

GROW UP!

SERIES: I LOVE MY CHURCH | WEEK 3 | 8.15.2021

Good morning. How's everyone doing? It's cool outside, isn't it? It feels nice. It was hot this week. Hey, so good morning, my name is John, I'm one of the pastors here. I'm excited to teach the Word of God. If you have your Bibles, Ephesians Chapter 4, turn to there, we're gonna be in there all series called I LOVE MY CHURCH, we're gonna talk about it.

But before then I wanna get kind of an assessment of the room if you don't mind. I'm gonna do a quick, little, like, survey, feel free if you don't wanna engage, that's fine, but if it applies to you just raise your hand. Okay? So I need your participation like in student ministry, I need you guys to engage. Okay? So I'm going to ask you a couple questions. How many of you grew up in some sort of church where you went to church every Sunday, raise your hand if you kind of grew up in church. [HE SURVEYS AUDIENCE] Awesome. Oh! That's awesome. Okay. Raise your hand if you're from, like, this general area, Chester County, you kind of grew up in Chester County. Okay. All right. That's good. Okay. This is gonna help me. Raise your hand if you aren't even from this country, you grew up in a different country, you're born in a different country, and you came here. Awesome. Awesome. All right. Raise your hand if, like, you are typically, like, somebody who would say that you have like a biblical background meaning, like, maybe you went to Christian college where you studied the Bible a little bit, you have like a little Bible background. Okay. Okay. That that makes me a little insecure [HE CHUCKLES] standing up here. [LAUGHTER] No, that's good. All right. So last one here, how many of you would say that you are from the north, raise your hand; how many of you would say you're southern, kind of southern born? All right. Good.

So here's what I'm getting from this exercise here. We are all coming from a lot of different places. We have a lot of different backgrounds. Some grew up in the church, some didn't; some grew up in the south, some didn't; some even didn't even come from this country. So here's the question on the table: How in the world are we going to be unified? Like, how are we going to have unity when we're all coming from all these different places? Because I would guarantee you because of our backgrounds, if we would have conversations, they'd be very different based on, you know, even our view of how church is supposed to be. We would have these backgrounds where we'd say, "This is what I used to do." So how in the world are we going to be unified?

Well, we're in Ephesians Chapter 4 and what's happening here is Paul is going to argue for the unity of the body of Christ. He's going to say what the church needs is to be unified, and then he's going to tell us how. And so you're going to turn here with me and really what Pastor Rob did a wonderful job last week in the series called I LOVE MY CHURCH, is kind of fight for the idea of why we are here. So if you're asking the question why does this church exist, why do you gather, we really talked about that last week and really, we talked about how in this room God has given us all that we need. We have teachers and prophets and evangelists and all these things that God has given the church and we are called to equip the saints, which is the body, for the work of ministry. We are called to build the Kingdom of God. This is why we are here. And so he's laying out this argument that in the church there is everything that we need is here.

And in fact, this is the role of the church is to build each other up, have a unity, a bond of peace, so that we can be effective for the Kingdom of God. And then he's going to shift gears. So look at verse 14, this is what we're going to spend most of our time with, he's going to shift gears between what God has designed in our lives, what we are designed to do, the purposes and gifts that God's given us, and then he's going to give us three commands to live it out. He's going to say because of these things this is why the church can be unified, and this is what you are to do in order to be unified. And so look at verse 14, we're going to start there, here's what he says:

14 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.

– EPHESIANS 4:14 (ESV)

So we're going to stop there. So the first command that we see here, and it's in the verse prior to 14 as well is that we are called to grow in maturity:

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

— EPHESIANS 4:13 (ESV)

So you notice here he says all of these things have been given to you so that we can grow up. And so here's the first point is Ephesians 14 says that we are no longer to be children. Okay, what does this mean? Okay, in faith—I want to make this very clear—there isn't this idea that if you're a new believer you are less valuable. Of course not. I mean, just think of a child. Right? Is a child any more or less valuable than an adult? Of course not. But in faith just like in life you have what's called spiritual stages meaning when you give your faith and trust to Jesus you may come in as a spiritual infant or a "baby Christian" or however what term you label it, and the Bible says, and Paul often calls out, he says your problem is you just haven't grown up in the faith yet. You're just children. You're still on milk and you need to work yourself to solid food. So what does this look like?

