

# Spiritual Bodybuilding

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, Psalm 1. Thus, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. And now Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, reading verses 1 to 16.

Ephesians 4, verse 1. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

[ 1 : 44 ] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.

In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may the Lord bless it to us today. Well, good morning, and please do have your Bibles open to Ephesians 4, the passage we read in Ephesians 4.

[ 3 : 33 ] And this morning, we're going to spend most of our time looking at verses 11 to 16 of that passage. Verses that are all about spiritual bodybuilding.

Daddy, where are we going? No doubt that question will have been asked by many a child, in the back seat of many a car, travelling up and down the country over the past few weeks, as families head off to their holiday destinations.

Over the past two months, my four-year-old son, Benjamin, whom some of you know, has asked that question repeatedly from the back seat of our car. Daddy, where are we going? And again and again, he has received the same wonderful answer.

Home base, son. We're going to home base for yet more gardening equipment that we do not need. Poor boy, poor Benjamin. That's where we spent most of our summer holidays this year, in the garden section of home base.

Not very exciting for Ben. But when you ask that same question at a much, much bigger scale, then the Bible gives us an answer that's infinitely more exciting than home base.

[ 4 : 48 ] Where are we going? Where is the cosmos going? Where is everything in the visible reality and everything in the invisible reality headed to? Well, Ephesians 1 verse 10 has the answer.

One day soon, absolutely everything and everyone is going to be united under the visible and unopposed rule of the Lord Jesus.

This is the great climax of God's sovereign and eternal plan. Everything is headed towards that. Being under the lordship of the son of God.

And right now, in preparation for that last day, for that glorious appearing of the son, God is at work. And what is God doing? What is his work? He is creating a new humanity who will reign and rule with the Lord Jesus forever and ever.

A new humanity who will reign and rule over everything and everyone with Christ for all eternity. That's what God is doing even as we speak. Even as I'm up here and as you sit there listening.

[ 5 : 55 ] That is what he is doing. This new humanity has been made up of people from all nations, all over the world, who have been brought into life-giving union with Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

They've been born again. These people have done nothing to deserve such a gift, such a privileged calling. God has done this by his undeserved kindness. And God has given his new humanity a name.

That is, the church. You're a Christian here this morning. You are part of God's new humanity. And this is your destiny. This is where you're headed. God has done this for you by grace.

And really, that is what Paul has been unpacking in Ephesians 1-3. The wealth of the church. That in Christ, we are the most spiritually rich and privileged people ever.

And having unpacked the wealth of the church in chapters 1-3, from chapters 4-6, Paul begins to unpack the walk of the church. He says in chapter 4, verse 1, I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you, the church, God's new humanity, to walk or live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

[ 7 : 09 ] In other words, live out your new God-given identity. Be who you are in Christ. And in our verses this morning, Paul says that an integral part of us walking in a manner worthy of our calling is the fact that we need to grow and mature as one all together, as one church all together.

And I'd like us to look at verses 11-16 under three headings this morning, three points. Here's the first one. Let's notice the foundation that must be in place if we are to grow.

The foundation that must be in place if we are to grow. Proclamation of the word of God must be the foundation of all of our church life if we want to grow and mature.

Without this foundation in place, we will not grow and mature, both as individuals and as a church. We can see that from the gifts that Jesus gave the church in verse 11.

In verses 8-10, Paul reminds the Ephesians that the Lord, having descended from heaven and completed his work of redemption that he was sent here to accomplish, he ascended in triumph to heaven over all of his foes.

[ 8 : 25 ] And in verse 11, Paul mentions four gifts that the ascended Christ has given to the church. Let's read verse 11. He, the ascended Christ, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, teachers.

Shepherds, teachers mentioned there, it's not talking about two separate offices, two separate roles. It's two ways of talking about the one person who shepherds the church by teaching the word of God to the church.

So these are four gifts that Jesus has given to the church. The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherd teachers. What do they have all in common? Answer? They're all men who proclaimed and who still proclaim the word of God to the church.

