

HOW WE GROW: Formed in Christ, Together | Ephesians 4:11–16

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church Sermon Podcast. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and I'm glad that you are joining us today online.! So no matter where or when you are listening to this, I would like to invite you to slow down, open your heart, and join us as we listen for what God is saying to us today.

Let us open the Word of God together. All right. Well, good morning, everyone. It is great to be here on February 1st.

Can you believe we're already in February? I can't. I feel like the new year just began, and things are already going, momentum's happening, and I guess that's just how every year goes.

I remember as a kid how waiting for the weekend seemed like forever, or waiting for summer vacation, or waiting for summer vacation to be over, to go back to school.

It seemed like an eternity. I mean, do you remember those days when it was just waiting for hours upon hours? You know, an hour is such a long time, and then as you get older, you're like, what week we had a weekend?

[1 : 37] What was that? Right? And so, as the saying goes, time flies as you're having fun, and hopefully we're having a lot of fun here. Today, we are going, we are, the sermon for today is titled, How We Grow, Formed in Christ Together.

And I want you to think as we begin here, the idea of, when was the last time you went for a hike, or you went on a path, and you're traveling, you have your backpack with you, and you can't wait to go see, you know, the top of a mountain, or you have a hill.

Maybe you're going to see a specific lake. Maybe you're going to see a waterfall, and you're seeing all of these different sights and sounds that are happening.

It's really remarkable. When you're on a trail, and you're hiking, or maybe, if you don't like hiking, maybe there's been a time where you have gone for a drive, and you just go, and you keep going, and you might lose cell phone service, right?

You keep going into a new destination, and you may not know where exactly you're going. Well, when we embark on a new journey, we have to think that we follow the trail, and hopefully we know exactly where we're going.

[3 : 05] I know nowadays we have GPSs and cell phone services, but for the idea, for the sake of this, we think of the idea of a map, of going from one destination to the next, right?

And hopefully not deviating from the path, and how important it is to stick to the plan, as it were, to get to the destination. And I have this image here of a guy who's hiking, and he's going to a specific destination.

And I want you to think of this image, not only as hiking, or going to a new trail, or a new sight, or sound, but also how it refers to how this image is but a representation of our spiritual walk in Christ. You know, before we know Jesus Christ, we might be a wanderer. We might be a drifter. We might be someone who doesn't know Christ yet, and we're just going through the motions, searching the hills and valley, trying to get on some sort of trail.

How many of you have been lost on a trail before, right? It's not fun. I don't recommend it anytime soon, right? You get lost, and you've got to find the trail. And how many, for many of us, before we know the Lord, we are journeying, we're drifting, we're going through life, and then eventually we get on to, hopefully, Lord willing, you end up on the appropriate trail.

[4 : 30] The one that leads to life everlasting. And that's the most important thing for us before we become a Christian. And when we receive salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, being born again,

we begin on this spiritual journey in Christ and how important it is.

We journey and we go with Christ. Now, for some times when you are on a trail, you might need someone to help guide you.

Maybe you've been on a trail like that, right? You need a specific guide who knows the way and says, look, you've got to watch out for this section of the trail. It's very difficult to climb, or it's very difficult descent, or if you're not careful, you're going to slip and fall, right?

I remember as a kid when my mother used to take me to the mountains, there was one trail that we would go on, and she would always say, don't be very careful when you're in this section.

It's kind of like the road would kind of turn like a moon shape, right? And this one section would just drop. And it wasn't safe at all.

[5 : 41] And there was one time, silly old me, right? I thought, oh, maybe I'll walk towards that. My mom's like, no, you're not going there. I don't want you falling off that cliff. And we think about that, you know, with parents, but we also think about that in guides in our own life as we're journeying.

But also when we think of Christ and how we have someone at the door, it looks like how the Lord guides us, right?

To green pastures. And how we think of Christ as the shepherd leading us and guiding us, all of us, making sure, you know, the protection from ravenous wolves and also making sure we don't deviate from the path.

And for some of us, we may think of the image that happens of what happens when a sheep gets lost, right? Where Christ leaves the 99 to find the one. So this is spiritual growth.