I, when I was a youth pastor, I used to use this a lot for parents and leaders to kind of evaluate how we're doing when it comes to growing our students up in their faith, and I use this discipleship wheel—some of you have heard me talk about it—and this is basically how it works. So the Bible says that before you know Jesus you are spiritually dead, you are a slave to sin; you don't know Jesus, you are actually dead, your spirit is dead, that's why you're never going to find satisfaction in stuff or material or fame or any of those things. Your soul is starving and it needs Jesus, it needs the Spirit of God. And so your need there is to hear about what Jesus did for you on the cross. That's your need.

You need to understand that you are a sinful, broken person and you're in desperate need of a Savior, so you need the Gospel. Often. You need to be reminded of what Jesus did for you; that it's a gift that He came down and rescued you and gave you an offering that you couldn't yourself do. There's nothing works-based that's going to earn salvation. You're not good enough to stand before God in judgment and get away with your sin. No. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."¹ He's giving us the gift of salvation through the blood of Jesus on the cross. This is what you need to hear and you need to walk into that truth—I need Jesus in my life. And the Bible says when you accept Jesus you are born again.²

So now for some of us we may jump through this phase but if you've never grown up in the church, you've never heard about Jesus, you become a spiritual infant. And a couple weeks ago we saw a bunch of people step out in faith and be baptized and they were on all different spectrums of their spiritual growth but they all said—listen—publicly I want to say I'm a follower of Jesus.

¹ Bible Reference – John 14:6 (ESV): **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

² Bible References – John 3:3 & 5-6: **Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." [v. 5-6] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."**

And 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV): **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come.**

And so what does a spiritual infant need? Well, think about it, a spiritual infant just like a regular infant needs a parent, they need somebody to come alongside of them and feed them and watch over them and care for them just like a child. Us as believers, if you're new to the faith, you can't just say, *I believe in Jesus now and so I'm no longer going to party with my friends and drink and swear* – and then I'm good. No-no-no. No. When you're a believer you now need to walk in Spirit and truth, you need to now say, *Okay, what does God say about these things?* So you need spiritual parents to come alongside of you and teach you what the Scripture talks about with relationships and finances and purpose and all of these things, so you need people often.

I'm talking morning breakfast conversations with somebody who's a spiritual parent, who's been walking with Jesus. You need to talk to them about, *Here's how I was taught to view these things, what does Jesus have to say?* So a spiritual infant needs a parent, and then what happens is they become spiritual children. What happens with our children? You get a little bit more independence. As a believer you start to understand, *Okay, here's what God's calling me to do*, and when you read the Scriptures you start to walk in obedience. So what happens? *Okay, I need community. I need Gospel-centered community around me. I need people who love Jesus who are gonna come around me, and I need it to be a lifestyle, not just once a week.* So you step into community with different people from different backgrounds, and this intergenerational awesome thing that the church offers. And then you start to not only be served by hearing their gifts and maybe you're a young couple and you start to get counseled by an older couple who's walking with Jesus, then you start to use your gifts because you're growing up and you're starting to see your value in the body of Christ.

So what happens with a spiritual child? They become a young adult and here's the big shift. Okay? This is what we talk about a lot in students. The win is when somebody starts to think about themselves less because in the early, like, think about children, they are dependent—I need you to grow me, I need you to be with me in order to grow as a believer—the goal is to get them from self-centered to God-centered. So when a young adult grows up in the faith, when you become mature in your walk with the Lord, you start to see the church as not just about feeding you but you are part of the body of Christ. So now you start to shift and say, *Okay, here's how God has gifted me and I'm going to pour it back. I'm going to start building into these things, I'm not just going to be growing myself and taking the gifts of others. I'm gonna start to use the gifts to build up the Kingdom of God. You start to move from just feeding off of others to, Mom and Dad, I got this. Right?*

So you grow in faith. So just now I'm trying, hopefully, trying to use the gift that God has given me to grow you, and a spiritual young adult does the same. They don't just take from others and then walk out and say, *That was good, but the music was too loud.* Hear me? No-no-no, you shift from, *Okay, this is my church, I'm part of this body of Christ, I'm a part of this Kingdom mission. I have been set free from thinking about myself and worshiping myself. I'm growing up now and I know the Word. I've studied it for years and I've applied it to my life and I know what Jesus has to say about these things, so now I'm going to speak these things.* You're growing up.