Let me just briefly unpack these four roles for us so that we at least have an idea of what Paul's talking about here. The apostles, mentioned firstly, were the twelve men who were eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection.

They were sent out to preach the momentous news about Christ and his resurrection on the day of Pentecost. And Paul himself, of course, was appointed an apostle a bit later on, wasn't he?

[ 9 : 34 ] He took the gospel across the whole world. And as the gospel was preached and as the church grew, the apostles carried on to nurture these churches by preaching and teaching.

Some of the apostles even went on to write books of the New Testament. When Paul says the prophets here, he's probably referring to the Old Testament prophets and especially those who wrote the Old Testament itself.

But I think he's also talking about other men who would go on to write the books of the New Testament who were not apostles. Men like Luke. So the apostles and the prophets were given as gifts to the church and they wrote the scriptures in the spirit so that the church would have the written word of God.

And we know from elsewhere in the Bible that we should not expect anyone today to hold these roles in the church. The next two roles mentioned, the evangelists, the shepherd teachers, are roles

that have carried on all the way throughout church history and we have them today.

The evangelists seem to be referring to those who are gifted at speaking the word of God to those who are not yet believers. Although elsewhere in the New Testament we're told that evangelists did preach to the family of God and to the churches.

[10:52] Shepherds, teachers, shepherd teachers, pastor teachers, that's referring to those who preach the word of God to the family of God week in and week out. Now there's so much more that I could say about these four roles but that should hopefully give you an idea of who they are.

And they are all Christ's gift to the church and they teach us that our greatest need as a church is to hear the word of God being proclaimed all the time.

And Paul goes on to tell us why that is our greatest need. Please look again at verse 11. And he, the ascended Christ, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherd teachers, to equip the saints for ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

So Jesus has graciously given and continues to give Bible proclaimers to the church so that the members of the church will be equipped for ministry. We'll think a bit more about that in a few minutes.

But word proclamation must be at the foundation of our life as a local church because without it, none of us would be equipped to carry out the ministry that we've been called to carry out.

[12:04] But what does Paul mean by equip here? Well, the Greek word translated here as equip could be translated literally as to fit together or to bring something into its proper use.

It's a word that's used outside of the New Testament literature to describe the process of resetting a broken bone or putting back a dislocated shoulder into its place, a dislocated joint.

It could also be translated as mending, as in mending a net that's broken and needs to be repaired.

And this is why Bible teachers and proclaimers are so crucial for the church.

Bible teachers speak the powerful word of God to the people of God in the spirit of God so that the people of God will be transformed, mended, and made fit for the ministry that they've been called to carry out.

All of the damage that sin has done to us, it is the word of God that is the remedy that we need proclaimed powerfully in the spirit of God. If a church does not have Bible proclamation at its foundation, that church will be a spiritually sick place.

[13:16] Its members will not be fit for ministry and instead of being a healthy and growing church, it will be an immature church. Instead of having a strong body, with big guns, big muscles, it will be a body that's full of things that shouldn't be, with injuries, ailments, failing organs.

Now let me just say, it might be that you're here this morning in the Tron church and you're a visitor or you're a relatively newcomer. Perhaps you're watching online, checking us out at home. Perhaps you're moving to Glasgow, maybe in September sometime, towards the end of the summer.

And you're just seeing what we're all about as a church. And I hope that you'll see that we're all about the proclamation of the word of God. And this is why. This is why.

Because without, this is our foundation, we wouldn't grow as a church. In fact, we would probably cease to be as a church. This is also, by the way, why we make so much of the need to identify and train up gifted and godly men in how to handle, preach and teach the word of God.

Bringing them on as apprentices, sending them through Cornhill, and if appropriate, bringing them on to the pastor's training course, the ministry training course. We need to always be, as a church, identifying those men whom Christ is raising up to be pastor, teachers, and evangelists today so that they will carry on this foundational work as a church in the future.

[14:49] Well, that's our first point this morning. The foundation that must be in place if we're to grow. Here's our second point, and this is the longest point this morning. The fellowship that we need to grow.

