



Date: 09-06-2026

Steady, Loving, Serving

Text: Ephesians 4:14-16 NLT

Question:

Am I simply getting older in my faith, or am I actually growing up?

1. Christian maturity keeps us _____ in the truth.

Ephesians 4:14 NLT

14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

Notes:

Ephesians 2:20 NLT

20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

2. Truth without love is _____; love without truth is _____.

Ephesians 4:15 NLT

15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

Notes:

James 3:17 NLT

17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.

3. Mature faith is _____-focused faith.

Ephesians 4:16 NLT

16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Notes:

1 Peter 4:10 NLT

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Closing

Paul's picture of maturity is actually pretty simple.

- Mature Christians are steady.
- Mature Christians are loving and truthful.
- Mature Christians serve others.

Three things you can actually do this week.

1. Anchor yourself in truth.

2. Tell someone the truth—with love.

Before you speak, ask two questions:

- Is it true?
- And am I saying it because I genuinely love this person?

3. Do your part.

- Who can you encourage?
- Who can you pray for?
- Who can you teach?
- Who can you serve?
- Who could be stronger in their faith because you used what God has given you?

You don't have to preach a sermon. You don't need a title. You don't need to be on staff.

You simply need to recognize that God has placed you in His body for a reason.

This week: intentionally serve one person and help them take one step closer to Jesus.

Expanded Notes: The Apostles and Prophets as the Church's Foundation

Key Passages: Ephesians 2:19–22; 3:4–5; 4:11–13

One of the important questions raised by Ephesians 4 is this:

What does Paul mean when he says that Christ gave apostles and prophets to the church?

To answer that question, we need to look at several places in Ephesians together. Paul uses the words *apostles* and *prophets* more than once, and those passages help us understand the role they played in the establishment and growth of the early church.

1. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church.

Read Ephesians 2:19–22.

Paul describes believers as members of God's household and compares the church to a building.

He says the church has been:

- built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
- with Jesus Christ Himself as the cornerstone,
- and is being built together into a dwelling place for God.

The most important person in this picture is Jesus Christ.

In ancient construction, the cornerstone helped establish the alignment and direction of the building. Everything else was built in relationship to it. In the same way, the church exists because of Christ. He is not simply one important part of the church. He is the One upon whom the entire church depends. Without Christ there is no church.

- Our salvation comes through Christ.
- Our unity comes through Christ.

- Our identity comes through Christ.
- Our growth comes through Christ.
- Our mission comes from Christ.

This is why Paul later calls Christ “the head” of the body in Ephesians 4:15.

The church belongs to Jesus.

2. The apostles and prophets were part of the foundation.

Paul says that God's household is:

“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”

— Ephesians 2:20

A foundation is different from the rest of a building. You lay the foundation at the beginning. Once the foundation has been established, you continue building upon it. That helps us understand the special role of the apostles and prophets in the earliest days of the church.

The Apostles

The word *apostle* means someone who is sent or commissioned as a representative. Jesus appointed a unique group of apostles who were eyewitnesses of His ministry, resurrection, and teaching. They were given authority to testify about Christ and establish the teaching of the early church.

For example:

Acts 2:42

The earliest Christians continually devoted themselves to “the apostles’ teaching.”

The apostles were not inventing a new religion. They were faithfully communicating what Jesus had taught them and explaining the meaning of

His life, death, resurrection, and kingdom. Their teaching became foundational for the church.

3. Apostles and prophets revealed the mystery of the gospel.

Paul gives us another important clue in Ephesians 3:4–5.

He explains that the mystery of Christ had now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The word mystery does not mean something strange or impossible to understand. In Paul's writings, a mystery is something that had previously been hidden but had now been revealed by God.

In Ephesians 3, that mystery includes the remarkable truth that through Jesus Christ, Jews and Gentiles are being brought together into one people of God. This was part of the gospel message entrusted to the apostles and prophets.

Notice the connection:

God revealed truth → apostles and prophets communicated that truth → the church was built upon that revealed truth.

That helps explain why Paul calls them the foundation. Their importance was not primarily in their personalities. Their importance was in the revelation about Christ that God entrusted to them.

4. The church continues to build upon that foundation.

By the time we reach Ephesians 4:11–13, Paul says Christ gave:

- apostles,
- prophets,

- evangelists,
- pastors and teachers.