And then a spiritual parent is somebody who is no longer thinking about themselves but thinking about the mission of God to the point where they're like, *You know what, I'm going to try to find some spiritual infants and children to mentor and to love and to feed.* And that is disciples making disciples—OR—its disciples just getting fat off of the Word on Sunday morning and doing nothing. And I would argue that's spiritual children. This is what Paul is saying. He says you want to be unified, first thing you have to do, church, is grow up. If you don't know what Jesus has to say about the Gospel that's on you, that's on you, that's because you chose to turn on Netflix instead of reading what He says about your marriage and your relationship and your future and your purpose. That's on you. You say you love Jesus but you're not

GROW UP!

SERIES: I LOVE MY CHURCH | WEEK 3 | 8.15.2021

willing to know what He says? You're a child waiting for a parent. And he says no-no-no, you want to be unified? You gotta grow up, church, you gotta grow up. This is the problem, he says, first off is you need to grow in maturity. Why? Look at the dangers he just says here.

What does Paul say is a danger for not growing up? He says because there are false doctrines – look at it – there's human cunningness and there's craftiness in deceitful schemes. That if, for those who are spiritual children, they're going to be very much vulnerable to that. When the arrows are coming they got no shield, so it's going to hit them and they're going to actually believe those things and they're going to be swayed. And this is what I wanted to bring to light, just to bring application to this.

EPH. 4:14

...tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes

About two weeks ago I taught in youth group on Wednesday night and we were on this worldview series, so we're just talking about worldviews, and I was assigned postmodernism. And for those who are in the church, if you don't know what that is you gotta grow up because it's everywhere and it's not biblical.

Here's what postmodernism says: This is my truth, and your truth, they're both true. And here is, in a nutshell, what your children are being fed is you're good, it's your family and society that makes you bad, but you're actually naturally good. That's not biblical. AND the Bible is not authoritative, it's just an old ancient book, the original Scripture – it's not authoritative, it's just a bunch of people's writings, it's not truth, you don't need to believe this. The ultimate value is not even what science says anymore, it's how you *feel*.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

– JEREMIAH 17:9 (KJV)

Feeling is the ultimate value and if you're a spiritual child that *sounds* good, but it's the enemy. But here's what happens: *I'm gonna leave my church. Why? Because they don't care about my feelings.*

You see? And so we grow up to know, *No-no-no. We're not even gonna receive that worldview, that's a lie from the enemy.* We all need Jesus, we're not naturally good, if we were naturally good why did Jesus have to die on the cross? I don't say that as an opinion, no-no, my God rescued me. If I was good, why did He have to do that? If I'm enough and I hate myself—no Jesus?—I'm lost.

POSTMODERNISM

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.

ISAIAH 64:6 (NLT)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 3:23 (ESV)

For the wages of sin is death...

ROMANS 6:23 (ESV)

but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[JESUS SPEAKING]

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

– JOHN 3:16 & 18 (ESV)

And so, church, one of the things we have to do is call out those things. We have to understand, okay, God calls us to understand there will be false doctrines that will come in amongst us and we need to know the Word to say, "That's not true! That's not true. The God who loves me says that this is truth, so

I'm going to anchor my worldview and my focus and my mind and my children and my family on *this* truth." If not, if I don't even know what the Bible says that's going to sound good, I'm going to adopt it. Of course God cares about my feelings. Of course He does, but is that truth? No. In fact, you are to take captive your thoughts and do what? Is this what Jesus says about me? If not, it's going, it's away, I don't even entertain it—but you need to know what God's Word says. You need to grow up.

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

– 2 CORINTHIANS 10:5 (ESV)

Look what he says the second point is, this is the second command, we need to grow in truth. Look at verse 15:

¹⁵ Rather,

— so rather than being children, rather than having all of these deceitful schemes that come into the church and divide the church because you don't what Jesus says and you're not walking in Spirit and truth, rather than that he says:

speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

– EPHESIANS 4:15 (ESV)

If you have a highlighter, underline, highlight this, come back to this passage, this Scripture often because this is why this is so powerful. We are to speak truth in love.