This is part of the journey. As we journey with Christ, we are growing, we are being molded, we are being transformed, essentially. And it's important for us to know that spiritual growth then is not accidental.

[6 : 45] It is something that is intentional. When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, when you're saved by grace through faith, that is the beginning of your new life in Christ. Essentially, you become born again and you become an infant.

A baby Christian, as it were, right? And you want to learn and grow and follow in the ways of Christ to become transformed and to become more like him.

And that is the intentional design that Christ has for all of us. Now, it's not a competition. And it's important for us to note that from the get-go. For many of us, there may be times where we think, well, isn't this person holier?

Isn't this person got it all together? And I sure don't. But we should not compare ourselves to other people. What's important is that we are journeying from Christ where we are at specifically in our own situation and circumstance.

Where you are at in the journey maybe will be different than the person next to you. And we have to think also how important it is that we live in this world that teaches that there are many different paths, right?

[7 : 50] There's many different paths to go up a mountain. And they would tell you these kind of things. But when we talk about Jesus Christ, we have to remember him as the way, the truth, and the life, right?

To enter through the narrow gate, right? To follow the path that Christ has set before you. The one who shows us the narrow life. The path to life everlasting. And transformation.

Not only salvation. Not only receiving eternal life. But transformation that happens here on earth.

And how important that is for us. Let this be a reminder of how important it is for us to find Christ.

And to begin our spiritual walk in our journey. And now, when we think about this, our message today is how we grow. I've been doing this sermon series going over who we are as a church.

And how we belong into the body of Christ. And this message today is how we grow in Christ. And how important it is, right? Just as we are called to belong to Christ, we are called to journey with Christ.

[8 : 56] And to begin in spiritual growth and transformation. And so, before we go any further, I'd like for us to pray. And then we will go ahead and turn our Bibles.

Father God, we thank you for this time and for this opportunity for us to gather here this morning. As we are going over Ephesians chapter 4, verses 11 through 16.

This idea about how we grow in you. And how important it is for us to make that decision to believe in you and to be saved. But also how important it is for us upon that salvation to grow in you.

To become more mature and to not be spiritual infants forever. But for us to be on this path of inward transformation for our lives.

Changing the way that we think. The way that we speak. The way that we live our lives. So that we can bear fruit for the world to see. And what a wonderful transformation it is to become more like your son, Jesus Christ.

[9 : 58] And so, we just pray a special blessing on this time. And I pray for everyone here who is in the room this morning. And those who are attending online.

Whether it is TikTok, Facebook, or all the other places. As we just pray for every single person. That they may have a curiosity. And the sense of awe and wonder for who you are.

And your word as well. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. And we all say together, Amen church. And so last week, again, I was telling you. We were talking about how we belong.

And so today we're asking a different question. And that question is, well what happens after we belong, right? We think about how important it is for us to have Christ as the firm foundation in our lives.

And how we build upon that foundation in our lives. And that many people belong. But we all are called to grow.

[10 : 56] Right? We have to think it's not just about believing in Christ is the most important. But being on a path for spiritual growth is also important for us.

And as we are called to seek the higher things, we're called to grow. And not to remain stagnant in our faith. So we have to think that growth is not just about becoming someone else.

It's about becoming who Christ wants you specifically to be. And I want to make that extremely clear to all of you. That God has a plan for each and every one of you. For you to grow into what he wants you to be.

And that's very important. So we have, let's turn our Bibles. It's going to be on page 1161. So it's going to be Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 through 16.

It's actually supposed to be 11 through 16. That was my mistake. But that's alright. It's still going to be page 1161 in your ESV Pew Bibles. Or you can turn to Ephesians in your Bible of choice.

[12 : 01] So let's just go ahead and turn there. We'll start at verse 11, even though I know the slide says verse 1 here. Are we all there, church?

Alright, so Ephesians 4, chapter 4, verse 11. Let's read it together, church. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.

To what? To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Verse 13. Until we attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

To mature. Some translations say manhood. Mature. Maturity. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So that we may no longer be what?

Children. Right? Tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine and human cunning. Right? You have to think of persuasion. Right? That kind of sneakiness that happens.

[12 : 59] Right? And by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Whenever I read schemes, I think of someone who's plotting and they have like that evil laugh from cartoons. Right? Someone who's scheming. Right? In verse 15 then, rather, speaking the truth in what?

