

# Body Building Part 2: A Healthy Body

Ephesians 4:13-16

Last week as we looked at Ephesians 4:11-12 we began to talk about body building. We said that the church is the body of Christ. And Jesus Christ, the head, is continually building His body through the presence and power of His Holy Spirit. And in His body, the church, Jesus Christ gives spiritual gifts to His church in order to build it up. He gifts every believer with one or more spiritual gifts to use in His service.

And He gifts the church as a whole with special leaders. "**Apostles**" and "**prophets**" fulfilled special roles in the foundation of the church. The other two types of leaders, "**evangelists**" and "**pastor/teachers**" fulfill special roles in the continuing ministry of the church. Those with leadership gifts are to equip the saints for the work of service, so that the body will grow to unity, maturity, and Christ-likeness.

I believe that God wants His church to be a healthy body. Let me ask you, how healthy is New Covenant Baptist Church? Whenever you go to the doctor, they will check your vital signs. They will take your temperature, your blood pressure, and your heart rate. The doctor will listen to your heartbeat and to your breathing through the stethoscope. The doctor knows what the vital signs of a healthy body should be and compares your vital signs with the standard to determine just how healthy you really are.

As the body of Christ, the church should measure up to certain standards of spiritual health. In our text, Paul gives us some vital signs of a healthy spiritual body. These are not all the signs of a healthy church, but they are some important areas for us to consider as we think about the health of our church.

A healthy body has unity of the faith, spiritual maturity, sound doctrine; truth balanced with love; growing Christlikeness; and, every member ministry.

## Vital Signs of a Healthy Church (vv.13-16).

### I. Unity of the Faith. (4:13)

Paul's prayer is that "**we all come to the unity of the faith.**" Notice the definite article. This is not just faith but "**the faith.**" This is the theological body of genuine Christian truth. As Jude states in Jude 3 "**the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**"

Show me a church in disunity and I'll show you a church that is filled with doctrinal ignorance. Show me a church in disunity and I'll show you a church where people are not involved in ministry and they are not edifying one another.

How do we preserve unity in the church? We teach the Bible. We encourage believers to minister. We follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We work hard at being peacemakers.

Sometimes we will disagree on minor matters: timing of the rapture, the timing of creation, etc... However a healthy church will have "**the unity of the faith.**"

This **"the unity of faith"** comes through a deep abiding **"knowledge of the Son of God."**

This does not refer to salvation, but to the deep knowledge a believer gains through years of prayer, Bible study and faithful obedience. This is the knowledge that Paul prayed for in **3:17-19**: **"that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge."**

Paul considered this knowledge His ultimate goal. He said in Phil.3:8, **"I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [dung, manure], that I may gain Christ."**

Personal knowledge of the Son of God really is all about a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is knowing Him and loving Him deeply. It is spending time with Him in prayer and in the word. It is walking with Him daily. It is working with Him in the ministry for which He has gifted and equipped you. It's loving Jesus more and more each day.

Are you growing in your personal **"knowledge of the Son of God?"** Are you growing in a deepening relationship with Him? Or, are you just coming to church?

*Vital Sign:* Do I have a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ?

## **II. Spiritual Maturity. (4:13)**

God wants us to become **"a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."** What does that mean? It means giving up childish, selfish faith and moving on to mature faith, to be complete.

God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is found in Rom.8:29. God chose you, called you, predestined you and saved you that you might be **"conformed to the image of His Son,"** that you might be a **"perfect [mature] man"** that you might **"measure"** to the **"stature of the fullness of Christ."** God wants you to grow up to be like your big brother, Jesus.

We can't fully be like Jesus in this life because of the sinful flesh in which we live. However we can attain a level of maturity that pleases the Lord.

Paul said in Col.1:28 that his goal was **"to present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus."** That's my goal as your pastor, to present you to the Lord as a mature believer. Are you growing in maturity?

In verse 14 Paul reminds us that we **"should no longer be children."** The word for **"children"** here refers to a child who cannot speak for himself / ILL – ordering for a child in a restaurant.

When Paul uses the word **"children"** here, he is referring to believers who refuse to grow up; People who are satisfied to just sit in the pew; Christians who are content to be saved but don't desire to mature. Such believers don't want to pray. They think Bible study is boring. They can take or leave worship. They rarely think about Jesus through the week.

*Vital Sign:* Am I growing in maturity?

### III. Sound Doctrine. (4:14)

The problem with not growing and maturing is that it leaves you vulnerable to false teaching and to being deceived. Children are gullible. They will fall for anything. So are spiritual children. Such folks often jump on every spiritual bandwagon.