Why?

So that God's people would be equipped for ministry and the body of Christ would be built up. There is an important progression here. Christ gives gifted people. Those gifted people equip God's people. God's people do the work of ministry. And as God's people serve one another the entire body grows toward maturity in Christ. The apostles and prophets were foundational in establishing and communicating the truth of the gospel. Evangelists carry that gospel outward. Pastors and teachers continue teaching, shepherding, and equipping God's people from the truth God has revealed. The church therefore does not need to invent a new foundation for every generation. We continue building upon the foundation already given to us. That foundation has been preserved for us in the Scriptures.

5. Are apostles and prophets still active today?

Christians who believe the Bible disagree about exactly how the gifts of apostleship and prophecy function today. It is helpful to understand the two primary positions.

View One: Apostles and prophets were foundational offices.

Many Christians believe Ephesians 2:20 strongly indicates that apostles and prophets had a unique foundational role that belonged particularly to the beginning of the church. Their reasoning is straightforward: A foundation is laid once.

The apostles were uniquely commissioned witnesses of the risen Christ and were entrusted with authoritative teaching that became foundational to the church.

Under this view, evangelists, pastors, and teachers continue serving the church, but the foundational offices of apostle and prophet were unique to the apostolic era.

Those holding this position may still believe God guides, directs, convicts, and empowers His people through the Holy Spirit, but they would distinguish those experiences from the authoritative revelation given through the biblical apostles and prophets.

View Two: Apostolic and prophetic gifts continue in some form.

Other Christians agree that the original apostles had a unique and unrepeatable role while still believing that forms of apostolic or prophetic ministry continue today. They often point to Ephesians 4:11–13 and argue that Christ's gifts are given until the church reaches full maturity. Under this view, modern apostles would not possess the same authority as the Twelve or Paul. Instead, *apostolic* ministry might refer to missionary church planting, pioneering ministry, or being sent into new areas with the gospel. Similarly, prophetic ministry would not create new Scripture or carry the authority of Scripture. It would always need to be tested by God's written Word.

6. What should Christians agree on?

Even where Christians disagree about whether apostles and prophets continue today, several truths should unite us. Scripture is our final authority. No pastor, teacher, prophet, apostle, author, conference speaker, or Christian personality has authority equal to God's Word. Everything must be tested by Scripture. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because they examined the Scriptures to determine whether what they were hearing was true. Jesus is still the cornerstone. Christianity is not built around charismatic leaders. It is built around Jesus Christ. The moment a ministry becomes centered around the personality, authority, revelations, or reputation of a human leader, something has gone wrong. The purpose of

leadership is to equip the church. Ephesians 4 does not picture church leaders doing all the ministry while everyone else watches.

The leaders equip.

The saints minister.

Every believer has a role.

7. Why does this matter for Ephesians 4:14?

Paul's goal is not simply to give us a list of church positions. His concern is Christian maturity. Christ has provided what His church needs so that believers will no longer remain spiritual children. We have been given the truth about Christ. We have the Scriptures. We have evangelists who proclaim the gospel. We have pastors and teachers who help us understand and apply God's Word. And we have one another.

The result should be Christians who are increasingly difficult to deceive.

We should not be:

- tossed around by every new teaching,
- impressed by every charismatic personality,
- convinced by every Christian social-media clip,
- manipulated by people claiming special spiritual authority,
- or constantly changing what we believe.

Instead, we become increasingly grounded in the truth that God has already revealed.

Questions for Further Study

1. What does it mean that Jesus is the cornerstone of the church?

Read Ephesians 2:19–22 and compare it with 1 Peter 2:4–8.

2. Why does Paul describe apostles and prophets as a “foundation”?

Consider whether a foundation is something continually rebuilt or something established so that the rest of the building can grow upon it.

3. What was the relationship between revelation and the apostles and prophets?

Read Ephesians 3:4–5.

4. What is the responsibility of pastors and teachers today?

Read Ephesians 4:11–13 and 2 Timothy 4:1–5.

5. How should we evaluate someone who claims to speak for God?

Read Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1, and 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21.

6. Am I becoming more grounded in Scripture?

When I hear a new teaching, do I ask:

“Who said it?”

or

“Does God's Word actually teach it?”