Here's what I was thinking while I was doing my preparation. Okay. What in the world does that mean? What does that mean? Here's what I think it means. In order to speak truth in love—guys, look at me—you need to know truth and you need to know love or you're speaking your truth, which is foolishness, and your love, which is conditional. So here's what we need to do. What is truth? Here's what he says, "in Christ." So in my mind it's, okay, in order to know what truth is I need to know what Jesus says because it's not *my* truth, it's not the things that I *feel* are true. It's no, the God of the universe who birthed and created everything that exists says this is truth. This is good. Okay. I need to know what He thinks, what He says, and then when I'm around people I need to speak the truth of God's Word despite the circumstances that I'll receive from it.

But I also need to know love, I need to know how God sees people, how Jesus sees people, so that I don't speak truth in pride but I see them the way Jesus would see them. I speak to them the way Jesus would speak to them, so I need to look [PICKS UP HIS BIBLE], okay, Jesus has these encounters and Scriptures and how does He approach it? Okay. He uses questions. What does He do? He sees their heart, He sees their background, He enters into their circumstances and He brings the hope of the Gospel. Okay, that's how I have to approach it. And so we're gonna get real. Okay? Because this is needed and in Christ is the goal. So unity comes when we grow up but when we're anchored on the Word of God, what Jesus cares about. Okay. This is what's happening here.

Over the past year I have never seen it like this past year, the enemy—and this is the source—it's not a politician, it's not a person, it's the enemy. We do not wrestle with flesh.³ The enemy has dropped major, major lies into the church to say divide, and when the church isn't anchored in Christ they pull those in and say this matters more than Jesus. Okay. *I'm gonna put who they voted for* [GESTURES

³ Ephesians 6:12 (ESV): **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

DROPPING THAT DIVISIVE ISSUE INTO THE CHURCH] – *watch them self-destruct*. Okay. *Your pigment of your skin* [DROPS THAT IN] – *watch the church self-destruct*. *Whether you have a shot or not* [DROPS THAT IN]. And he's like [THE ENEMY APPLAUDS HIMSELF] *Look, it's anything but Jesus, anything but Jesus*. Okay. Is this a conversation that's Kingdom? If not, why are we having it? I mean it. Like, ask yourself this question and this is so convicting in my life. I'm having a conversation and I'm like, *Would Jesus even care about this?* No.

I mean, here's the King of the kings, Lord of lords, the Author of all that is, comes down in human flesh—follow me—and can do anything He wants to do in this world, anything He wanted to do He could have done. He wants to be the ruler of Rome, [SNAPS HIS FINGERS] just like that angels would come, He would be there. Right? Anything He wanted to do in the world. He could change government, He could change people, He could bring about all the power. In fact, the enemy tempted Him with that⁴ and what did He do? He said no, Kingdom, Kingdom, I come for the Kingdom. This is not our home. This is not the mission. It's the Kingdom of God. I'm bearing treasures for the Lord. I'm not going to be caught up in conversations about this world. I'm not. And so if something keeps me from focusing on my mission, which is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I don't think about those things. I used to. I used to.

Like Paul, we're gonna talk about how Paul became so different and he became untouchable, which is really what the church could be if we did this, it would be untouchable, but before Paul focused in on Christ he was angry. In fact, he was stoning Stephen for doctrine. *Arrgh! I'm angry all the time. I hate people and their thoughts and what their view is. Man, we can't have these people in our church. Man, we gotta have these policies in our church.* It's about these things which is not our mission, we've been rescued from that. To live is Christ, to die is gain,⁵ so we use wisdom. But man, our conversations are different because they're anchored in crisis. Does Christ care about this conversation? If not, what are we doing with this? I don't know about you, but Lord, forgive us. Because here's the thing, those things that are planted in the church from the enemy to divide us, some of it has some truth in it, but it's not for the unity and building up of the church, and here's the sad part is it worked. And what does that say? Paul says that actually is a measurement of your walk with the Lord, church.



I'm angry!

