

## LESSON 13

# Equipped to Serve, Mature in Christ

Ephesians 4:11-16

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*“Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.”*

(James 1:2-4)

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**Class Overview:** In this final lesson, we explore the purpose of spiritual maturity. Scripture clearly shows that growth in Christ is never an end in itself. God develops His people so they can serve others, strengthen the church, and reflect Christ together. Mainly drawing from Ephesians 4:11-16 and supported by Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4, this lesson emphasizes that every mature Christian has a role in the life of the church. Spiritual maturity naturally leads to service, contribution, and shared responsibility within the body of Christ.

**Class Objectives:**

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Explain how Scripture distinguishes trials from punishment or abandonment.
  2. Understand how God uses trials to produce spiritual maturity.
  3. Recognize the connection between hardship and the fruit of the Spirit.
  4. Identify unhealthy responses to trials that hinder spiritual progress.
  5. Respond to trials with trust in God’s formative purpose.
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## Introduction:

SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NEVER MEANT TO STOP WITH PERSONAL FORMATION. While God cares deeply about transforming individual hearts, His purpose goes beyond the individual. Mature faith is meant to bless others. But this is not just a private achievement. We are not being matured simply to become wiser, stronger, or more spiritually confident. God matures His people so they can contribute meaningfully to the church and participate in His work in the world. Knowing Christ leads to growth, which produces maturity. And maturity results in service. As we grow in Christlike character and discernment, we are equipped to strengthen others and build up the body.

The danger is a maturity that turns inward. Knowledge without service becomes pride. Growth without contribution leads to stagnation. God’s design is for mature Christians to pour into others, creating a healthy, growing body where each member matters. This lesson urges us to consider not only how we have grown but also how it is being used. Spiritual maturity is fulfilled not in self-focus but in service.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians offers a clear view of God's plan for maturity and service in the church. As we revisit Ephesians 4, we see how development, unity, and service are interconnected, and how maturity is gauged by the strength of the entire body.

## **God Matures Us to Strengthen the Body (Ephesians 4:11-13)**

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Christ gives leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, not to do all the work of ministry themselves, but to equip the saints to serve. The goal of this equipping is not activity for activity's sake, but maturity within the body of Christ. How does this passage reshape how we think about growth? God does not mature us merely so that we can feel spiritually accomplished or knowledgeable. He matures us so we can contribute meaningfully to the life and health of the church. Maturity is measured not by independence from others, but by usefulness to others.

Our ministry belongs to the entire body. Leaders equip, but everyone shares in the work of ministry. As we grow, we transition from mainly being recipients to becoming contributors. Spiritual maturity naturally fosters responsibility, encouraging us to use what God has placed in us to strengthen others. The result of our shared ministry is unity and stability. As we serve in accordance with our gifts, the body moves toward unity in faith and a deeper knowledge of Christ. This isn't about uniformity, but harmony—many members working together toward a common purpose. Spiritual maturity, then, is not an endpoint; it's a process. God matures His people so the body can be built up, made stronger, and equipped to reflect Christ together. When we grow and serve faithfully, the church becomes what Christ intends it to be: a living, unified body that displays His fullness to the world.

## **Every Mature Christian Has a Role to Play (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11)**

As we grow in Christ, one thing becomes clearer: we're not just saved *into* a relationship with Jesus — we're part of a body. Romans 12 illustrates this well: one body, many members, different functions. That diversity isn't a flaw — it's how God built it. Unity doesn't mean everyone does the same thing; it means everyone contributes in a coordinated way. Different strengths, different roles, one Lord. Paul isn't focused on which part gets more attention. He doesn't rank gifts or emphasize visibility. Instead, he stresses faithfulness. Use what God gave you—that's all. Mature Christians understand that no role is small if it strengthens the body, and no gift is accidental. If God entrusted it, it's important.

Now, let's consider 1 Peter 4:10–11. Our gifts are *entrusted to us as stewards*. That word matters. What you have isn't a trophy—it's a trust. It's not a platform to promote yourself. It's a tool to serve others and demonstrate God's grace in all its forms. Every act of service reveals a bit of His grace at work. And maturity influences how we serve. It cultivates steadiness, dependability, and a willingness to do unseen work without resentment. Mature Christians don't need applause to keep going. They know that strengthening others and honoring Christ is enough.