The fellowship that we need to grow. Growing and maturing in the Christian life, it is not a solo activity. Growing and maturing in the Christian life is a corporate activity, a team activity.

If we want to grow, then we need the fellowship of a church family round about us. There's a great surprise in this passage. Now, you may well have spotted it already, but the surprise in this passage is that none of the men mentioned in verse 11 are said to carry out ministry.

Did you notice that? I take it they are because they're Bible teachers. But Paul doesn't say they're to carry out ministry. Who is to carry out ministry in this passage? Verse 12 says, the saints.

In other words, every Christian, everyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord is a saint. every Christian is actually the ones who have been called to carry out ministry.

[15:58] We are all called to build up the body of the church. You're all ministers. I'm looking at ministers here. You're all ministers. Ministry is not just carried out by the blokes up the front who preach and teach.

The responsibility for producing church growth, according to this passage, lies with every member. Now friends, if you're sitting at a Tron location just now, I can see the people here, the good people here in Kelvin Grove.

But if you're watching at Queen's Park, you're over there. Sorry, you're at that camera. If you're watching this at Queen's Park or at Tron Central or if you're here at Kelvin Grove or if you're watching at home in the presence of other Tron members, let me just ask you to turn to each other and have a good look at each other.

Just do that now everybody. Have a wee look around. Don't be afraid to turn around behind you if you want to have a look back. Good Alan Clark. Very good. Looking back the way. All the people that you've looked at there, you are responsible for helping them grow.

You are to minister to these people. All the people that you may have looked at at another Tron location or at home, you have the responsibility for helping each other grow. That's one of the things that you have to do as you walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

[17:11] We need each other. The Bible knows nothing of this kind of lone ranger Christian who grows and matures in isolation. That is completely unbiblical. One commentator puts it like this.

Let me read this to you. This is a great quote. We cannot be united truly with Christ without being united truly and therefore visibly with Christ's people. We are members of one another and real Christian discipleship takes that seriously and seeks to live out that truth visibly in a meaningful commitment to the living body of a real church family.

Listen to this. Indeed, so interdependent are we as Christians that our own personal health, preservation, and growth in Christ is completely bound up with the health, preservation, and growth of the whole body, the church to which we belong.

You hear that? Our health, preservation, and growth in Christ as individuals is completely bound up with the health, preservation, and growth of the whole church that we belong to.

It is as the whole body is built up that each part, every joint with which it's equipped is also built up. And I don't know if you've ever encountered someone who is a professing Christian but who has very little time for the local church.

[18:38] I remember being at a really nice dinner down in England and I was just sitting with a group of people and I was just listening to the conversation and they were Christians and there was one man there that I didn't meet.

I believe he was the husband of someone in the church that I went to but I couldn't be sure, I can't remember. But it always struck me, he just spoke about the fact in which he was so clear that he had so little time for being in a church family.

He just said, ah no, I just don't have any time for that. How I grow is, I grow alone in my house and my study, I read my Bible, I read theology, I listen to sermons from my favourite preachers in America.

Well according to Paul, that attitude is completely wrong. Must be repented of immediately. Now don't get me wrong, don't get me wrong, please don't mishear me.

There is nothing wrong with reading your Bible at home. In fact I think one of the vows of our membership is that we will regularly read the Bible at home. So it is very good to do that. Do that. It's good to read good theology at home.

[19:47] A good Christian book that's sound. If you want to get your hands on one then I'd recommend popping into Tron Central because we've got a great selection of books that we've picked. And they're trustworthy books because they're true to the Bible.

But anyway, it's really good to read good theology at home. I actually think it's good as well, it doesn't do any harm, to listen to a good sermon now and again during the week online if you can do that. But if these things take us away from growing and maturing with our church family then that's not good.

These things have taken you away from where you should be. Paul says we need to surround ourselves with the fellowship of the church in order to grow. In fact, just think about what we saw the

Lord Jesus doing in Luke chapter 2 last week.