We have a bunch of children who have false theology that divides us, or false values that because we don't think about Jesus, we're thinking about our retirement or the next generation or something, because of that this becomes more valuable than our mission. Are you following me? In Christ—that's how we have unity—in Christ. What does Jesus have to say about these things? And here's the good news is that's wonderful—*isn't it?*—that the things that the world fears I no longer have to fear because I'm in Christ and I'm called to something more than that. You can you can stress about this world being a utopia without Jesus, I'm not going to stress about that because I know He's coming back, and before He comes back it's a broken world that needs Jesus. They don't need policy, they need Jesus.

And so it doesn't—listen—it doesn't matter if the church is persecuted or not, Jesus is Lord and the church will flourish. So we fight for what is true. We fight for what is true and we represent Jesus well, but we pull our pride out of the conversations and we filter it. Okay, what does Jesus care about? Lord, help me to care about that. Here's practicality, if you hate your neighbor, if you hate your neighbor and you are in love with Jesus, you're sinning. I don't care why. You hear what I'm saying? If I hate my neighbor because they have this view of the world and you're a believer, you are sinning because you're

⁴ See Matthew Chapter 4

⁵ Bible Reference – Philippians 1:21 (ESV): **For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

not wrestling with their opinions, they're slaves to sin, and you know how to set them free. So I'm going to be all things for the sake of the Gospel. I'm not going to be a child having my way if they don't agree with me. No-no. My pride could get in the way of the Gospel, so I have to say Lord, "Take my pride" – even if I think I'm right. You're telling me that Jesus only talked to people that agreed with Him? You see how that works? Did Jesus run from people who had diseases? I mean, it sounds silly but, man, let that rest in you. What did Jesus do in the midst of when the world ran? He ran towards. Man, that is convicting.

Here's another thing he says, look at this, we are to grow in love, verse 16:

¹⁶ from whom the whole body,

— which is us —

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.

– EPHESIANS 4:16 (ESV)

And so we are called to grow up, to mature as believers, to understand truth. We need to understand who Jesus is, what He's called us to, and we need to understand love, the whole body. And so this is why we're in this series called I LOVE MY CHURCH because our body needs to grow in love for each other. We just do. We need to love each other better than we do. So how do we do that? Well, we need to get around each other. Like, here's the thing that made me angry this past year is somebody in the news says that you were supposed to hate your brother in Christ and you said, "Oh, okay." I'm gonna take this person who I don't know and I'm gonna allow them to impact how I see my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Instead, [INAUDIBLE] we have life together, we love each other, we sacrifice for each other, we serve each other, and there's nothing in the enemy that's going to break into us. In fact, we are quick to be vulnerable. So you're not telling me anything I don't know. I know I'm around sinful, broken people, because we are actively sharing our brokenness in prayer and longing for Jesus to transform us. There's no fear, there's no hidden things in this church because we're loving each other. In order to love each other we've got to be vulnerable with each other, we have to be in community with each other. So when we talk about—and this isn't your typical, like, get connected into groups—here's the value of all of our communities. Our life stage, our affinities, our men's and women's, the value is these are tools for you to do that. The ultimate value and goal is that you're connected to a Gospel-centered community, and so we're just providing you with tools to do that.

Here's what I mean is if you step into a small group, which you desperately probably need and they're not Gospel-centered—look at me—they're talking about stuff that isn't Jesus, get out of it. Let us know and get into one that is. I want to be in a community that's talking about how we can build the Kingdom of God and use our gifts, and hungry, I want to be in a community that's hungry to be in the Word and apply it to their lives. We want that for you. You need it. You need to grow up and you need to understand Jesus. So for those who aren't in community, it's not a check box because discipleship is a lifetime thing, you are going to be growing up in your faith until the day you are hit with glory.

It's like my gifts of "teaching" for what they are is not going to be needed when Jesus is here. Okay. Seminar. [MIMICS AN ANNOUNCER] JESUS IS IN THE AUDITORIUM. PASTOR JOHN IS IN THE LOFT. [LAUGHTER] Right? Like, I would be like, *I'm missing out on...* I'm like, *I'm going.* You know? So like no-no-no, right now we have this stewardship of okay, let's build each other up, let's say the things that we know Jesus would say in this situation. Let's love and pray for each other, and let's carry each other's burdens.

