

Intro. Read Eph. 4:1-16.

We are learning from our extended study of these verses that God pleasing and directed church growth is dependent on two critical tasks. One, gifted leaders equip the saints. Two, gifted and equipped saints invest that equipping in building up the body of Christ. These are specific and objective tasks all done in the sphere of and influenced by love.

We are to do these tasks according to 4:13 'until we attain to' something. This phrase tells us that there is something we (Christ, leaders, saints) are to do together, for as long as it takes to arrive at a certain destination. The term translated 'attain' points our thinking to travelers arriving at a destination. Leaders who equip saints and equipped saints who work are to serve together in their equipping and serving until certain objectives have been reached or met.

Destination #1 for KSBC . . . building each other up. 4:13

Leaders and saints work together to build into each other's lives with three objectives in mind . . .

1. Unity. You build by aligning life with truth.
2. Maturity. You build by expecting growth and change in each other.
3. Lordship. You build by pursuing the standard of Jesus as Lord in community.

Directly implied in the equipping process described in 4:13 is life transformation. One writer defines transformation as *the objective and observable change in the life of a disciple into the character and likeness of Jesus.*

Another author helps us further as he identifies 3 levels of change to consider as we validate or measure actual life change:

1. Compliance when the influencing source has some means of control over a person
2. Identification when influence is based on desire to be in relationship w/ Christ/church
3. Internalization when content of induced behavior is adopted as intrinsically rewarding

Aligning life with truth, expecting growth and change and pursuing the standard of lordship are the targets we consistently strive for in producing the objective and observable change in our lives. Building each other up in these ways is now stated from a negative perspective in the next verse (14). These direct warnings teach us to be concerned about becoming comfortable with ways of doing church and life that are in reality counterproductive to the critical assignments of equipping and building.

This morning we turn our attention and ask for God's help to understand what it means to identify, engage and protect each other – the church – from these sometimes accepted ways of doing church that are biblically immature.

Destination #1 for KSBC . . . building each other up. 4:13
 Destination #2 for KSBC . . . protecting one another. 4:14
 Destination #3 for KSBC . . . becoming people who love each other. 4:15-16

Destination #2 for KSBC . . . protecting one another. 4:14

Note the three metaphors used in 4:14 to indicate 3 characteristics of immaturity that we tend to embrace or struggle with as followers of Christ. Leaders equipping and equipped saints serving must have as their goal/destination a practical commitment to recognize, engage and protect one another from these destructive conditions. *'May no longer'* points to present and current situations . . . these conditions occur in the church now . . . be warned and ready to guard against them.

Here are three reasons why churches do not grow . . .

1. Individualism. *So that we may no longer be children*

Childishness is referred to in some places in the scripture as a positive trait pointing to simplicity or absolute trust. Here along with a few other references, being like a child is a negative trait to be avoided. It is contrasted with the maturity and growth expected in verse 13. Infants resist being unified or aligning themselves with anything other than their extremely limited viewpoint. They are individualistic, not having concern for the needs or thoughts of others.

Two specific ways childish individualism is measured in a church community is . . .

- Undeveloped sense of community 1Cor. 3:1ff jealousy/strife among you
- Undeveloped skills in the scriptures Heb. 5:11ff, 13 powers of discernment

2. Misdirection. *Tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine*

This metaphor reminds us that the church is like a ship on the high and rough seas. There are winds and waves that will toss the ship in all kinds of directions. The healthy church faces challenges from all directions to stay on course and arrive at its proper destination. The winds and waves are metaphors for various teachings or trends . . . we are warned about being driven by every fresh gust of teaching.

There are at least 4 examples in the NT of false doctrine that tosses and misdirects us . . .

- Legalism Col. 2:22 emphasis on externals & appearance
- License 1Tim. 1:3-11 moral indecisiveness & wandering

Individualism . . . commit to serving and connecting with others to grow the body of Christ.

Misdirection . . . commit to submitting yourself to the life transforming teaching of the Bible.

Deception . . . repent of your form of godliness, self-love, no power and resistance to suffering.