

GOD

Growing Up into Christ, the Head of the Body (Ephesians 4 verses 15 and 16)

As born-again believers, we members of God's household belong to the Body of Christ. God wants this Body to which you and I belong to grow and to be edified, or built up, so that we collectively can be victorious in every situation as we enjoy the more than abundant life. Each one of us has a God-given role, or function, that will facilitate this growth that God so desires.

We know Ephesians Chapter 4 that because of God's great grace, love and care for us He gave us gifts, both the individual gift of holy spirit that each of us received when we believed and the gifts to the Church, people operating one or more of five ministries, that help to keep us on track and add new members to the Body. A major goal of these gifts in operation is stated in Ephesians 4, verse 14, and we'll read this verse before continuing in chapter 4 to see how the Body is put together so it can be edified.

Ephesians

4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:

This verse shows God's desire that, with the aid of people operating ministries, we will no longer be like children, tossed about in our minds by every false doctrine that comes along, no matter how right and organized it may appear. Succumbing to these false doctrines doesn't help to build up the Body to which we belong, but instead hinders it.

In contrast, God's desire for us is that we hold on to the truth of His Word and serve one another by performing our individual roles in love, which will result in the building up of the Body. We see this in the next two verses:

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Verse 15 starts with the word "But", which sets this verse in contrast to what came before, namely being like children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Because we have the gifts that God made available, including holy spirit and people who operate ministries, we can avoid being tossed to and fro. According to verse 15, as we "speak the truth in love" we grow up – we are no longer like children but instead we become more and more like Christ, who is the head of the Body.

Let's consider verse 15 more closely to more fully understand what it is telling us.

The words “speaking the truth” are all translated from a single Greek word, *alētheuō*. This word is used in only one other place in the Bible, in Galatians 4:16, which says: “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” Even though both of these verses imply speaking the Word, the word *alētheuō* means much more.

This Greek word is derived from *alēthēs*, meaning true, a word used of God that cannot lie. Thus, the word *alētheuō* literally means “truthing it”, or “acting truly”.

According to the *New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, *alētheuō* means “to be true in doctrine and profession”, “to deal faithfully or truly with anyone”, or “to deal truly”.

So, this Greek word, translated “speaking the truth” in Ephesians 4:15, really covers all aspects of our walk. We are to be true in our walk, dealing truly with one another in everything we do.

Also, verse 15 says that we are to do this in love. Only by walking with the love of God can we express the right words or actions at the right time to provide the greatest benefits to others in the Body.

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which (*who*) is the head, *even* Christ:

This verse says that as we live truly, dealing truly with others with the love of God, we will “grow up into him in all things, who is the head, Christ” (the word “even” is not in the text).

The Greek word translated “grow up” is the word *auxanō*, which means “to increase”. This is the same word that we find in I Corinthians 3:6, in which Paul wrote: “I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” As we deal truthfully with one another in love, God gives the increase, and we “grow up”: we are no longer like children, tossed to and fro.

From previous verses in Chapter 4 we know that people operating ministries help to keep us on track as we live truly, while at the same time adding new members to the Body so it can grow up into the “perfect (*mature*) man” mentioned in verse 13.

Verse 15 says that we will grow up “in all things”, in all the parts that make up the whole, the Body in which we are members. And we, as the Body, will “grow up into him”, into Christ who is the head of the Body. This word “into” is the Greek word *eis*, which means “with a view to” or “with the goal of reaching or obtaining”. The Body is to grow with the goal of being like Christ, the head.

By considering how this important verse reads in two other versions, we can gain greater understanding:

Aramaic-English Interlinear New Testament:

But we should be steadfast in our love, that in everything we may grow up in the Messiah who is the head.

Amplified Bible:

Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth (in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly). Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things unto Him who is the Head, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

Now comes verse 16, which explains more fully how the growth and edification of this Body takes place:

4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

According to this verse, it is from Christ, the head of the Body, that the whole body is “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth”. Christ as the head of the Body is the one who keeps the Body together and is the source of supply.

The words “fitly joined together” are from the one Greek word *sunarmologēo*, meaning “perfectly or harmoniously fitted together”. This word is used in only one other place, and that is in Ephesians 2:21 which says “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord”. In both of these usages, the word is used to show how the Body of Christ (the Temple in 2:21) is perfectly, or harmoniously, fitted together. I Corinthians 12:18 says “But now hath God set members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

Not only is the Body perfectly fitted together, but it is “compacted by that which every joint supplieth”.

The word “compacted” is from the Greek word *sumbibazō*. It means “to bring together”, “to join together”, “to cause to coalesce”, or “to unite in association or affection”. This Greek word is translated “knit together” in Colossians 2:2:

Colossians

2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment (*full knowledge*) of the mystery of God.

In I Corinthians 2:16, this word *sumbibazō* is translated “instruct”: (For who hath the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him). This word can also be rendered “to bring together by instruction”. In order for the members of the Body to be “compacted” or “knit together”, they need to be instructed in God’s Word.

