

Series: *Growing in Christ*
Message Title: *Grow Up*
Date: Sunday, January 22, 2017
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3, 11-16
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

What's up? An extremely annoying question that has [unfortunately] replaced “Hello” or “Hi” as the most popular form of casual greeting. For full effect, it is best delivered while walking past someone at about 90 m.p.h. so the person you’re talking to has no time to respond, and in a tone that suggests you really don’t care about “what’s up” with them. —Urban Dictionary

Ephesians 4:1-3, 11-16

I want you to know what it means to *walk with God* and for us to *walk worthy of our calling*. I want us to live, serve and give for the glory of God together—to make much of the name of Jesus. So to this end, I want us to zero in on a simple little phrase: “Grow Up.”

Ephesians 4:15

What does this mean? How does this happen? Can we identify “marks” for growth in the coming year? How can we measure it?

Let me begin with these three areas.



I. To **GROW UP** means Maturity

Example: On a door in our garage, there are marks from our grandkids’ visit several years ago measuring their height at that time. Today, they tower over these earlier marks because they have continued a journey of growth and maturity.

Growth is a process, not something that happens quickly or instantaneously. It is the result of a variety of factors and circumstances colliding in our lives and intersecting faith that perceives and believes God is working in our lives for His glory.

In this day, we are highly conditioned for instantaneous results and response. We all look for short cuts or “hacks” to help us advance spiritually. We can become

discouraged and disgusted when we learn this is not reality. There are no “hacks” to holiness.

“It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to have been born again but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called *holiness*.” —Eugene Petersen

Christianity is not just after-life focused; it is intended to be present-life fruitful. We live for and are saved by the life of Christ.

“Spiritual growth into Christ-likeness is the ultimate goal of biblical Christianity.”

Biblical discipleship begins with conversion and moves toward a growing-learning-loving relationship with Christ and other believers.

Discipleship is a strange and hard pursuit in an instant society, yet this is our stated aim as we embark into the unfolding days of this New Year—to ignite and encourage.

“...a long obedience in the same direction.”
—Eugene Petersen

We are not a group of polarized personalities, but a group of gracious and godly people.

(Timothy Keller’s comments to Beeson School)

In the coming weeks, we will be thinking, reflecting and identifying key marks (and measures) of spiritual growth—the character and conduct of a G-R-O-W-I-N-G Christ-follower.

Our church should not be filled with pious people, but mature Christians—people who understand the need to make much of Jesus by becoming more like Jesus. Christ is everything!

Ephesians 4:12, 16

2. To GROW UP means Membership

We should be more of who we are together—not numbers on church rolls, but a living community of faith, hope and love.

Ephesians 4:16

From the moment of your conversion in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you become a member of the family of God—the body of Christ, the church, the community. Even if you neglect or refuse identity with a local congregation, you cannot excuse yourself from placement within the family of God.

Membership in the church is a corollary with faith in Christ. We cannot disregard, disrespect or despise the church. Church identity is a spiritual fact! No Christian is an independent child.

“God’s children do different things. Some run away from it and pretend that the family does not exist. Some move out and get an apartment on their own from which they make occasional visits, nearly always showing

up for the parties and bringing a gift to show that they really do hold others in fond regard. And some would never dream of leaving but cause others to dream for them, for they are always criticizing what is served at meals, quarreling with the way the housekeeping is done and complaining that others in the family are either ignoring them or taking advantage of them. And some determine to find out what God has in mind by placing them in this communicate called a church, learn how to function in it harmoniously and joyously, and develop the maturity that is able to share and exchange God's grace with those who might otherwise be viewed as nuisances." —Eugene Petersen

Growing up together is vital because:

We Believe Ephesians 4:4-6

We Belong Ephesians 4:12

We Become Ephesians 4:13

Greater service, sacrifice and support.

This means authenticity, responsibility, and accountability within community. Read your Bible and try to build a case for solitary belief. You cannot find it. God used the nation of Israel, Jesus and His twelve disciples, early

believers that gathered in local homes, and even the greatest commandment—Love God. Love others.

Our faith is individual, but not independent. Church membership is not like paying taxes—some obligatory action. Church membership is like paying dues because of a shared privilege we have to belong with others.

