

**Kingdom Vision: The Greenhouse**  
Growth Group Discussion  
Ephesians 4:11-16

**Opening Questions** (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Begin with prayer. Take at least 30 seconds to be silent, clearing your minds of distractions and preparing to hear from God's word.
  - Everyone share: Share about one relationship, besides a spouse or parent, that has been formative for you.
  - One premise of this week's sermon (and study) is that we live in environments which are hostile to our growth as disciples. Do you agree or disagree with that premise? Why?
    - Share about one element of your current context that is hostile to your growth as a disciple of Jesus.
  - **Refresher on Ephesians.** The Apostle Paul wrote Ephesians as a letter of encouragement. While it may have been initially directed to one church in Ephesus, it was probably intended to be passed around from church to church in the first century A.D. It differs from other letters in that it is not "occasional," but intended for all churches everywhere.
1. **READ Ephesians 2:11-16, and 21-22.** (These provide an important theological foundation for chapter 4.) How would you phrase the message of these verses in your own words?
    - What do v. 15-16 say about the purpose of Christ's work?
    - By chapter 4, Paul has finished describing how the mysterious work of God throughout all of history has finally culminated in the reconciliation of all peoples to himself and to one another in Christ. Then he gets to the "so what," the "therefore," starting with 4:1.
  2. **READ Eph. 4:1-7 and 11-16.** [Vv. 8-10 are a parenthetical statement. Don't get hung up on these!]
    - Point out every word or phrase that you can find in this passage, having to do with the concept of individual disciples growing to maturity.
    - Now point out every word or phrase that you can find here, having to do with the concept of unity, community, or relationships.
    - What is the relationship here between the two concepts of 1) individual maturity and 2) community?

3. On Sunday, Pastor Josh claimed, “**Authentic community is the greenhouse where disciples grow.**” How would you explain this idea in your own words?
  - Josh also claimed that “authentic community” includes the following components. Take some time to discuss each one—how are we doing with this component in our growth group? Are there ways we could do this more consistently? What keeps us from doing this?
    - Sharing life together through ups and downs
    - Being vulnerable
    - Studying God’s word together in a way that brings it to bear on your life
    - Speaking the truth in love
    - Serving together
  
4. Our church’s new vision statement begins as follows: *We will make disciples of Jesus in the communities where we work and live, who will make disciples, locally and internationally. To do so, we will... **in community with one another...***
  - This concept of authentic community is so vital to our church’s mission, that we’ve included it in our vision statement. Why do you think it is so important?
  - Beyond what we have discussed about our growth group, are there other ways that our church can improve at fostering this critical context? (Feel free to share you group’s ideas with church leadership).

**PRAYER:**

- Pray with regard to the components of our group’s life that have come up. Pray for God’s leading as our church seeks to fulfill this vision.
- Take time also to share about and pray for any other needs that exist in your group.