with longsuffering,”* (patience, NASB, ESV)
 - 3. *“Bearing with one another in love,”*
 - a. NASB reads, *“showing tolerance for one another in love.”*
 - b. Compare to Colossians 3:12-14.
 - 4. *“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* (cf. Ephesians 4:4-6)
 - a. We are part of one body and one Spirit. (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13)
 - b. We were called in one hope of your calling.
 - c. We have one Lord.
 - d. We are of one faith.
 - e. We are of one baptism.

- f. We are children of one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

B. **Each member** is to maintain this unity with

- 1. All humility,
- 2. gentleness,
- 3. patience,
- 4. and bearing with one another with godly love.

II. **THE NEED FOR PROPER LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING.**

A. Consider five specific roles mentioned by the apostle Paul. (Ephesians 4:7-11)

- 1. **Apostles:** Men chosen by Jesus to serve as witnesses to Him. The apostles received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost. (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:7-8)
- 2. **Prophets:** Teachers inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Act 11:27-28; 13:1-3; Ephesians 2:19-22)
- 3. **Evangelists:** Those who preach the good news of salvation and the inspired word of God. (Acts 21:8 – Philip the evangelist; 2 Timothy 4:5 – Timothy the evangelist)
- 4. **Pastors:** Pastors (elders, shepherds) are those who lead and watch over the flock who is among them (local congregation). (Acts 20:28-31 – Paul to the elders from Ephesus; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- 5. **Teachers:** Those who teach the inspired word of God. (Acts 13:1; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Hebrews 5:12)

III. **THE NEED FOR ONGOING EFFORT. (Ephesians 4:12-16)**

A. Continually equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (service). (vs 12)

- 1. This would involve teaching sound doctrine. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)
 - a. Consider Paul’s admonition to Timothy. (2 Timothy 1:13-14; 4:1-3)
 - b. Consider the responsibility of the elders. (Titus 1:7-9)
 - c. *This is one reason why we have multiple services and Bible classes.*
- 2. This would also involve ministering to one another. (1 Peter 4:7-11)

- a. This requires an attitude of submission and humility. (1 Peter 5:5)
 - b. This also requires an attitude of love and like-mindedness. (Philippians 2:1-4)
 - c. This importance of our service to one another is seen in the rest of this passage (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- B. Continually building up (edifying) the body of Christ. (vs 12-15)
- 1. To bring all members to the unity of the faith.
 - 2. To bring all members to the full knowledge of the son of God.
 - 3. To bring all members to spiritual maturity (mature man) and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
 - 4. To teach all members to speak the truth in love.
 - 5. To cause all members to grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.
- C. Continually keeping us unified and growing together through Jesus Christ. (vs 15-16)
- 1. When each grows to maturity, they both know and speak the truth in love.
 - 2. When each member speaks the truth in love, the body grows together in Christ. (vs 15)
 - 3. Every member of the body promotes the growth of the body when they do their part.
 - 4. This action results in the growth of the local body *“for the edifying of itself in love.”* (vs 16)
- D. Continually keeping us working together to fulfill the needs of the local church.
- 1. Consider the following examples as found in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. (Roman 12:3-8)
 - a. Those who prophesied or revealed the word and will of God.
 - 1) After the age of inspiration, this role is continued by pastors (elders) and evangelists.
 - b. Those who ministered or served others.
 - c. Those who taught God’s word to others.
 - d. Those who exhorted and encouraged others in the things of God.

- e. Those who gave with liberality.
 - f. Those who led with diligence.
 - g. Those who showed mercy with cheerfulness.
2. Every member of this congregation has an important role to fulfill. While our gifts and abilities may differ, we can all serve to edify this body and to cause this body to grow, both spiritually as well as physically.

CONCLUSION.

- A. This local church must continue to grow spiritually in order to properly serve the Lord and to proclaim His message to the world around us.
 - 1. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).
- B. As we have shown, we are to:
 - 2. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
 - 3. Keep proper leadership and teaching.
 - 4. Keep putting forth the ongoing effort to grow and edify one another.