**Series**: Uniting All Things Under Christ

**Title**: GrowingTogether

**Scripture**: Ephesians 4:11-16

**Description:** Miss God's mission at your own peril, and the peril of your brothers and sisters!

# Read 4:11-16

# Intro

* **Reason for doing this series**: Giving (again) scriptural substance to our Vision and Mission. Touching on particular points (there is a time for systematic book study, and a time for pointed thematic preaching)
* **Eph 4:11-6** a critical, core... foundation of #GrowingTogether
* **Goal Today** = To see the **Mission of God WITHIN THE CHURCH**, as a BODY, and f**ully buy in to it** - seeing it in His Word - so that as the elders work to develop this pratically (and the deacons help facilitate) it will become **not just an ideal, but a reality** -- Why else does God give this to us! But that we'd know 'the immeasurable power of God at work in us who believe"

# Pray

The way we'll handle this - Explain the verses, then illustrate them, then apply it with some important observations.

# Explain the Verses

* 11) "*And He gave*"
	+ in addition to gifts of salvation (7-10). "Certainly", more than that... !!
		- "*Apostles and Prophets*" - Eph 2:20, Revelation of God, given through men, under the Old Covenant, and New Covenant
		- "*Evangelists*"? - only 2 other places mentioned! Philip the Evangelist, and Timothy who must, 'do the work of an evangelist'. Essentially, a 'gospel announcer'. Who introduces people to the gospel, who've never heard it - here, men as a particular gifts from Christ in the world.
		- "*Pastors and Teachers*" - not two different roles; In this list in the Greek, separation with the definite article - these 2 are joined. "Pastor-Teacher" - an elder, who does both caring for and teaching.
	+ so it's not a '5-fold office' - not even 4! But first 2 refer to the foundation laid, and lat 2 the continuing work on that foundation today - the introduction of the gospel, and then the ongoing leading of believers under the gospel.
	+ Christ gave these!....
	+ ***For what purpose?***
* 12) "*the saints*" = 1:1, 2:19 - not Mother Theresa. But Believers.
	+ *'equip ... for the work of service'* ***stated otherwise as*** 'building up the body of Christ' (=church) - or "to edify"
	+ IE the fulfilling of the Vision, is vested in the Believers!...
		- (v1-6: ONE body)
		- (v7-10: EACH individually recipients of God's grace)
	+ ***With what Goal?***
* 13) "*until we all arrive"* [APP: trying to *arrive* in life] Where does God intend for us to arrive? Stated 3 different ways - so that we really get this...
	+ #1 *the unity of 'the faith'* and the *unity of 'the knowledge of the Son of God*" =
		- the CONTENT of our faith - united in God's Word, Revelation
		- and being united in that, intimate knowledge of Christ, personally
		- *Unity of* ***ie*** COMMON to all the believers
	+ #2 as *coming of age*: [writers love this theme because it appeals to all of us - the experience of growing up and finding our true identity and meaning in life, and adult experience] - ... This is the True Coming of Age - regardless of physical age.
	+ #3 explaining further, "i.e"... [read...]
		- fullness is a major theme - 1:10, 1:23, 3:19, 4:10, 5:18
	+ [APP] This is where GOD intends us to arrive. Where are you trying to arrive? What does your investment of time and resources say?
* 14) = What works against this?! [read 14]
	+ "*doctrine*" = teaching; 'Every wind' - so it's everything communicated to us explicitly, subtly, in ideas, stories, philosophies that tries to inform us about what is true, how life works, why the world is, ultimate reality. Doctrine that is "*human*" - as opposed to Divine - This is the context in which we live. Unbelieving parents, school teachers, friends, colleagues, courses, movies - constantly informing our minds, building perspectives, whether we know it or not, like it or not
* 15) Alternatively, "rather"... What does 'building up'/edifying entail? In contrast to being manipulated by *human* ideas, 'speaking the truth in love we are to grow up' - Truth and Love
	+ ***Truth*** - rigorously seeking after what is TRUE, and affirming it, living moment by moment according to what is God's Truth
	+ ***Love*** - eye not on me, but on service of others - cf 'the works of service' - intention of benefiting one another
	+ That's the battle - that's how and where advance happens (our commitment to the likeness Christ, who is "*full of Truth and Grace"*, John 1:14)
	+ "*we may grow ... all things*" = neuter 'everything' - referring to ourselves, our ideas, our ministry, actions - all things connecting into Him... **v16**
* ! Uniting Under One Head... "**the whole body makes the body grow in love"**
* This is so clear, isn't it. It is defining. Directing. Blueprint of the Mission of God WITHIN THE CHURCH. And we've summarised this by **#GrowingTogether**