In love. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into whom? To Christ. Right? And verse 16.

From whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is eclipsed. When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds up itself in what?

In love. In love. Right? So it's talking about the unity of the saints. Right? The body of Christ being together and functioning properly. Right? That's something that is extremely important for us to notice in here.

And so in this, we see in verse 11. Right? We see the providing. Right? It talks about the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists.

[14 : 01] Right? The shepherds and the teachers. You have all of these positions that the Lord is providing. And I want you to think about this. That God provides for his church so that the church can grow and so that it can be equipped.

Right? You have these examples in here and that Christ is providing. He is giving people to the church. And how important it is for us to know that.

That God provides what we need. Right? Not just in our own personal walk with the Lord, but when we're thinking of the building up of the church. Right? That we are better when we are together. And God's going to provide the right people at the appropriate time to build up the church. How wonderful is that church? Right? We think that the Lord will send people specifically to help equip the saints is something that is remarkable.

And it is something that is divine. Right? Giving these things. Right? The saints for the work of ministry, to building up the body of Christ. Right? It's talking about the congregation as well as churches.

[15:08] And so, we have to think that these gifts then, these people, these individuals are given meant for formation. Right? For the church to be formed so that it can become more effective in its building up of the saints.

But also when we think of how we reach out to other people. Sharing in the gospel message to others as well. And it's important for us to know that God does not abandon his people. But he provides for his people. Right? God provides leader to build up his church. Amen on that? That's something that's very powerful. Right? We go then into verse 12. Right?

To equip the saints for the work of ministry. And that's very interesting. Right? Some of you may have heard the saying that the church is only for sinners.

Some of you may have heard the church is only for saints. Well, you want to know something? The church is for both. Right? It's for saints and sinners. Right? And none of us are perfect.

[16:06] We all need healing and restoration and guidance in our own life. Can I get an amen on that? Right? It's very important for us to recognize that. That every single person is invited into the doors of the church to know the Lord and to grow in him.

And when we think of ministry then, it is a call for all of us to grow in Christ. Right? To be equipped. Every believer is called to be equipped. Right?

And we have to also realize that leaders equip the saints. Right? To spiritually grow. To know in your spiritual gifting. And to be able to have the ability to discern.

That's one of the higher things I've mentioned before. Right? The ability to know right from wrong, truth from lies. That's a really wonderful and incredible gift that we can think about. Now, something that I will speak to recently online.

I'm not going to mention the name of the organization. But there was an organization the other day that said that it is more important for us to be equipped than to be called.

[17:10] And I didn't like that at all. We are all called by God so that we can be equipped. It's not the other way around. And we have to be very careful with that. Right? God calls every single one of us to enter into a relationship with him.

Right? That's very important for us. Now, the equipping then is just as God is calling us, he is going to provide for us people who will equip us. Right?

We have to be ready. We have to be able to be equipped. It's not going and getting equipped first and then being called. I don't know where that was the most wild thing I've ever read.

But in any case, it's important for us to know the calling comes first. First. And we respond to that calling. Right? Just as we respond to the call for Christ to receive salvation.

Right? We respond to the call for what the Lord has for us in where we are to go, what we are to do, what specifically does God have for your life. That is what it's about.

[18:07] Not the other way around. I think it's very unfortunate. It's a very well-known organization to read something like that. But again, I'm not criticizing the organization. Maybe it was a misunderstanding. But in any case, I wanted to make it very clear.

The calling comes before equipping. Right? And so scripture shows us, like as I'm mentioning, that God calls for all of us to be saved. And there's another call. Right? For us to grow by being equipped.

And so the church grows as everyone is being equipped. We have to think that God provides leadership. And that the Lord will provide the resources necessary for us to be able to grow and to reach our God-given potential.

You have to think for a moment. The Lord has a much better way for your life than what the world has to offer. I don't know about you, but some of you may have lived in the world before.

I admit, in the past, I did. Right? And I didn't like where the world had me end up. In some very dark places. In places I don't ever want my children to know.

[19 : 10] In places I don't want any of you to know. And you can say very similar things. Right? In other words, God has a much more divine way. A way that is full of truth.

