

Ephesians 4:12-21

Ephesians 4:12-21 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (14) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (15) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ; (16) 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. (17) This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, (18) having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; (19) who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (20) But you have not so learned Christ, (21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Questions On The Text

What is the purpose of the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts?

Verse 12: The five ministry gifts were given by Christ to the church for its edification (building up) and to equip the saints for the work of ministry. This tells us that ministry (literally, service) is not the domain of a chosen few like apostles and prophets, etc.

Rather, all believers are called to ministry and the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts are given to equip all believers for ministry. Interestingly, this job description applies to the evangelist too, implying that they should not only be preaching the gospel, but training all believers to win the lost.

How long will the Ascension Ministry Gifts be necessary?

Verse 13: We will need the ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers till the day that all Christians are united in the faith and in our knowledge of Christ, till the church is like a perfect man, and till we exhibit the fullness of Christ.

What further purpose do the Ascension Ministry Gifts serve?

Verse 14: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers also exist to help the members of the church grow up and to protect them from deception. “Tossed to and fro” literally means to be “tossed by waves” and conjures up a picture of the immature Christian being thrown around by every fad doctrine (literally, teaching).

The word translated “trickery” means “the throw of the dice,” a pastime which, in the ancient world, was associated with trickery. The word for “plotting” is only used in one other place in the New Testament in association with the devil, and is translated there as “wiles”. See Ephesians 6:11.

How is the church to grow up?

Verse 15: For real spiritual growth to occur in the church, believers must be prepared to speak the truth. But truth by itself is insufficient. The motive behind the speaking of truth must be love. This is the sure path to spiritual maturity.

What is the source of Christian growth?

Verses 15-16: Ultimately, Christ as the head of the body – the church – is the source of growth. However, other factors are involved in the process too. First, every member supplies something necessary to the body and does its share of what needs to be done. This is done through serving one another. In addition, the body is edified (built up) through love, the supreme Christian ideal. See 1 Corinthians 13:13.

How does Paul describe Gentile unbelievers?

Verses 17-19: First, their minds are futile, a word indicating the pointlessness and emptiness of a Christless intellect. Second, their understanding is darkened (see Romans 1:21). Obviously, and understanding that doesn't include the God who created and sustains all things is missing a major part of the jigsaw of life.

Third, although God is the source of all life, Gentiles are alienated (separated) from the abundant life (see John 10:10) that He wants to supply. This is because of their ignorance (lack of knowledge) of God, a condition resulting from sin (see Romans 1:28), as well as spiritual blindness (see again Romans 1:21).

Fourth, they are past feeling, which in Greek is “having ceased to feel pain,” indicating that they have become morally insensitive and that their conscience no longer functions (see 1 Timothy 4:2). Fifth, they have given themselves over to lewdness, a word that includes the idea of excessive living and casting off restraint. As well, they have given themselves over to uncleanness (impurity) and greediness.

What is the focus of the Ephesians' learning?

Verses 20-21: The learning of the Ephesians is not so much based on information or a set of facts, but on a person – Christ. Although knowledge is important in the Christian faith, ultimately, all things focus on the person of Christ.

Paul further develops the concept of the centrality of Christ by referring to their having heard Christ (not just the facts of the gospel) and having been taught in (a better translation than “by”) Christ. “If indeed” sounds in English as if Paul might be doubtful of their Christian experience, whereas in Greek the phrase expresses greater confidence.

Further Questions For Discussion:

What is your ministry?

Do evangelists visit your church for the purpose of training believers to win the lost?

In your opinion, what does the church still need in order to exhibit the fullness of Christ?

How can believers avoid being tossed around by the latest fad doctrines?

If the body grows because each member supplies something unique for its edification, what happens if you withhold your special contribution?

What happens when a person's conscience no longer functions as it should?

How can you make Christ the centre of your learning?