

Ephesians 4

live the life

GOING DEEPER

WEEK TWO

Welcome to the discussion questions for the sermon series, Living the Life. These questions are designed to take you deeper. You can enjoy them by yourself, with a friend, or in your community group. Begin this time with prayer and read Ephesians 4:11-24

1. The core messages of this passage is the call to grow to maturity in Christ. The New Testament consistently calls believers to grow or more accurately, to grow up in our faith. The comparison used in the Bible over and over again is that we should no longer be like infants or children in our faith and that we need to grow to be like mature adults. Maturity changes our perspective, our desires and sharpens our awareness of how God is at work in the world around us. It would be a serious mistake for us to underestimate how important our growth is.

- Do you see in this passage the call to grow to maturity in Christ?
- What are some of the obstacles in your life that cause you to underprioritize growing in your faith?
- Be honest, are you growing and maturing in your faith?

2. One of the most natural questions when studying this passage is to ask, how do we grow? How do we mature in our faith so that we no longer think and behave like spiritual infants or children? This passage, in addition to calling us to grow, points us to five key factors for spiritual growth. The first of those factors is the importance of relationships. Ephesians 4:11 points out that Jesus gives us spiritual leaders and those leaders have a very important role in our lives and our growth. This could be a pastor, a community group leader or a ministry leader or a spiritual mentor.. Verse 12 points out that one of the roles they have is to equip or train us. Think about that for a moment, we need people in our lives who are more spiritually mature than we are to encourage us, correct us and train us to live the life we are called to in Christ. Beyond our relationship with our spiritual leaders, another important relationship is with other believers who join with us to live the life of Christ. Verse 16 uses the analogy of the body of Christ to explain how these relationships should work. 16 *He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. . (NLT)*

- Have you ever had a relationship with a spiritual leader that helped you grow? How important was that relationship for you?
- Do you currently have the relationships you need so that other believers and spiritual leaders can encourage you, train you and speak into your life? If not, how might you get into those kinds of relationships?
- What relationships do you currently have where you encourage and invest in someone else's growth?

3. As you might have guessed, the second factor for spiritual growth is training. In the last question we saw the need for a trainer or spiritual mentor to equip us, but in this question we will focus on the need for the training itself. The root word Paul uses for equip in Ephesians 4 is used in several other verses in the Bible and gives us an understanding of how we are trained. One verse that uses the word is 2 Timothy 3:16 when it says All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. This verse reminds us that our study of God's Word is a core part of our training and our growth. You cannot grow in Christ without a growing knowledge of His Word. To grow, you should be examining and learning from the Word of God with a spiritual leader (like in a sermon in a church service) and by yourself. Another verse that uses the word for training or equipping is Colossians 4:12-13 *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured (equipped).* Here we see that prayer plays a role in our training, both praying and being prayed for are exceptionally important. To be fully equipped we need an active and vibrant prayer life. A third element of our training is to endure difficult times of testing or suffering. We see this in **James 1:2-4** and **1 Peter 5:10** where the word is used to indicate that we are refined as we endure difficult times. So, we know these three elements are important to our growth and training: The Word of God, prayer and enduring hardship.

- Are you currently studying the Word of God with the kind of intensity that will propel your growth in Christ?
- Is your prayer life where it needs to be? If not, how might you make the changes you need to make so you can grow?
- Do you see how enduring hardship can help you grow? Read James 1:2-4 What mindset do we need when we endure hardship?

4. Ephesians 4 not only calls us to grow but it points out five factors that help us grow to maturity. The first is key relationships, the second is training or being equipped, the third we see clearly in verse 12 is service. We might call it Christ-centered service. Service is all about taking the focus off ourselves and meeting the needs of someone else. The Greek word Paul uses for service includes any kind of service from serving food to teaching and training others.

- Why do you think serving others helps us grow?
- Are you involved in Christ centered service? If so, how does it affect your life?

5. Another exceptionally important factor that impacts our growing to maturity is found in Ephesians 4:23 and deals with our thoughts and attitudes. Ephesians 4:23 (NLT) Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. One of the central ways that we grow and mature is by changing the way we think and the attitudes that we hold. Some of the things that we have already examined are important in changing the way we think, especially our key relationships, study of God's Word, prayer and Christ-centered service. One of the things that spiritual leaders should impact in our lives is how we think. They should consistently pull us back to examine our lives through the lens of Scripture and to see things as God sees them. Our personal daily study of God's Word should be renewing our minds and attitudes. And prayer pulls us out of worldly thoughts and should bring us back to God's perspective. Serving others focus' our thoughts on them and meeting their needs instead of a continual focus on desires and daily struggles.

- How important do you think our thought and attitudes are?
- Generally, do you feel in control of how you're thinking or do you find that your thoughts more often than not get away from you and you find yourself mentally wandering into areas best not visited?
- For you personally, what most often influences your thoughts and attitudes?

End this going deeper time by asking the question: what tangible changes based on this study do I need to make so that I can grow to maturity?