I know he was only 12 years old at the time. But Jesus was having a Bible study with other members of the believing covenant community.

Jesus was in the temple searching the scriptures in a Bible study with other believers in the power of the Spirit. And even think about Jesus' life when he grew as a man. He never was a lone ranger. [ 20 : 55 ] He always surrounded himself with other believers, with his disciples. You might argue that his other disciples weren't a great help to him. But still, he had the fellowship around him.

He was not a lone ranger. So neither should we be lone rangers. Let's be clear on this. Growth in the Christian life is a corporate activity not a solo activity.

But how exactly are church members to build up the body of the church? Well, verse 15 is key. Please look at verse 15. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.

Now, what does Paul mean by this phrase speaking the truth in love? Is he calling the church to be truthful, not to lie? Well, that might be a good thing and we should be that way. But I don't think that's what Paul is meaning here.

Just look at the immediate context. In verse 14, Paul has mentioned false teachers, those who do not speak the truth of the word of God, like the men mentioned back in verse 11.

[ 21 : 57 ] These false teachers in verse 14 speak deceitful things, things that are designed to do spiritual harm to the church. Their speech is designed to lead people away from Christ.

And so in verse 15, Paul is saying to the church, you're to speak the opposite words of these men mentioned in verse 14. That's why it begins with the word rather. You're to speak the truth in love and that must mean speaking the truth of God's word to each other, speaking the truth of the Bible into each other's lives.

And reading verse 15 in light of verse 11, Paul seems to be saying that we build up the body of the church by gathering together to listening to sermons, listening to the word of God proclaimed and then we're to go away as members and we're to help one another to apply and to obey what we have heard by the help of the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives.

That's how you are a spiritual bodybuilder. Sit under the preaching of the word, listen to it, apply it to your own life and then help each other throughout the week to obey and apply what we've heard to their lives as well.

Just think, I've been thinking a lot about the implications of this. Think about this. It is crucial that a church has a good pastor, a good preacher in the pulpit expounding the sermon week in, week out, faithfully.

[ 23 : 24 ] But, that by itself is not enough to build the church. Let me say that again. You can have a good and faithful preacher in the pulpit giving good and faithful sermons each week, but if the members of the church don't step up and do their ministry of speaking the truth and love to one another, the church won't grow or the church will be massively hindered in its growth.

I think that's really alarming, don't you? A church could have a mature pulpit ministry but also at the same time have an immature membership.

Spiritual maturity will happen when a pulpit is manned by a good man who expounds the scriptures and the members step up and do their ministry.

A spiritually immature church will be full of members who they sit through sermons and they think this, oh listen to this sermon, this is just so good. I love my pastor, he's such a good speaker and such a nice man.

That is not a healthy way of listening to sermons or thinking. The mature way of listening to a sermon according to Paul is to think this, Lord, please help me to obey this, what I'm hearing.

[ 24 : 46 ] Please help me to take it seriously, not to forget it, but by the power of the Spirit help me to apply this deeply to my own heart and mind. Please help me to change and please help me to help my brothers and sisters in this church to do the same.

That is a mature way of listening to sermons. Peter Adam, whom some of you will know, I think he's a retired minister, he's a very, very wise man, great experience in ministry, but he says that we should listen to the sermon with two ears.

We all listen to the sermon with two ears, but two metaphorical ears. We use one ear to listen to the sermon and to listen to it and think, how does this apply to me in my life?

How does it challenge me? But at the same time, we're to listen with another ear and the other ear is to be dedicated in listening to truth that challenges the whole church or challenges someone else in the congregation.

We're to listen to the sermon and think, how does this apply to me? But that truth that's said there, that could really help this brother and sister I know. How can I lovingly help that brother and sister and do that carefully?

[ 25 : 54 ] How can I help them to think about this truth that was preached and apply it to their lives as well? If we were all to do that, then we would grow and grow and grow.