That is full of life. That is full of clarity and consistency. Not lies and hatred. Not this sense of confusion. How many of you have followed a path before and you ended up confused and lost and not knowing where in the world you're supposed to go?

Our God is the God of clarity and consistency. And he provides newness of life and transformation to become more like him. That is important for us to recognize as the difference between God's way and what the world has for us.

We don't follow the ways in the world. We follow the ways of Christ. And so, in that, we go into verses 13 to 16. Right? Where the Apostle Paul is explicitly mentioning the sense of, right, verse 12, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, building up the body, until we attain the unity of faith. Do you notice how unity is something that we should strive for? As we are being built up, we have to go towards unity and not away from it. Isn't that interesting? Unfortunately, there's many places out there where they're more focused on division as the goal rather than unity.

[20 : 28] Or there's more places that are more focused on hatred rather than the love of Christ. Isn't this very interesting? That we're to focus on the things that are higher, right? So, the unity of the faith, right?

The knowledge of the Son of God. Now, in the language here, it mentions mature manhood, right? And I want to be very clear in this because the Greek does speak about mature adults, right? Now, in the English standard, it does have more of a leaning towards the masculine. That's all right. But if it was talking explicitly towards men, it would say, until we achieve mature manhood and we are no longer little boys.

So, I need to make that distinction very clear here because, unfortunately, sometimes in any translation, you can misread a translation. It's important at times to go into the original language and to understand.

And I'm not criticizing translations. I'm just saying, let's just make that very clear. When it's talking about mature manhood, it is talking about mature adulthood, right? Because the call is for everyone to mature in Christ.

[21 : 30] Can I get an amen on that? Does that make sense? All right. So, it's important to note that in the text, the Greek speaks of mature adults and no longer being children, right? And so, Paul is speaking to all adults reaching maturity, right?

No longer being children. We have to think about it. How many of you, I mean, I know when we talk about our own children, they all grow up too fast, right? We all know that one for sure.

And we think about the physical world where children, they're all cute and cuddly and they just move and they kick around and they spit up things, right? And then they begin to crawl on the floor and you don't want them to go there.

And the next thing you know, they're standing and you hope they don't fall over. The next thing you know, they start walking and then they start running. And then they keep going, right? And they keep growing, right? The physical capabilities that happen within the physical world.

Well, we have to think about how it is with the spiritual world. It's interesting that God calls for us to not remain as spiritual infants. For us to be born again in the spiritual world, we are called to grow.

[22 : 34] It's no different than how we grow in the physical world. That's something that's so important. So we cannot remain as infants. We are to grow and to mature, right? To reach adolescence and to reach adulthood, right?

All of these different things are so important. So in other words, when we think of verses 13 through 16, right? The sense of unity, speaking the truth in love, no longer being children, no longer being swayed, right?

By people that can speak well. We remain rooted in the word of God. That's something that's very important for us, right? And in that, to grow in Christ then is to become mature and also united. Isn't that interesting? You think about that and how, well, I would never encourage for you to remain an infant or immature in Christ, but to become mature.

And in the same way, I would not want you to become divided, but to be united in Christ, to focus on the love of Christ rather than hatred.

[23 : 39] And it's unfortunate when that happens the other way. And so Christ gives leaders to equip all believers then so that the church grows together into mature unity in Christ.

Let me say that one more time. Christ provides. He gives us leaders to equip all believers so that the whole church, right? The body of Christ grows together into mature unity in Christ. Amen? That's so important for us, right? And so in this then, what does this mean then, right? So we had the observation. We're now going into the interpretation, right? And so that's going to be the next slide then here.

The interpretation. The first one is growth is formation for greater things, right? That's the first thing. We think of how Hebrews talks about milk from solid food, right?

It's that famous line, right? You think about how children, they have their formula or they have milk as an infant. And eventually, well, hopefully, they get to the point where they're having solid food.

[24 : 47] It could be mac and cheese. It could be crackers, right? And then as they get older, their palate's going to change. I mean, maybe for teenagers, they just love pizza. I understand that. But the idea is that they eventually are no longer drinking milk, right?

