

Next Steps

Grow

Ephesians 4:11-16

September 20, 2026 am

HDBC

Last week I introduced you to three new words to describe the discipleship journey that we hope every member of HDBC will embrace and travel.

Gather . . . Grow . . . Go

Gather with believers. Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights.

Worship, Bible Study, Fellowship, Prayer, Giving.

Grow as disciples – Being intentional about our own spiritual growth.

Taking responsibility for your growth and giving it focus.

Go as disciple-makers – Intentional efforts to lead others to faith in Christ and to grow in their walk with Christ. (More next week)

These are three key steps in the spiritual development of every believer.

We believe every Christian and particularly every member of HDBC should be intentional about taking these three steps. And by the way, when you move from one step to the next you don't stop doing the first step. The goal is to be doing all three at all times.

I was so encouraged by the response last week to our emphasis on gathering. Well done. Now, let's follow through on a consistent basis.

This morning we want to focus on the **second step in our discipleship journey**. The word we are using for this step is **GROW**.

Gathering alone will not lead to the kind of spiritual maturity that Jesus wants you to experience. A lot of people gather in a lot of groups. The gathering has to have purpose and each of us must take personal responsibility for our spiritual growth. What's involved in **Grow**?

Intentional effort to deepen your knowledge of God.
Intentional effort to strengthen your faith in Jesus.
Intentional effort to understand your role in the church.
Intentional effort to serve through the church on a regular basis.
Intentional effort to consistently support the church through your offerings.

Look at the NEXT STEPS. First and last are practical steps.

Learn what your spiritual gifts are. We can help.

Join a GROW group. (Oct – May)

I'm doing a detailed series on spiritual gifts following this series.

You can sign up for a GROW group right now.

Grow groups are small gender specific groups that will meet weekly from October through May. These groups will provide deeper Bible study, enable strong connections, facilitate serious prayer support, and provide levels of encouragement, accountability and support. As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another. **Grow groups** are designed to sharpen.

It is the responsibility of every believer to **grow**. We are not meant to be stagnant or dormant in our spiritual lives. Life by its very nature implies and anticipates growth. But this growth does not happen through giant instant changes. **A child doesn't wake up taller overnight. Physical growth occurs in subtle, millimeter increments through daily nutrition, sleep, and time.**

Human body is in a constant state of growth. Old cells die; new ones form.
Mind is in a constant state of growth. Knowledge is added each day.
Soul is in a constant state of growth. Will, emotions, decisions change.
God has called us to grow in our spiritual development as well.

Let's consider what the Bible says about our need to **grow**.

Heb. 6:1 *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity.*

2 Pet. 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

1 Pet. 2:2 *Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.*

Eph. 4:15 *But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.*

God has designed the church to be a catalyst for the spiritual growth of its members. The individuals bear the greatest responsibility but the church has been designed to facility your spiritual growth. **Ephesians 4:11-16** demonstrates this truth. Here we see four things.

1. The gifts of leadership to the church (11)

God has given to the church the leadership gifts needed to cause the church to thrive. God gives spiritual gifts to individuals. Then God gives those gifted individuals to the church. That's the point of this passage.

Those gifted leaders include the following:

1) Apostles

The basic meaning is **one sent on a mission**. It was used in a very restrictive sense of the original twelve, but was also used in a more general sense of other men like Paul, Barnabas, Silas and Timothy. Even Jesus was referred as an apostle. These were men who not only served in and through the local churches, but also were gifted to go out and plant new churches.

2) Prophets

Divinely gifted and appointed to the church to bring the word of God to the people and provide leadership to the young churches. Primary responsibilities included teaching and preaching God's Word.

3) Evangelists

Simple refers to those who declare the good news. The work of the

evangelist is to preach, proclaim and explain the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to those who have not believed. Philip was a great example of one exercising this gift. He was led by God to people who needed to be saved and he was then the instrument through which they heard the gospel.

4) Pastors/Teachers

These two words describe one office or one person doing both.

Pastors is a translation of a word that means **shepherd**. It emphasizes care, protection, leadership of God for the people under his care, much like a shepherd caring for his sheep.

Teachers speaks of the primary function of the pastor. It is impossible to be an effective pastor without being an effective teacher. These two should be seen together as one office.

God equipped and called men to serve in these four ways to lead the church. These were gifts to the church.

2. The pattern for growth in the church. (12)

God is a God of order and structure. He has organized the church in just the right way for it to be healthy and grow. I get that some people thrive on spontaneity, but organization is not a bad thing.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over? asks Linus.