Paul says such people are **"tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."** How many of you would go out on the ocean in boat and put a two year old at the helm? Imagine what would happen when a storm comes and the boat begins to get blow about on the waves. You are liable to end up shipwrecked.

That's why a healthy church must have sound doctrine, solid teaching, and each member must be devoted to growing up in their spiritual understanding.

So, Paul says, "Grow from childhood to maturity so that you don't get taken in by the spiritual hucksters!" This means not only reading, but also studying your Bible. Don't dodge the difficult doctrinal sections. They're in there to help you mature in the faith. Take advantage of the Sunday School classes that we offer, study with us, and discuss how God's word applies to us.

*Vital Sign:* Am I able to discern good teaching?

### IV. Loving Attitude. (4:15)

To avoid **"craftiness"** and **"deceitful plotting"** we are to be **"speaking the truth in love."** Actually the word speaking is implied here, literally the original reads "truthing it in love." It encompasses both truthful words and an honest lifestyle. We must have both **"truth"** and **"love."**

**"Truth"** without **"love"** can be harsh, judgmental, legalistic and unforgiving. It promotes a pharisaical brand of selfrighteousness. Immature believers can speak the truth, but only mature believers speak truth with love.

**"Love"** without **"truth"** is wishy-washy and unbalanced. Some call it "sloppy agape." Love that is not based in truth is not really love but phony emotionalism.

A healthy church must hold to, proclaim, and practice the truth of the gospel with a loving attitude. Speaking the truth of the gospel is to love others, because it is only by believing the gospel that people will be saved from God's eternal judgment. It is not loving to tolerate or promote heresy. Spiritual error on the essentials of the gospel is both evil and cruel because it results in eternal ruin for those that are deceived by it.

*Vital Sign:* Am I practicing and proclaiming the gospel truth in a loving way?

### V. Growing in Christ-likeness (4:15).

Paul restates the process of the growth of the body and its goal: That we **“may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ.”** Growing in Christ is a lifelong journey. Even after Paul had been a Christian for many years, he said that he had not yet arrived, but he pressed on toward the goal of maturity in Christ (Phil. 3:12-14).

We are to **“grow up in all things into ... Christ.”** This means bringing every area of your life under Christ’s lordship as commanded in His Word. Your *thought life* should grow up into Christ. Your *emotional life* should grow up into Christ. How you use your *physical* body, including eating, exercise, rest, modest clothing, and moral purity should grow up into Christ. The same applies to all of your *relationships* and to your *business* practices. It applies to your use of time, money, and possessions.

Paul says we grow up into **“Him who is the head; Christ.”** Christ as the head refers to His lordship and to His care for His body. Just as your head controls your body and directs the members of the body to care for one another, so Christ does in the church. Just as your head does not cut off a sore finger, but tenderly nurses it back to health, so Christ does for a wounded member of His body.

A healthy church is one in which every member is making progress toward Christ-likeness and the Lord Jesus directs and cares for His church as the head of the body.

*Vital Sign:* Am I becoming more like Christ daily?

## **VI. Every Member Contributing (4:16).**

As we showed last week, the church is not a one-man-ministry. Every person in the church has something vital to contribute. Verse 16 says, **“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”**

Paul is saying that every part of the body has a function to perform. When all of the parts are working in accordance with their specific function, the body grows in love.

This verse has two practical applications. First, the phrase “fitted and held together” implies that we must be close to one another in order to grow. You will find it difficult to grow spiritually without the help and support of other believers. And the church only grows spiritually when we get close enough to each other to really demonstrate love to each other.

Second, Paul’s emphasis on every joint supplying and each individual part working properly shows that every Christian must be a functioning, serving member of the body. If your body has a non-working part, you are somewhat incapacitated. God saved you to serve Him in some capacity. The goal of all ministry is “the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

*Vital Sign:* Am I serving so the whole church grows in love?

I asked you at the beginning of this message, how healthy is New Covenant Baptist Church? The church is only as healthy as its weakest member. If one part of the body is unhealthy, it affects the whole body. How are your spiritual vital signs today? As we prepare for the Lord's invitation today, would you look at those six vital signs again? Which one did the Lord really impress on your heart today that you need to grow in?

*Vital Sign:* Do I have a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ?

*Vital Sign:* Am I growing in maturity?

*Vital Sign:* Am I able to discern good teaching?

*Vital Sign:* Am I practicing and proclaiming the gospel truth in a loving way?

*Vital Sign:* Am I becoming more like Christ daily?

*Vital Sign:* Am I serving so the whole church grows in love?