

Ephesians 4:14-16¹

***Scripture divisions used in our series and various commentaries differ from each other.*

This is the reason for the occasional discrepancy between the verse range listed above and the notes given below.

2. The preservation of unity ([4:7-16](#))

¹⁴Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Notes**[4:14](#)**

Then we will no longer be immature like children.—This rendering considers that the conjunction *hina* [^{TG}[<G2443>](#), ^{ZG}2671] introduces result rather than its normal usage of introducing purpose. This is certainly possible and so rendered in many recent translations (RSV, NASB, TEV, JB, NIV, NJB).

[4:15](#)

Instead, we will speak the truth in love.—The NLT's use of the adverb “instead” rightly marks the stark contrast with the previous verse. The rendering “speak the truth” is a translation of the participle “truthing.” It conveys the idea of truthfulness both in speech and conduct.

[4:16](#)

He makes the whole body fit together.—Lit., “from whom the whole body being joined together.” The preposition with the relative pronoun literally means “out of, from.” The relative pronoun refers back to Christ, not the head, and means “from whom the whole body is fitted,” designating the source of growth.

As each part does its own special work.—This refers back to the word *metron* [^{TG}[<G3358>](#), ^{ZG}3586] (measure) in [4:13](#); it indicates that each member is to function in the measure of the gift that has been given to it ([4:7](#)).

full of love.—Lit., “in love”—that is, building itself up in love. This corresponds to the truthfulness in love mentioned in the preceding verse.

1. Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 16: Ephesians-2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 83-91.

Commentary (cont. from Eph 4:7-13)

The second aspect of the goal of attaining maturity is that believers grow into mature personhood. The word “mature” refers to a person who is fully grown and mature, as opposed to a child who is gullible to false teachings, as mentioned in [4:14](#). This particular reference to the mature person does not refer to individuals but to the church, the body composed of individuals. This is analogous to [2:15-16](#), where it states that believing Jews and Gentiles were created into one new person and brought into one body. Although the generic term for humanity (*anthrōpos* [^{TG}<G444>, ^{ZG}476]) is used in [2:15](#), in the present context the term *anēr* [^{TG}<G435>, ^{ZG}467] (man) is used. It normally distinguishes between male and female, but here it distinguishes between a boy and an adult man. The emphasis is not on gender (males only) but rather on adulthood, because the present context makes reference to “God’s people” ([4:12-13](#)), each receiving a gift ([4:7](#)), all in one body ([4:4](#), [12](#)). Hence, each believer is to utilize his or her gift in order for the body to attain full maturity.

Building on the first two aspects of the goal, the third component is to attain to the measure of Christ’s full stature. As the church is filled by Christ, so is the stature of the church filled by him. Again, it is not speaking of any individual believer; rather, “we” are to measure up to this extent. Each member is to use the gift that has been given to him or her in measure ([4:7](#)), and as each member fulfills this, then the body will measure ([4:13](#)) to Christ’s full stature. This does not imply that the church completes Christ.

When will the church reach its full measure—now or in the future? Although no time frame is given, certainly this goal can be accomplished in the present age, otherwise one could conclude that either the gifts or the power of the Holy Spirit are inadequate. Also, since one goal of maturity is that believers will not accept false teachings ([4:14](#)), it would necessarily refer to the present age and not the eschatological consummation. Hence, full maturity is the goal of the gifts. This maturity is accomplished as each utilizes the gift(s) given to him or her. As individuals grow, they are to share this growth so that the whole body grows.

Paul then explains the ultimate purpose for Christ’s giving gifts ([4:14-16](#)). First, there is the negative, a warning of the danger of remaining immature and thus susceptible to false teaching ([4:14](#)). Then comes the positive growth to maturity in Christ, which causes the body to grow in love ([4:15-16](#)). Negatively, believers are no longer to be children who are inexperienced and unstable and open to false teaching. Often, such teaching is presented by cunning people who by their deceit lead others into error. This is obvious in the machinations of present-day cults. They propagate their erroneous system by trickery and deceit, especially in the use of Scripture. This confuses immature believers who lack a proper understanding of God and his Word. Generally, cults tend to shy away from those who are well-acquainted with Scripture and the God of Scripture. Consequently, it is of utmost importance for believers to understand God’s Word.

