

## How To Grow Into A Christ-like Believer (Part 1) Ephesians 4:11-24

### Introduction:

1. As a parent, have you ever looked at your little baby or toddler and said, “She is so cute! I wish she could just stay that way and not have to grow up.”
  - Imagine if your wish was granted, and a year or two went by, and your little child didn’t change at all. What would you do? You would freak out!
2. Did you know that when you trust Christ as your Savior and you become part of God’s family, the Bible likens you to a baby or child in Christ? Let me show you: Ephesians 4:14
  - “*children*” literally means “immature Christian; an infant; a minor.”
  - “*tossed to and fro*” – to fluctuate
  - “*carried about*” – to transport hither and thither
  - “*wind of doctrine*” – instruction (you listen to anybody and take it hook, line, and sinker)
  - “*sleight*” – fraud; cunning craftiness; trickery
  - “*deceive*” – to mislead the mind; to cause to believe what is false or disbelieve what is true
  - The picture here is of someone immature, unstable, ungrounded, and easily deceived.
3. All of us start out our Christian lives in this state – as vulnerable children. But God wants us to leave this state of immaturity, “*That we henceforth be no more children.*”
  - We cannot be content to remain children – babes in Christ. This is where verse 13 comes in.
4. Verse 13 is the goal for every believer.
  - “*perfect*” – complete; stature; maturity (in years of size)
  - Notice the phrase, “*fullness of Christ.*” “*Fulness*” means “the state of being filled so as to leave no part vacant.”
  - The picture here is of someone that is full of Jesus! He is running over in every area of his life.
  - According to this verse, God’s goal for you is that you become a fully mature Christian that is Christ-like in all areas of your life.
5. When we talk about spiritual stature or maturity, it has nothing to do with what position you hold in church, how spiritually you talk, how much money you make, etc. The standard is the fullness of Christ! Is Jesus overflowing in every area of your life?
  - How tall are you spiritually? The answer is how much you are like Jesus!
6. So verse 14 shows us where we start, and verse 13 shows us where we want to go. But how do we get there? Verse 15 reveals the secret. We have to “*grow.*”
  - “*grow*” – to advance; improve; to make progress
  - You may not be what you want to be, but are you making progress?
7. Notice it says, “*grow up into him* [Christ].” We become more like Jesus. We say to our kids, “I want you to grow up into a fine young man.” God says to His children, “I want you to grow up into Christ in all things.”

- As we grow, Christ permeates every area of our lives (all things). There should be a growth of Christ's character, a growth into His likeness.
8. But growth is not instantaneous. It's progressive. It's a process. Every believer should be growing and changing. But how?
  9. In order to grow, we must overcome the barriers to growth. The Bible lists several barriers that are detriments to growth. They will hinder you from growing.

### **First, the wrong kind of people - vs. 14**

1. Are you endeavoring to make progress and grow into Christ-likeness? There will be people who will be a drag and drain on you.
2. They aren't interested in growing and changing, and they don't want you changing either.
3. We need to be a testimony to those who may be struggling in their Christian lives or haven't been saved. But, if a person is ill-affecting your walk with Christ, and he tends to have the same effect on you as verse 14, you have to distance yourself from that relationship. Galatians 5:7, 12

### **Second, your past life – vs. 17-19, 22**

1. “Henceforth” (vs. 17) gives the idea that this is the way you used to act and live, but now (henceforth), it needs to be different.
2. Notice, the problem here is a completely wrong way of thinking. The entire mind-set is ungodly.
  - “vanity of their mind,” “understanding darkened,” “ignorance that is in them,” “blindness of their heart [thoughts, mind]”
3. When you came to Christ and were saved, all past sins were forgiven and washed away. Amen! What a glorious event! **But**, there is no delete button pushed in your mind. Those memories are still there. Those bad habits are still there.
4. Mental strongholds and ungodly habits established B.C. (before Christ) can be a problem, and can hinder us in our growth process. We must be aware of this.

### **Third, Satanic deception – vs. 14, 27**

1. Satan is a liar (John 8:44), and he blinds people with lies. 2 Corinthians 4:4
2. Satan will have a smorgasbord of lies for you, and every one of his lies are designed to keep you right where you are – to keep you from growing and becoming all you can be for God.
  - For some of you, he may be feeding you lies to keep you from getting saved (you're too bad, you're too good, God couldn't love you or forgive you, etc.).
  - For some of you, he may be feeding you lies to keep you from growing and really being used of God.
3. Don't believe him. God does love you, He does want to save you, He does want a relationship with you, He does want you to grow, He will help you to change, and He does want to use you on this earth.

4. Next week, we are going to discover from God's Word the two keys to growth in Christ. How do I overcome these barriers to growth, and how does growth happen?