# Illustration

* Since 2014, massive migration to Europe from Africa and Middle East; Fleeing from war, poverty, persecution.
* A desperate father sending his 2 teen children - the only hope they had of life; the promise of arriving in land of freedom and prosperity;
* But the only way is through the treacherous sea, in the hands of smugglers; and we've seen the results. The Promise of Salvation so often ends in starvation or drownings on overcrowded boats, even poverty on the other side, and being sent back. I'm sure you remember the deceased infant that washed up on shore. In 2017, one article said 150 had died in just 4 months. "The Mediterranean Sea is a cemetery with no grave stones"
* **v14: "*so that we may no longer be*" like that** - ***infants*** - utterly defenseless, utterly dependent on others, at the mercy of eager smugglers.
* **This is the human condition**: At the mercy of "*craftiness"/trickery*: Like gambling, but your opponent has manipulated the dice against you - just like those smugglers - their interest is their own Lucrative business - charging victims based on ethnicity and desperation, giving discounts for referrals, and then if they themselves even get on the boats, abandoning them before reaching the other side, so they can return for more business. *Craftiness*: the word used for Satan in 2Cor11:3 - with Eve.
* "*deceitful schemes*" - literally, 'The scheme of the Wandering', referring to the overarching plan of the enemy; This is not a matter of **chance**; But **Satan** leads, deceives, then rightly accuses us before God, seeking our destruction. **This is the human condition** - whatever isn't from God is *wave-tossing* and *wind-beating*; there may be hope and promise of well being apart from God, but it's all trickery under one scheme.
* **(14) - "No Longer!!"** The Church is God's Rescue Mission. Without God's Intervention, there's NO ARRIVAL.!
	+ Without His Grace (v7-10) **AND** the Building/Serving (11-16), we will **never** arrive, at the "**Unity of Maturity**", United in our Faith, and in our Intimacy with the Son of God! -... **and the alternative to that** - *devastation*: To the degree that we don't grow, is the degree that we are victims of Satan's schemes. Will see it in our stability/wavering, home strength/crumbling, confidence/fear, hope/hopelessness, peace in Christ, Love for Him / spiritual deadness. God desires us to arrive, and has given what we need for it.

# Application (16)

* v16 is the summary of 11 to 15; This is what we must root ourselves in today - leave being convinced of, This is why it is utterly important for ALL believers to invest in **#GrowingTogether**
	+ **[! Notice the Spirit repeatedly talking about "ALL"** : It's no good to leave anyone behind. It's not OK to only sort yourself out in 'THE FAITH" and "INTIMACY WITH CHRIST".
	+ 12 - the saints for the body
	+ 13 - until we all arrive ('one mature man')
	+ 16 - the whole body, every joint, each part
	+ If I am confident in what I believe but another members isn't - I've work to do. If I have intimacy with Christ but another member not, I've work to do. "I'm in a Bible Study" - What about the others? The work of service, the work of building, edifying, is yours - maybe you're not a bible study leader, but will you reach out, will you even join a new study that the others may be needing? Who are you in it for?
* (See why church membership is significant? "Who am I reaching out to? Of this sea of people, who's calling, reaching to be helped, who's available to help?
* And knowing how the Christian life goes, the one who is strong today, is weak tomorrow - as with God's provision of wealth: 2Cor8:14 "*your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be equality"*
* Don't miss the orientation course. We have to get more definitive about the membership, and proactive in building up each member, right? **]**
* (16) #GrowingTogether: **3 Words in application**
* ***#1 Joined***
	+ = fitted together like a frame, the interconnecting joints perfectly aligned. One of the root words is what we use for 'speaking' - and that's a nice illustration of the Joining we aim for: We speak individual words, making one sentence, with a cohesive meaning - that's my first observation for application - **COHESION**.
	+ Now a new learner of the language speaks/each/word/se-pe-rate-ly. But a mature speaker's words are so cohesive that a-foreign-speaker-cannot-make-out-the-distinction-between-the-words-can-they? It's not just the vocab we need, but the grammar and fluency that makes it fit.
	+ (16) says we must be joined like that. Cohesion between each member.
		- Well there's always work to be done in that arena, isn't there? How does it happen, but by FIRSTLY **coming together** ('by every', 'when each')
	+ "This mustn't be forced, people should naturally be led by the Spirit to get together/ grow together" - Well, this is the Spirit leading now! Let that challenge us.
	+ Part of this is common human behaviour: When we move away, we lose cohesion. (and that's why its harder to GrowTogether if you're not living in the same town as your church - it takes extra effort! But living in the same town still requires effort, doesn't it?)
	+ The key, though, is spiritual =
* **#2 "*held together*"**
	+ The difference between *JOINED* and *HELD* is **HELD refers to a strong bond of CONVICTION.** Used a number of times in the Word for when something is taught or explained, resulting in an understanding and strong agreement. So here in v16 - *held together* refers to having a SHARED CONVICTION
	+ So it's not only the joining, but the gluing: **Our work** to **Interconnect** and then we discover **the common understanding -** we become CONVICTED, TOGETHER, of our FAITH, and of INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.
	+ Please see - This conviction is learned not in books and isolated study, but only in Cohesion. Just follow the argument from v11 to 16: the Depths of our Faith and the Intimacy known of Christ, comes in conviction **as a Body Together**. (see 11-16, *from whom the whole body* *being glued together and being convicted together makes the Body grow...*
	+ You know yourself - those times when you've joined together with believers in study, prayer, ... how the depths of our faith and the reality of Christ expands beyond our expectation - a blessed conviction that settles over you, and gliues you to one another, and makes you long for more... How the winds and waves come to clearer perspective, and Truth and Love strengthen you.
	+ Don't you miss that? ... Or... Will you SHARE that?
* **#3 -** How and When? = By every joint, each member working properly
	+ Jesus didn't only give Himself and every blessing in the Heavenly Realms (1:3). He gave Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor-teachers for the Equipping of the saints for the Work of Building Up the Body in Love
	+ The teachers and the scriptures alone, will not result in the Fullness of Christ - but only in the **CONTRIBUTION** of each part.

# Conclusion

* We HAVE TO become ***'cohesed'***, become ***'convicted***, become ***'contributors'*** - on all levels. We need it among small groups, and among all the members. [ILLUS: A.W. said, "Give me something to do" - I said, "Arrange a gathering for the whole church!". "For what purpose?" "Friendship!" - We begin with Cohesion.
* We're going to add more midweek courses, where cohesion **and conviction** can grow - We need **gravity in them by enough attendees** - please, for the sake of the whole body, and especially to make it easier for those who aren't yet connecting, let's do this.
* We're trying to create concerted prayer gatherings, for the sake of His will - See it for what it is:
* ***#GrowingTogether.***