The word “joint” in Ephesians 4:16 is the Greek word *haphē*, which refers to a ligament that holds the different parts, or members, of a body together. Even though it is translated from a different Greek word, it has the same basic meaning as the word “bond” (translated from the Greek word *sundesmos*) in Ephesians 4:3 which says “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of (*which produces*) peace”. It’s what holds the Body together, and one result is peace.

The word “supplieth”, from the Greek word *epichorēgia*, literally means “of the supply”, rendering this more accurately: “every joint of the supply”.

This phrase “every joint of the supply” includes a figure of speech, in which the word “of” could be rendered “for the purpose of”. Every joint that “compacts”, or holds the Body together, has the purpose of supplying the members of the Body with something important. Furthermore, verse 16 states that the source of the supply is the head of the Body (Christ).

What is the supply that comes to us by way of the “joints” that hold the Body together, that help the Body to grow and be edified? Philippians Chapter 1, verse 19 contains the only other usage of the word *epichorēgia*, translated “supplieth” in Ephesians 4:16:

Philippians

1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ,

The “spirit of Jesus Christ” that is available to us is that gift of holy spirit that we each received when we got born again, which we know from Colossians 1:27 is “Christ in you”. It is potential power that we as children of God can choose to operate.

We have been perfectly fitted together as members into the one Body, held firmly together by the bond that provides us with the needed supply, the power of the holy spirit that we can operate. In order for the Body to benefit the most from this supply, we each need to do our part. We see this as we continue reading verse 16 of Ephesians chapter 4:

Ephesians

4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part...

The words “effectual working” are from the Greek word *energeia*, meaning “energy or strength put forth from within in effectual operation” or “energy or power in action”. It’s the same word that is used in Ephesians 1:19 where it says “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working (*energeia*) of His mighty power”.

According to Ephesians 4:16, this effectual working, or energizing, is to take place “in the measure of every part”.

“Every part” can be better understood as “each individual part”. That’s each one of us, each member in the Body of Christ. We each have a role to play. The word “measure” refers to

the fact that we each received the same measure, or amount, of holy spirit when we got born again (Romans 12:3 says: “God has dealt to every (*each*) man the measure of faith”).

The remainder of verse 16 tells us that our operation of that supply, the power that comes with the gift of holy spirit that we each have, as we serve in the Body of Christ, whether it be by operation of ministries or in any other way, “...maketh (*brings about*) increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

The word “increase” is *auxēsis*, related to the word translated “grow up” in verse 15. God wants the Body to increase, to grow or mature. And, as we perform our function “in love”, manifesting the love of God, the Body will be edified, or built up.

As we saw by examining these verses in Ephesians, the growth and building up of the Body is accomplished as we each do our part, walking truly and dealing truly with each other in love. To do this we need to keep Christ as the head of the Body, recognizing that he is the source of our supply, the guidance and energizing that we need to serve in the best way possible.

We’ll conclude by reading a parallel verse to Ephesians 4:16, in the book of Colossians. Paul was warning the Colossians to beware of those who were promoting religious bondage (“winds of doctrine”) because they had lost track of who the head of the Body was to be. In this verse we’ll see the same great truths of Ephesians 4:16 reiterated.

Colossians

2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

In this verse, the word “joints” is from the same Greek word translated “joint” in Ephesians 4:16, and “bands”, meaning the same basic thing, is from the same Greek word translated “bond” in Ephesians 4:3. We are told that the head (Christ) is the source of nourishment (the power of the holy spirit that we can operate), which is supplied to the Body by way of these joints and bands that hold it together. We also see that the Body is “knit together”, from the same Greek word translated “compacted” in our verse in Ephesians.

Finally, we see that when we keep Christ as the head and do our part, the Body will increase with the increase of (*from*) God (God gives the increase).

As we stand on God’s Word, speaking truly, dealing truly, and living truly, manifesting the love of God, we grow to be more like Christ. As we each do our part, utilizing the gifts and callings that God gave us, the Body to which we are a part will continue to grow and be edified. As this happens, we all will reap the great benefits of the more than abundant life.

- Dr. Rick Batt

Ephesians 4:16 in different versions:

King James:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Interlinear Greek-English New Testament:

From whom all the body, fitted together and compacted by every joint of supply according to the working in its measure of each one part, the increase of the body makes for itself to the building up of itself in love.

Lamsa Bible (Translated from an Aramaic Text):

It is through him that the whole body is closely and firmly united at all joints, according to the measure of the gift which is given to every member, for the guidance and control of the body, in order to complete the edifying of the body in love.

Aramaic-English Interlinear New Testament:

And from him the whole body is fit together and is tied together in all the joints, according to the gift that is given by measure to each member for the growth of the body, that its edification might be accomplished in love.

Amplified Bible:

For because of him the whole body (the Church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part (with power adapted to its need) is working properly (in all its functions), grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.