Or not just milk. They have more of a palate, right? More different things that they're able to eat here, right? And so in the Hebrews passage, it talks about how we grow into maturity, the ability to discern.

We're not turning to Hebrews. I'm just referencing this here. And so maturity then is living out the faith, right? To seek the higher things as Colossians mentions or how we go from milk to solid food as Hebrews mentions.

And we have to think that when we're talking about Christianity, that it's not just in knowing Christ, right? That's the most important thing. But upon knowing Christ, we are growing in him.

We are being transformed from the inside out in the words that we speak and how we conduct our lives, right? In other words, we are saved by grace through faith.

[25 : 49] And that grace, it keeps working in us. It keeps forming us. It keeps growing us. It keeps transforming us and moving us to become more like Christ.

I don't know about you. How many of you had a favorite celebrity, right? When you were a teenager, right? You might have had, you know, Phil Collins.

I don't know. I'm just throwing out names here, right? You might have had a famous actor or actress that you really liked the way they looked, right? And how many of you have met a celebrity before? And were they the way they appeared to be in the movies, right?

Or usually no. Sometimes they might be legit. I get that, right? But when we think about it, you're like, wait, I looked up to you as a child and you're nothing like the way that you put off to be.

Well, how important it is for us to know Christ. Well, he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, right? How important that is for us. We have got to look up to Jesus Christ, not some random actor.

[26 : 52] And I'm not, I don't mean to bag on all the actors and bag on all the musicians and all the good work they do. But certainly, I'm not going to look up to them and follow in their footsteps, though. They are human, right?

We follow Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh. Something that is much higher than everyday humans. Let's be honest here.

And so in that, right, we continue to become more like Christ, right, who gives us new life, who gives us an abundance of gifts. That we are moved to grow and to do good in his name.

The second thing then in the interpretation is that growth is ongoing, right? It's not instant, and it's not competitive. Right?

I'm growing more than you, bud. No, it's not like that. Calm down a little bit, right? We think about that. But it's also not instant either, right? We think of plants and how they grow, right?

[27 : 52] Do they, I mean, yes, they sprout overnight. I get that. But are they in full maturity overnight? Well, the answer is no, right? I get you can go to Home Depot or go to Walmart and go get a completed plant.

I get that. But it's still not overnight. It takes time for these plants to grow. And especially if it's a fruit plant, for it to produce fruit, right? It takes time. And in the same way, when we're thinking about spiritual maturity, about growing in Christ, it takes time.

Right? It's not like instant ramen noodles. And some of us may love instant ramen noodles. I would know I cook ramen noodles for my kids when they're really hungry right now kind of thing.

But when we think about it, when we think about preparation for food, sometimes it takes a long time to have a really good meal. Amen? Right? Sometimes it takes, and when it comes for us growing in the physical world, well, yes, I understand time flies by in the blink of an eye, but it's not

instant, right?

It seems like it's instant. I get that. But it takes time for us to mature and to grow in the physical world. It takes time for trees to grow and to bear fruit. And in the same way, when we're talking about our spiritual growth, it is an ongoing process, right?

[29 : 05] In Colossians, it talks about being filled with knowledge, bearing fruit, and increasing. And it's also important. We think of fruit and crops and all these different things, right?

We have to think of, do fruit trees ever go through cold seasons? Right? They go through seasons. They go through times where there's maybe a really crazy thunderstorm, right? Lightning and thunder just crashing everywhere, right? Well, that's no different than how we grow.

That there are seasons where we are growing and we're doing fine, and seasons where it may be dark and cold. There may be times where there's a specific storm and things are just thunderous and crazy and wild and out of control.

But these trees, they remain rooted in their position. And in the same way, we have to think when it comes to storms or things that happen in our own life, it doesn't mean failure.

[30 : 08] It's part of the process of growth and maturity, even though it may be difficult for us to understand in the moment when a storm happens. And so, let us think for a moment that God grows us like trees, one season at a time.

Let's say that one more time, right? God grows us like trees, one season at a time, right? How we are like trees. How much in Scripture you see that kind of language, right?

The seed of the Word being planted into the soil, right? To grow and to bear fruit. There's a lot of that agricultural type of language that exists, but it's simple and it's easy for us to understand, right?