When each member embraces their role—whatever it may be—the body becomes stronger. Healthier. More resilient. Service no longer feels uneven or draining for some. It turns into a shared effort. Even

joyful. An expression of gratitude. God matures His people so every member can make a meaningful contribution. Not all in the same way. But all are vital.

## **Maturity Protects and Builds Up the Church (Ephesians 4:14-16)**

Why does maturity matter so much for the health of the church? Immaturity, he says, leaves us vulnerable—*tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching*. Spiritual immaturity doesn't just affect individuals; it destabilizes the whole body. Without maturity, the church becomes reactive, divided, and easily misled. On the other hand, maturity brings stability. Mature Christians are rooted in truth and able to recognize error. They aren't driven by novelty, pressure, or personalities, but by a growing understanding of Christ. This stability protects the church from confusion and division. Paul also highlights how maturity builds up the body. Mature believers *speak the truth in love*, balancing conviction and compassion. Truth without love can wound; love without truth can drift. Maturity keeps both in harmony. It allows us to handle challenges, disagreements, and corrections in ways that strengthen rather than divide.

The goal of this is clearly stated: the body of Christ grows *into its head*, who is Christ. Maturity centers on Christ, not on oneself. As each part fulfills its role, the entire body develops in love. No single member bears the entire burden alone. This is a shared, coordinated, and relational process. Spiritual maturity isn't about individual achievement; it's about the health of the whole community. God matures us so that the local congregation becomes a stable, loving, truth-filled community that reflects Christ to the world.

### **For Application**

God doesn't develop His people just so they can feel spiritually accomplished. He develops us to strengthen our bodies, stabilize the church, and deepen love. If all our it all remains private—just me, my Bible, and my insights—something's missing. Progress and development that never helps others isn't complete. At some point, we need to ask, *what is my maturity producing?* More knowledge? Good. More discernment? Necessary. Stronger character? Absolutely. But these aren't trophies to show off; they're tools to use. When mature members serve others, the whole church benefits. Stability increases. Resilience grows. The body becomes more capable.

And maturity always involves responsibility. There's a shift that happens over time. Early on, we receive. We're taught. We're helped. We're carried. But as we grow, we're called to become contributors. Not out of pressure. Not out of guilt. But out of gratitude. Out of calling. Every believer has received grace. And grace isn't given just to sit on.

Use what God has shaped in you: patience gained through hardship, insight from study, and steadiness developed through trials. Seek opportunities to serve, quietly encourage someone, teach when possible, support those struggling, and speak truth with love. Promote unity and strengthen the church body. God's design is simple and beautiful: mature Christians serve as stabilizing forces in the church. Not loud. Not flashy. Just consistent. When each part fulfills its role, the whole body grows. And as the body grows, Christ is honored. That's where maturity finds its true fulfillment. Not in personal achievement.

Not in spiritual résumé lines. But in shared life. Shared labor. Shared joy under Christ, the head of the church.

## Memory Verse and Weekly Challenge

### Memory Verse:

*“From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.” — Ephesians 4:16 (CSB)*

### Weekly Challenge:

This week, identify one specific way you can use your spiritual development to serve someone else in the body of Christ. This may involve encouraging a discouraged brother or sister, assisting in various things around the church, offering practical help, or using a gift that often goes unused. Pray for awareness of where you can contribute and take one deliberate step of service. At the end of the week, reflect on how serving others helped you see maturity not as personal achievement, but as a means of strengthening the body.

## For Reflection

1. Why does Scripture present spiritual maturity as something that benefits the whole body rather than just the individual Christian?

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2. How does Ephesians 4 challenge the idea that ministry belongs only to church leaders or a few gifted individuals?

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3. What are some ways maturity can be expressed through service even when a role feels small or unseen?

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4. How does speaking the truth in love help protect and strengthen the church?

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5. What is one practical step you can take to use your growth to build up others in the body of Christ this week?

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