

Victory of the Lamb – United in Jesus We Trust

Ephesians 4:1-16 Unity in Diversity – Pastor Bill Limmer

Infants are a blessing. An infant will put anything in her mouth, whether it is good or bad, food or not. If she found a ball without supervision it would find its way to her mouth. Infants don't always use the gift of their senses as it is supposed to be used for. Infants have short attention spans. Their feelings change rapidly. That is why in the span of 1 second infants can go from laughing to crying. Infants want what they want when they want it. Infants are a blessing, but we expect that infants will not stay infants but grow into mature adults.

Today we are continuing our series on the study of the small NT book Ephesians. The theme for our series is *United: In Jesus We Trust*. And as we open up God's Word we are going to see: **What is the difference between spiritual immaturity and spiritual maturity?**

Ephesians 4: ¹¹ **So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,** ¹² **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** ¹³ **until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** We all have different gifts and abilities given to us by God. Depending on how you count them there are 20 different spiritual gifts. According to strength finders there are 34 different strengths. And according to the Enneagram there are 9 different personality types. And definitely under strength finders and personality types there are subsets. All these are amazing blessings. Only a creative and imaginative God, would give us all this diversity and yet UNITE us as ONE.

The problem arises when there is spiritual immaturity.

Do you know anyone who is spiritually immature? The Apostle Paul says Ephesians 4:14, **Then we will no longer be infants.** Did you catch that? Paul says, "we." The 13-letter writer of the Bible, the at least three time all world missionary says, I'm spiritually immature. I am a spiritual infant. And if the Apostle Paul is spiritually immature it is safe to say inside the heart of every believer, regardless of age or education or position whether we are a small child, a person with 150+ IQ, or a pastor, we are spiritually immature. Let's see if I am right.

The spiritually immature says they are going to change but don't. Know who anyone who says to themselves, "I'm not going to do that anymore but does." Paul did. He said, **"The good I want to do, I don't do, the evil I don't want to do this I keep on doing."** The spiritually immature person thinks that life is all about them. They wake with an agenda. The spiritual immature complain or offended by a difference of opinion. The spiritual immature wants to be served instead to serve. Or sometimes spiritual immaturity reveals itself by this attitude: if it is going to be done right, I have to do it. Immaturity reveals itself by thinking too much of ourselves or too little of ourselves, by thinking too much of other people or too little of other people. Know anyone who is spiritually immature? Spiritual immature people compete for love and approval. Know anyone who competes for love or approval? Competing for love or approval often reveals itself in jealousy. A lot of times you can't see on the outside whether a person is jealous or not are jealous or not but if you are jealous you know it because of the heart burn it causes. Another way competing for love and approval looks like is through

insecurity. Know anyone who is insecure? Here is one-way insecurity reveals itself: She is a really good singer BUT. He is a good leader BUT.

What is the difference between a spiritual immature person and a spiritual mature person?

Spiritual immaturity is marked 1) by prideful and selfishness and 2) by competing for love and approval.

So what does spiritual maturity look like? Just as there is a big difference between the typical infant and the typical 30 year-old. There is a big difference between the spiritually immature and the spiritually mature. We all can make progress forward. Tim Keller says, “Being a Christian is like riding a bicycle. You gotta move forward or you are going fall off.”

Paul says spiritual maturity looks like this: ² **Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.** ³ **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. . . .** 13 says, **until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** ¹⁴ **Then we will no longer be infants, . . . Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.** ¹⁶ **From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work**

The words become mature literally is “one mature being.” Infants is a plural word. The word maturity is singular – one. Just as God is three persons yet one God, with no conflict but absolute unity. Just as there is one body with five senses all working together in unity. All Christians with all our gifts, talents, strengths, personality are to form the one body of Christ.

Spiritual mature people live with the perfect balance of truth and love. We need each other to speak truth in love. For example: way back in the day when we would record the service on cassette tapes (do you even know what that is. The recorder would be underneath my seat. And I would hit the play and record button because for some reason record wasn’t enough. The service would get taped and then Jacky would make copies of it and the tapes would be delivered to those members who couldn’t be in church because we didn’t have the cool internet that we have today. But here is the point: As Jacky is listening to the service she says to me, “Dear, you can preach, and I don’t mean to be mean, but you can’t sing.” Truth and love.

Truth and love in perfect balance. Not truth alone. Some of us lean too far to the truth side and are so blunt. And when we lean too far to the truth side what it shows is that we want to win the argument, show off that we are right, smarter, feel superior, etc. in other words it is all about us – pride and selfishness.

And not love alone. Others of us lean too far to the love side. We are so nice. We hide behind not wanting to hurt anyone’s feelings. But here is what is really going on for those of us who lean too far to the love side: we are afraid if we tell the truth to someone they will be mad at us, and then we will be crushed and feel guilty. Did you see it is all about me – pride and selfishness. Pride and Selfishness are engraved on the Championship Trophy of the spiritually immature because it is all about me getting love and approval.

Anybody else besides me holding up the trophy of the spiritually immature?

So how do we become spiritual mature? Here is our own personal rescue story. It is a two parter: Truth and love. **Part 1 The Truth.** The truth is Jesus died on the cross because of the truth. The truth is we aren't that good. The truth is we aren't good at all. The truth is we are spiritual pathetic and helpless. The truth is Jesus didn't come to make bad people good people. The truth is we were spiritually dead in sin. The truth is Jesus came to make dead people alive. The truth is we were so far gone that the only thing that could save us was the death of God's own perfect son. Let that sink in for a minute.

Part 2 The Love. The love is that Jesus died on the cross because of his love for you. When Jesus went to the cross he was saying I so love you, you are so valuable to me, that I am willing give up not somethings for you but everything for you, so not just heaven but my life. I love you so much I died for you. To the degree that we get the magnitude of the truth our lostness is the degree to which we will see that amazing love that God has for us and is to the degree to which we will be spiritually mature.

What does spiritual maturity looks like? **Spiritually maturity is living from the truth 1) we are already love and approved by God and 2) we look to complete each other instead of competing against each other.**

How does spiritual maturity make a difference today? Living from love and approval we can be united in Jesus. Ephesians 4:15 **speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.** ¹⁶ **From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work** . A divided nation needs to see the church united in Christ. This unity that reveals itself in speaking the truth in love leads to confession. Confessing I was wrong, I said too much, I went too far. Confession bridges the gap between placing blame and accepting responsibility. It owns my part. Confession begins the healing process because we and all people would see Jesus. Spiritual mature people confess. What our divided nation needs now is a church that is united in Christ. In Christ, with all of our different backgrounds and gifts we are united around Jesus and his mission in person and on social media. And when the world sees that unity they might just come running.

So for you and me: Instead of looking at what is wrong in our church or our community look at how you can use the gifts God has given you to complete your church and community. Here are two really practical examples: For those of us who have food how can we complete those who don't. MobilizeMKE is coming up where we will support the Muskego food bank. For those of us who don't have a care of what we are going to get our children for Christmas because we will go to Amazon without thinking about it because we have the means, how can you give a gift to someone who won't have one. One way is our Friends of Jesus Toy Drive. Both of these opportunities are coming up at the end of the month. However you do it, let do this. Let's complete instead of compete. We are United: In Jesus We Trust. This is Jesus prayer and mine too: John 17 **Sanctify them by^g the truth; your word is truth.** ¹⁸ **As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.** ¹⁹ **For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.** ²⁰ **“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,** ²¹ **that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** ²² **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—** ²³ **I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**