These five fingers said Lucy. Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.

Which channel do you want? asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, Why can't you guys get organized like that?

God has provided a simple but effective pattern for the growth of the

church and of its members. **Simply put . . .**

- 1) The leaders equip.
- 2) The members serve.
- 3) The church is built up.

3. The markers of growth among members. (13-15)

There are some things that are found in healthy, growing churches that honor God. These verses include a couple of long, complex sentences, which are typical in Paul's letters. But we can see some key markers. Here are some:

1) Unity (13)

When a church is growing in Christ they are much more likely to experience a true Biblical unity. When churches stagnate and stop growing the door is opened for the enemy to come in and plant seeds of division and disunity.

2) Knowledge of Christ (13)

We will never run out of things to learn about Jesus. Our knowledge will never be completed. There will never be a time when we can close the Bible and declare, *well, I now know everything there is to know about Jesus*. We are on a forever quest to know Jesus more. This should not be hard to fathom. It's what good husbands and wives in their marriage. Learning, growing, loving more deeply.

3) Spiritual maturity (13)

To a mature man. The word refers to a full-grown man; one who has reached adulthood. In other words, gotten to the place intended even when he was a young child. Growth has not been stunted.

This is further defined in the last phrase, *to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*. In other words, maturity as a disciple means we become like Jesus. He is our measuring stick.

4) Sound doctrine (14)

I love the graphic picture that Paul paints of a small boat on a sea in a storm, carried wherever the winds and waves take it. This is what spiritual immaturity looks like. What Paul has in mind here is **doctrinal stability**. Having a firm handle on the truth and the convictions to live according to that truth.

This is the opposite of what we are to be when

5) Loving testimony (15)

The final marker of spiritual maturity for the individual and for the church is speaking the truth in love. We stand for the truth without compromise, but present it always with love. Harsh, unkind expressions of the truth are neither Christ-like nor helpful. And they are signs of immaturity.

So, do you see those markers in your life?

Are you an agent of unity? Are you unified with other believers?

Do you have a growing knowledge of Jesus?

Are you becoming more like Jesus, demonstrating maturity?

Do you have doctrinal stability?

Do you speak the truth in love?

Do we see these markers in our church?

4. The picture of a healthy church. (16)

This section closes with a picture of a healthy church. Once again this verse is part of a long, complex sentence. But it is easy to see three important things that are found in a healthy church.

- 1) Members working together in unity
- 2) Spiritual and numerical growth
- 3) An atmosphere of love

**This is what we want. This is what will glorify God.
And glorifying God is the ultimate goal.**

We can have great organization, great structures, fine facilities, great staff members and a host of dedicated volunteers, but if we are not glorifying God by growing in His grace, then it is all for naught.

A soldier was wounded in a battle and ordered to the nearest military hospital. Arriving at the entrance, he saw two doors: one marked, *For Minor Wounds*, the other, *For Serious Wounds*.

He entered the first door and walked down a long hallway. At the end of the hall, he saw two more doors. The first read, *For Officers*, the other, *For Enlisted Men*. The soldier went through the second door.

Again, he found himself walking down a long hallway with two doors at the end. One read, *For Party Members*, the other, *For Non-Party Members*. The wounded soldier took the second door and found himself back out on the street.

When he got back to his unit, his buddies asked, *How'd your trip to the hospital go?*

The people didn't really help me, he said, but, man, are they organized!

This is not a healthy church. Organization is important for a church, but if that is all there is, it is not healthy. Organization in the church is like the skeleton in the body. The bones alone will bring no life even if they are connective in just the right way.

For there to be life there must be a heart and a brain and blood . . . and most importantly the human spirit. *For the church to be healthy and vibrant we must have a heart for Jesus and the powerful indwelling activity of the Holy Spirit, bringing life and growth.*

Takeaways: Practical Steps you can take.

- 1) Discover and develop your spiritual gift(s).

- 2) Join a ministry team to use your gifts in the church.
- 3) Volunteer in the nursery, with children or students.
- 4) Volunteer to assist your small group leader.
- 5) Participate in a **Grow Group**.

Illustration: No one accidentally grows a prize-winning garden. If a gardener leaves a plot of land alone, it doesn't automatically default to growing tomatoes, roses, or fruit—it defaults to weeds, thorns, and chaos. Good crops require intentional planting, weeding, watering, and pruning.