We gather weekly to declare our love for God, to share our common life in Christ, to bear one another's burdens and needs, to repair broken places in our lives and relationships, and to stir one another to greater love and good deeds. This is essential, but it is not easy.

Churches are filled with believers at all ages and stages of life. And candidly, brothers and sisters sometimes fight! Sometimes it's not easy to grow up together. Have you ever said to kids or siblings, "Will you grow up?" (It's a little more difficult when you say this to your mate!)

Yet, we share a membership intended to move us beyond "friction" to a "fusion" of

life, and this is expressed through the congregational experience in our church. We worship together to proclaim our need for grace, our struggle with doubt and despair, and our common consolation that God's Word is true and that Jesus never fails.

"The Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs a brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

3. To GROW UP means Mission

Our goal is to grow in our understanding of the essential nature of God's mission and what it means to live with intentionality and focus regarding what really matters in life.

We can have confidence in the gospel and share a mutual commitment "to make disciples and multiply disciple-makers."

I want us to embrace the eternal significance of our witness, both individually and collectively. I would ask that God reshape our lives to embrace and enable His mission in and through us.

Ephesians 4:17-18

Through our Replicate Weekend, our goal is not to replicate ourselves, but to learn how to replicate disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ—to give witness and glory to God in and through our/their lives

Testimony: Letter from Kyle and Jennifer Pedigo

“We were married for seven years and had two beautiful children. We had previously attended church as teenagers, but as a married couple with children, we had only just recently and briefly joined and attended a church at our previous duty station. After two tours in Iraq and multiple moves, our family was still trying to figure out our roles and how to be a family.

“Shortly after our arrival, we started attending Warren. Immediately, we were welcomed into the Children’s Ministry, and it was a relief to know that our children were in a safe environment with amazing people who served them wholeheartedly. We were pleasantly surprised that there were multiple services to choose from. We decided to attend a service in Simmons Hall.

“The first time we heard Pastor McKinley share God’s Word, we were surprised. Not only was the Word being spoken to us, but it was being taught to us. We were learning what the Gospel really means and how we, God’s people, are the church—not a building. It was the first time it was presented to us in that way—that loving Jesus was *a way of life* in the every day tasks, every day choices, every day living. Our perspective on ‘church’ was changing. It was no longer how can the church serve us, but rather, how can we (us the church) serve to further share the love of Christ.

“When it was announced that Warren would be opening a campus in Grovetown and they needed people to make the move and help

start the church, we wanted to be a part of it.

We received a call one day asking us if we could be a part of a video to show the vision of Warren Grovetown. They needed a military family and asked if we could be 'it'. At first, the answer was going to be *no* because that was totally out of our element, and in our minds, serving meant volunteering once a month in the nursery. But God had other plans and we said yes. We thought we would just act out being in a Life Group and getting to know people, but with God, that is never the case. We literally had Bible study during the filming and met people who would forever be part of our lives.

"When Warren Grovetown opened, we served in the Children's Ministry and the SOLO Moms Ministry—not once a month, but every week because help was needed. We were also part of the Wilkins Life Group and met in their home with people who became our family. We did life together in all seasons of life. Our children went to preschool together. Husbands coached boys baseball together. A ministry leader in our Life Group helped explain to a seven year old

what baptism and accepting Jesus in your heart means, and he was baptized the same day as his best friend. Our children played together in the street cul-de-sac, served alongside them in South Africa, and the list goes on. In a season when our marriage was struggling, our Life Group walked and prayed alongside us as God was teaching us and showing us how to be husband and wife in a relationship with Him. When holidays came around, we were always welcomed in someone's home when we lacked a place to go.

"In 2016, we found out that we would be moving to Germany. With every other move, anxiety takes over and negative expectations arise. This time, God had equipped us to fully trust in Him and have faith that He has already gone before us, and to count it all joy in the midst of circumstances. As we have learned, it's all part of the adventure. In the 4 1/2 years we spent in Georgia, God has matured our faith and our family has been redeemed. We are thankful that God used Warren to be part of our story and we are prepared to 'be the church' wherever we may go."—Kyle, Jennifer, Russ and Grave Pedigo

Hey Warren, that is what's up! We are here to proclaim life in Jesus' name and help people grow up for His glory.

What's up with you?