The positive purpose of the gifts is the maturation of believers. In stark contrast to the false teachers portrayed in [4:14](#), believers are to be truthful both in conduct and speech ([4:15](#)). Being truthful means being transparent, revealing the real state of affairs. The following prepositional phrase “in love” tempers truthfulness. Truth must be presented gently in love. Again, this is in contrast with the previous verse, which indicates that false teachers use deceit for their selfish ends, whereas truth with love considers the interest of others supremely important. This manner of conduct makes it possible for believers to become more like Christ, who is the embodiment of love ([3:19](#); [5:2](#), [25](#); [Rom 8:35](#); [2 Cor 5:14](#)) and truth ([4:21](#); [John 14:6](#)). Believers are called upon to grow in their love for God and others. Paul described the process of growth using a physiological model ([4:16](#)). As each individual member of

the body functions properly, the whole body develops. The same is true for the body of Christ. Each believer is to utilize his/her gift(s) in conjunction with other believers. As this occurs, it will cause the whole body to develop. Again the ingredient of love is an important part of the process. As in a physical body, so also in the body of Christ—when members of the body fail the body becomes deformed. Each member is to utilize the gift(s) in measure (4:16) as it was measured to him or her (4:7; cf. [Rom 12:3](#))—no more and no less. Here again it is each member, not just a few members, who is to function so that the body can grow into maturity.

In conclusion, the emphasis of this section is that each believer is given a gift according to the measure of Christ (4:7-10), which enables each believer to minister toward the goal of edifying the body of Christ. All of this growth is done in the context of love. The past animosity between Jews and Gentiles can no longer exist because now, in Christ, both are reconciled to each other, making it possible for them to utilize their gifts to build up one another and, in turn, build up the whole body, the church.

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Ephesians 4:14-16²

4:14. Instability is one definite sign of immaturity. Paul himself upbraided some Corinthians who were still "babes in Christ" after apparently being Christians for about 5 years ([1 Corinthians 3:1-4](#)). The writer of Hebrews dealt with the same basic problem in his letter ([Hebrews 5:11-6:12](#)).

"Cunning" comes from an interesting Greek word (*kubeia*, "cube") which was used literally of dice throwing. A clever trickster actually could hold two sets of dice in his hand and throw whichever set he desired. Tricksters who use crafty methods appeal to immature Christians who do not grow spiritually. These "babes in Christ" seem always to be looking for something a little more sensational than the last thing that appealed to them. Unfortunately, these individuals help many religious hucksters to build their own kingdom, rather than concentrating on building God's kingdom.

4:15. Instead of falling for trickery Christians should be obedient to Christ. Obedience to Christ and the ability to recognize religious charlatans are definite signs of Christian maturity. Christ is the source from which the ability to grow comes, and He is the object or goal of that growth. Immature Christians have a tendency to overly revere Christian leaders. Obviously, leaders should be respected. Sometimes, however, respect can turn into worship. Paul dealt with this tendency to exalt leaders when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians ([1 Corinthians 1:10-17](#)). While Christian leaders do help us grow spiritually, we need to keep our concentration on Christ, the perfect example.

4:16. In addition to the fact that a mature Christian will be stable and obedient, the last verse of the section shows this will result in a coordinated "body" with each member fulfilling his function. Just as the human body grows as a total organism with each part being involved, so the body of Christ grows as believers allow Christ His rightful place and as they do their part in the total process.

Unfortunately, many modern congregations have adopted the unscriptural philosophy of "hiring" a pastor to perform all the ministry for the congregation. These congregations can grow only to a certain point because one person can accomplish only so much. How refreshing it is, though, to see a local assembly where most of the members are involved in some kind of ministry. That church will be a growing assembly, meeting the needs of people in the area and reaching the lost for Christ.

Believers need to be taught that full-time ministers are placed in the Church by Christ to help equip the saints so they in turn can minister and help others mature in the Lord. Even the first New Testament apostles were concerned about being able to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word ([Acts 6:4](#)). A careful study of Acts chapter 6 will show that the apostles considered themselves "in the service of the Word" or "the deacon of the Word" (*tē diakonia tou logou*). The first obligation of occupational ministers must be to pray and to expound God's Word.

2. Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library – Galatians-Philemon*, (Springfield, IL: World Library Press, Inc., 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 139-141.