How beautiful would it be if you were in your closet praying and crying out for somebody that's not you? How rare is that? That you'd be crying and weeping over a brother and sister in Christ, just joining them in that battle. How unified would the church be if we all prayed for each other? Even just that, prayed according to the Word that God would shape us and transform us.

"Builds itself up in love." This is why we have communities. This is why they exist. If that wasn't something that we needed we would just say come to church on Sunday and leave. But no, you need more than that to grow up, you need more than that in order to not only say you love Jesus but live it out. Do you know that the early church, I just heard this this week from a pastor, did you know the early church wasn't called Christians? This blew my mind. Do you know what they called the early church? The Way. How awesome, guys, how awesome is that? Yeah, this group of people, if you go to them they just will kind of show you Jesus. So you're like, yeah, if you come in for an event they're just going to talk about how amazing Jesus is and how He transforms your life. Yeah, if you go to this women's thing they're just gonna talk about Jesus. Yeah, if you go to the lobby they're just gonna talk about Jesus. No matter where you go, whatever angle you take, they're just gonna point you to Jesus. What do we do? They were called The Way.

Did you know that Caesar would send spies into the church? In fact, he would send philosophers into the church and they would write back—we have these written letters—they would write back to Caesar what they absorbed as spies and they saw and they, like, they would write these letters back. Aristides, I think I got that wrong, but he was—don't hold me to it—but he was a spy and we have these letters where he writes back to Caesar, here are some bullet points. He says they don't care about the things everyone else cares about. He's a spy! They don't care about the things that... they're not wanting to become super wealthy and they're not wanting to spend their time on Netflix all day, and they're not trying to build their likes online. They're not doing the things that the world is doing. They look very different how they spend their time, their resources and energy, they're kind of weird. This is what he's reporting back to Caesar.

Caesar, I know you think they're a threat—by the way, Caesar was right because they just took over Rome, they're going to take over Rome in a couple hundred years and you're not gonna stop it because you can't stop the Spirit of God. You can't stop Him. But he says this: Their eyes were not set on earthly things. Caesar, they're weird, they don't talk about the things of this earth. They're like, and he says, they're meeting – and this is amazing because we have this in the book of Acts, too. Right? So the Acts isn't lying because he's a spy, he's going to tell the truth. He was, like, they met each other's needs. So no one was really hungry, because if somebody was hungry they just fed them. And no one was really without clothes because if they needed clothes they would give them clothes. There was no need amongst them because they were quick and God-centered to see it and meet it. Man, that's a group of spiritually mature believers. Right? They weren't taking as much as they were giving.

Like, practically, here's something I struggle with, if you're sitting here in a church and this is your home and you see a need that you can meet and you don't meet it, like, I don't understand that because we're stewards of this. Like, we're all going to be accountable to this. This isn't mine, this is our mission, we have been blessed to steward this thing. And so what he's saying is no-no, there was no one that did that, no one that saw... no, they were out, they were running. The first one to get there gets the prize of loving somebody and sacrificing for them. This is how he described it. And then this is what rocked me, you know what he says to Caesar? "There is something divine in the midst of them."⁶ A spy comes in the

⁶ From *The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*. Source: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html>

GROW UP!

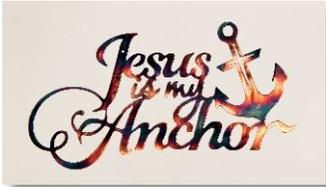
SERIES: I LOVE MY CHURCH | WEEK 3 | 8.15.2021

church and his conclusion is there's something divine about... something in these people that are divine, that's not human. So what was his report not even knowing—Jesus was really loud there.

And so, man, church, I'm gonna have the band come up, what would it look like if a spy from the government comes into our church? Let's make it practical. And they're meant to close us down and they leave thinking, *I met Jesus there, a bunch of people that really love Jesus, that's all I gotta say. That's all I can say. I don't... they're just weird. They don't talk the same way people talk, and they don't have the same anxieties that my neighbors have. They're just... they love Jesus and that's what – if you talk to anybody that's what they're about.* Can you imagine, can you imagine the impact that we can have if we just did that? If we just walked out our faith and we all grew up and we were obedient to the gifts that God's given us, as a body unified in Christ, imagine the impact that would make.

