

Christians should desire unity among themselves, but they sadly sometimes accept the purposes and methods of the world. That is a serious problem, because it does not lead to the unity which God wants. Mature Christian unity is centered on Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul's teaching on unity (Ephesians 4:1–16) reaches a climax in verses 14–16 with the purpose of unity. It is centered in Jesus Christ.

I. *Christ is the means for mature unity.*

1. *Unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ brings stability.*
 - a. Christ gave gifts to the church (v.11) in order to equip believers (v.12) which leads to a unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God (v. 13). The result is a stable maturity (verse 14).
 - b. The opposite of stability is likened to infants and being tossed about in a storm. Toddlers are not steady on their feet. Storms toss ships about. False teaching is like the storms that push immature believers first in one direction and then another. False teaching uses deception, but solid biblical teaching helps against being deceived.
 - c. Instability prevents growth. Without growth there will be a lack of unity. Christians need to be firmly anchored to the truth to grow spiritually and be united.
2. *Christ's truth lived out in Christ's love promotes growth.*
 - a. When we speak the truth to one another in love, we will grow together into Christ.
 - b. "Speaking the truth" is one word that has the sense of living a life that is truthful. Being truthful includes non-verbal communication. Both verbal and non-verbal truthfulness must be in love. Love and truth are not mutually exclusive. See 1 Corinthians 13.
 - c. Living with Christ's love and in a manner pleasing to Him helps in becoming like Jesus. We grow properly when we live truthfully in love with one another. Then each grows closer to Jesus and we all grow closer to one another. Remember that we will one day stand before Jesus and we will not want to be ashamed before Him (1 John 2:28).

We need to grow in our knowledge of Christ and to speak Christ's truth to one another in order to achieve mature unity.

II. *Christ is the goal of mature unity.*

1. Believers are to grow up in all aspects into Christ which makes Jesus Christ the goal of growth. In every area of faith or character Christians should become more like Jesus. The more we are like Jesus, the more we will experience unity. Believers should have the same mind as Jesus (Philippians 2:1–5).
2. Ephesians 4:15 implies this as well in that Jesus is called the Head. Paul pictures believers together as one body. The head of that body is Jesus, who directs the body. We are to submit to the Head and Jesus will shape how we think. This both brings unity and is the goal of unity. The goal of mature unity is to have Christ clearly functioning as head.

III. *Christ is the source by which the whole body and each member grows together.*

Each believer must do his or her part for the body to grow. But all the growth of the body comes "from him," that is, from Christ (v.16).

1. The "supporting ligaments" join and hold the body together. Ultimately Jesus joins and holds all together, but He uses people to do that. See Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Acts 2:47.
2. Christ assures that the essential parts, the "supporting ligaments," are there to keep the body together. Cf. Colossians 2:9. These may be the gifts and offices which Christ appoints by His Spirit in the body. Christ by His Spirit appoints elders to oversee the church (cf. Acts 20:28). Their task is to shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5:1–2) which includes keeping the sheep from scattering.
3. Christ is the source of grace which each part needs for its proper working (v.16 with v.7).
4. The body builds itself up in love which comes from Jesus Christ. Believers should obey the commands to love one another (cf. vv. 29, 32), but that love comes from Christ (1 John 4:7, 19).

When the parts of the body relate properly to the Head, the body grows. Jesus Christ is the source of growth. Therefore, He is also the source of mature unity in the church. He uses each part as the means of accomplishing that growth. Therefore, we should care that our brothers or sisters in Christ are spiritually healthy.

Mature unity in the church is all about Jesus Christ. If we want unity for any other reason than serving Christ, we have missed the purpose of unity. If we think that we can obtain unity by any other means than submitting to Christ, we will fail to arrive at the unity which God desires. If we attempt to draw upon any other resource than what Christ has provided to obtain unity, we will remain frustrated. Each part must do its work as Christ enables each one. Unity in the church is all about Jesus Christ, the source and the goal, for His glory.