And you know, I think this shows, this passage shows that we all have a responsibility to get to know others in the church, to invest our time, energy, and building up relationships and friendships with others so that we can start to look out for them, get to know them, love them, and speak the truth to them.

That's not an easy thing. That is not an easy thing. Friendship isn't something that just falls on your lap. Friendship is something that requires time and energy. But if we invest in friendships in the church, it will be so worth it because in the end, it will make the church grow.

One great way to get to know people and to be in an environment where you can speak the truth and love to them is to join a Tron growth group. It's one of the many reasons why I'm so thankful for the growth groups that I've been in and the growth group I'm in currently, just now.

Every time we get together, we go deeper in the word and prayer together. We sometimes talk about things from the latest sermon that we've heard that have been challenging us and we pray about it. We also have lots of fun and we get to know each other and we love each other.

[ 27 : 12 ] If you'd like to know more about being in a growth group, if you're not in one already and you'd like to know more, then come and talk to me. I'd love to talk to you. Drop me an email. But whether we're in a growth group or not, every single one of us has been called to this ministry of growing and maturing and building up the Tron church together.

If we're serious about walking in a manner worthy of our calling, then that's what we'll dedicate a lot of our time to doing, speaking the truth and love to each other. Now let me just say, there are some members of our church whom because of personal circumstances they can't meet regularly with the rest of the church, perhaps due to poor physical health and they're not able to get out on Sundays. They have legitimate reasons for not coming together and joining in like they once did maybe in the past. And so it's important that all of us who are fit and healthy, we need to remember them, we need to go to them, visit them, call them, pray for them, pray with them, encourage them, remind them that they're still part of the fellowship.

But if we are in good health and if there's no constraints upon us, then none of us should be shrinking away from meeting together. We should all be coming along to crack on with building up the church.

Because if not, we will seriously hinder our growth as individuals and as a church. Well, that's our second point this morning, the fellowship that we need to grow.

[ 28 : 43 ] And thirdly, here's our final point and it's a briefer point. Let's notice the fruit that will be produced when we grow. The fruit that will be produced when we grow.

Paul tells us about the glorious fruit that will be produced by a church that has Bible proclamation at its foundation and where the membership is speaking the truth and love to one another. Please look at verse 12.

Christ gave Bible proclaimers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, of the stature, of the fullness of Christ.

Let's just unpack that. When Paul says we will all attain the unity of faith, he's not talking about all of us each having individual faith, although that's true.

He's not talking about faith in that sense, the faith that an individual exercises. Rather, he's talking about every member being united in the faith that was delivered once and for all to the saints.

[ 29 : 48 ] In other words, we will all be a church that is united theologically in the Bible's theology. The truth of the word will have shaped and mastered our minds and our hearts.

So that we will all be united together in the Bible's truth and we will stand together in that truth whatever the cost. And just notice, Paul says that we will also attain if we grow the full or the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is, we will know our Savior better and better. We won't just know stuff about Jesus, but we will actually know him better. That is, we will have a deeper relationship with him.

We will love him more. And of course, to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ at the same time unavoidably means that we will grow more and more like Jesus Christ.

We will share in his mature life. Now I don't know about you, but looking at that, those fruits that Paul, don't you want that? I want that.

[ 30 : 49 ] I want that for this church. We should all want this for the church, for the tron. And just look at verse 14. As Paul says, that if we continue to grow together, we will also be a church that becomes more and more discerning.

He says, we will no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, craftiness, and deceitful schemes. In other words, our church will be full of discerning Christians who are able to biblically assess all that they see and hear. And that's such good news because as I'm sure you'll know, there are many voices out there in the world that speak all sorts of deceitful and crafty things. There's also plenty of voices within the professing church that speak deceitful and crafty things.

If I was to, I could take you on YouTube right now. I don't do a lot of stuff online, but I watch a lot of YouTube. I could take you on YouTube right now and I could show you endless videos of content that claims to be Christian but is actually deeply wrong and really harmful for the church.

But a mature church will be full of people who've had their thinking so shaped by the word of God that they can identify a deceitful scheme right away and they can watch a video on YouTube and say, no, that's not right.