And so what do we need to do? Well, Paul tells us, here are our commands: We need to grow up, so you need to learn more about what Bible has to say, you need to apply it to your life. You need to grow up, you need to get connected, find small groups and have conversations. Be in your Word, write questions, get those questions answered. I have yet, church, I have yet to come across a question that knowing the character and nature of God that I can't filter through that. Okay, maybe the Bible doesn't specifically say that, but I know who Jesus is and I know what He cares about. So this question that I get, man, I can filter through truth my Anchor and come out with an application. Okay, based on the character and nature of God, this is what God would say about this. You can do that when you're anchored in truth, it's your filter for all the things that you're going to get exposed to, it's your armor. So we need to grow up.

Here's another one, we need to be anchored in truth. That's why coming into the fall we're going to start a series, it's a doctrine series, and I'm so excited about it. Why? Because we as pastors said what does our church need the most? They need to know what the Bible says. So we're in a doctrine series where we're going to talk to you and, man, if you come every week and you get connected, we're going to have packets for our women's communities and small groups and we're gonna have discussion guides. If you come and you really take it seriously and you write your notes and you repeat them during the week and you put it on the mirror and you anchor yourself in truth, by the end of it, because we're going all the way to Christmas, by the end you will be equipped to know what you believe and how to defend it.



So we talk about the inerrancy of Scripture, something that's under attack right now, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, all these things that matter, we're gonna talk about it. We're gonna dive into it in our doctrine series so don't miss it. Invite people, invite your lukewarm Christians that maybe left the church because of the hypocrisy in it and say no-no, come back because Jesus is still there.

Here's what I want to end with because I want to make this practical. Remember how I talked about Paul and I said that Paul was so angry over doctrine and then Paul met Jesus, this is my prayer for every individual in this room, Paul became untouchable. Man, what would it look like if we were all untouchable? You don't think I'm right? I'll prove it to you.

<i>Paul, we're gonna kill you for your faith.</i>	To live is Christ, to die is gain.
<i>Okay, Paul, we're not gonna kill you for the faith, we're gonna throw you in prison.</i>	Okay, well, before, uh, an earthquake comes and breaks down the walls, I'm going to save your guards.

GROW UP!

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Come on, church, you hearing me? Your guards are going to get saved, bring it on! How do you impact Paul? Paul, yeah, but that guard disagrees with you. No-no-no, that's nothing because I'm anchored in truth, because I'm saved. What can the world do to Paul? He's untouchable. He's focused on the Kingdom of God and nothing is gonna keep him from that. He's just gonna see his circumstances and redeem them. Kill me – I'm with Jesus. Throw me in prison – I'm gonna save everyone. That's the goal, church, this is how we become unified as we grow in that truth, become a bunch of untouchables because we're marked by the blood of Jesus and we've been transformed, everything about us. That there's something divine in the midst of us.

That's why I love my church is because I pray that that's what our church becomes. The church needs to become that, because here's the... I'm going to end on this, there is a threat against this [HOLDS UP HIS BIBLE]. And because people are wanting to be approved by men over being honoring and obedient to God, they're saying, *I'm putting this down; what do you want me to say?* And we will never do that here because when we abandon this [Bible] we are just as hopeless as the world is.

So I'm gonna close in prayer and I want you guys to be stirred by this truth. This is something that God has convicted me, like, over the past year. I'm, like, I need to step more back into community, I stepped away too much and I know that the enemy has a foothold when I'm not around brothers and sisters linking arms. So we're to worship together, give God glory, worship, give this time to Him, pray, confess. Okay? Love you guys.

Jesus,



We pray right now for your hand of blessing, and I thank You right now for all those who give in this place to the mission, to the Kingdom. I thank You for their obedience to give, Lord. I pray that You give us the desire to give more for your Kingdom. What a gift, what a privilege it is to give to something that's eternal.

Lord, I want to thank You for everyone online watching, thank You for everyone in this room. I pray that You would help us be unified with your Spirit, only You can do this, Lord. So I pray we lean into that as we worship You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



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Keywords: truth, anchor, grow, Kingdom

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