[ 32 : 16 ] I don't think that's right. Is that really what the Bible says? No, I don't think so. And a mature church will be full of people who lovingly look out for one another to make sure that members aren't seduced off by this sort of teaching.

When I was a student for a brief period, I was only at university for a term and then I dropped out of university and I never went back. Excellent. Best decision I've ever made in my life.

But when I was a student for that very brief period, I got my hands on a book that claimed to be Christian and it was a very, very trendy book. All sorts of Christians my age at the time were reading this book across Glasgow.

It was the talk of the town amongst the Christian student world in Glasgow. And I read it and I thought, you know, this is pretty good. I like this. Thankfully, I was a member of Release the Word at the time and I was able to take the book to Release the Word to my group and I asked, has anyone read this?

I asked them questions and they were much more discerning and wiser and maturer than me. And you know, I'm so pleased to say that my brothers and sisters protected me because they were able to say, that book is not very helpful.

[ 33 : 28 ] In fact, in some parts it's deeply wrong and here's why. They helped me. They protected me. And if we are to continue to grow as a church, then that sort of incident that I've just described there, that will happen more and more.

However, we will protect each other and we will not be taken in by false teaching. We will know the truth and we will stand firm in it. And again, isn't that so attractive?

Don't you want this? Well, that's Ephesians 4. There's much more that could be said but let me just finish by saying this. When you place this passage alongside the passage that we looked at last week in Philippians 3, surely we must see that as a church we will never reach the point corporately where we should stop growing.

And in Philippians 3, if you weren't here last week, Paul says that mature Christians in this life are those who are never satisfied with the level of maturity they've already gained. In Philippians 3, Paul says, I'm not, I've made so much progress in the Christian life but I'm going to forget about that because I'm going to press on for more.

I am never ever going to stop growing. That must be true of us individually but surely it must also be true of us corporately as a church. There's no point in this life where we as the Tron Church can sit back and go, I can't get my arm around, I'm too fat, you know, give ourselves a pat on the back.

[ 34 : 55 ] We can't. There's no point in this life where we as the Tron Church can sit back and think, guys, we've made it, well done. No, we must press on more and more.

This is a non-stopping activity growing and maturing as a church. So let's keep on doing what we're doing and doing it more and more. Let's keep on listening to Bible teaching and preaching.

It's our foundation. And let's continue to do all we can to minister to each other, speaking the truth and love to each other so that together we will be made more and more into the people that we will be on that last day when the Son of God appears in glory.

And let's never, ever try and do any of this in our own strength. Fundamental to all of this is that we're to draw upon the resources of the Lord Jesus Christ through his Spirit.

We must pray for help to do this. It's hard. But the good news is that we have a Savior and we have a Spirit living in us who is ready and willing to help us.

[ 36 : 01 ] Well, that's spiritual bodybuilding. Let's be quiet for a moment to take a moment to respond to the Word of God in our hearts and in our minds and then I'll pray for us.

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for the glorious calling that you have called us to.

By grace, you've called us to be part of your new humanity in Christ. Father, we do not deserve such a wonderful calling. We do not deserve all of the spiritual blessings that you have given us through your Son.

you've transferred us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light, into your family, your people. We have been born again from above.

Oh, gracious God, we praise you for such grace and we ask that you will help us now. Help us now to walk in a manner worthy of this great calling by your Spirit.

[ 37 : 25 ] help us to grow and mature together as a church. Please forgive us for the times when we've neglected this ministry or just assumed it will happen.

No, Father, please help us instead to be active about this and to be purposeful. Help us to help each other to obey the Word so that together we will be transformed from infancy into mature manhood, into the likeness of your Son.

Oh, how we want to know Him better. Oh, how we want to be united together in your truth. Oh, how we want to be protected as a church, to be a discerning church.

So help us, our Heavenly Father. Please make us more and more into the people that you would have us be. We pray this in Jesus' name and for His sake.

Amen.