You could teach a child this. Hey, be like this fruit tree. You should have a lot of fruit. That's pretty easy to understand, right? Don't be like this other tree that isn't producing any fruit, right?

Very easy for us to understand. Very simplistic, but yet very powerful kind of language. The third thing, then, in our interpretation, then, is that growth is individual and communal.

[31 : 09] And what I mean by that is that not only do we grow as a person, right? We grow as an individual, but we collectively grow.

And what a remarkable thing, right? When you first believe in Christ, that is transformation. That is being saved. That is receiving salvation. As you are growing, so too does the body grow.

We think about how we pray for one another, how we bear up one another's burdens. In Acts chapter 2, it talks about believers doing life together, right? Teaching fellowship, prayer, and shared life.

And it's important for us to know that we grow as part of the body of Christ. In other words, I want you to think of, if anyone here goes to the gym all the time, right?

You get strengthened, right? You strengthen your arms and your legs, or you're just simply walking to keep healthy, right? In the same way that, as the body of Christ, we are to grow and to strengthen.

[32 : 09] And so, in that, we grow as part of the body of Christ, united together. And I cannot emphasize enough, we are not to focus on the things that divide us and the things that separate us.

We cannot focus on that. God calls us to things that are much higher, right? To be united in Christ, right? And isn't it remarkable that for all of us, the call for us to focus on the love of Christ, and for all of us to be united together, not to be divided, not to fight over silly things, but to seek God and transformation that comes from him, to practice discernment, right?

And to continue to grow. I've always been so encouraged when I meet someone, and they share what the Lord is doing in their life. It might be a key insight from Scripture.

It might be an experience that they are going through. And there's this sense of encouraging one another. Wow, that is amazing you learned that. Like, I want to, I want to, I want to, this is what God's doing in my life.

Or this is what I've been learning in Scripture. All these different things are just so important for us. And so growth is spiritual formation, right? And it happens over time.

[33 : 33] I can't emphasize that enough, right? It's not instant ramen noodles, although some of you may like it, I get it. But it's, it happens over time with practice, but also being within the body of Christ.

And this leads us now to our application then, our next slide, right? Which is how we grow, right? What do we do about this, right?

So the first one is we, so you have these three grows. We grow by loving God and loving others, right? Just as it says in the Gospel of John that we are to remain in Christ, and Christ remains in us. Or how in the Gospel of Matthew, right, the Great Commandment. We think of all these different things and how important it is for us to have that relationship with the Lord, but also to have relationship with other people, right?

And in doing that, that takes practice, right? For some of us, you may identify, I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand here, but for some of us, it's so much easier to love God than to love others, right?

[34 : 36] For others, it might be the other way around. But in any case, that call is very important for us to practice love, loving God and loving others, loving others because God has loved us.

Because the kind of love that God has for us is something that is beyond what the world has to offer or the capacity or our ability to love, and yet we're called to love like that.

May we learn how to love like that from the Lord. Very important, right? And so in this, we have to think, ask yourself the question, are you growing in your capacity to love?

And if not, ask the Lord to teach you how to love like he does. Because that is an amazing kind of love that the Lord has. Something that is transcendent, something that is beyond our understanding.

There's so many things about the Lord that is beyond our understanding. And that's okay. We're supposed to be in awe and wonder of who the Lord is, right? The second thing then is grow by learning the word and what it means to be Christ-like.

[35 : 48] Right? Obviously, we have, we should all have a Bible, right? We should all get a Bible and open it and read it and study it, of course. And in that study, there should be transformation.

We need to live out what the word teaches us. Are you being molded by God and his word? Right? You have to think about, I love, I mean, the famous 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 16 through 17.

All scripture is given by God, right? To mold us, to form us and to change us, right? We have all of that section, right? Or we talk about how the word is living and active.

And this transformation then, transformation in the mind, in how we think. Some of us may know the word metanoia, right? To change your mind. Always remember, church, when you hear the word repentance or to repent, it is a changing of the mind.

There's a lot of people that say, well, it's just confessing your sins. It's much more than that. It's to change the very way that you think about things. Very important. Changing the way we think.

[36 : 56] Changing our ability to love. I want to say it's in Ezekiel, where it talks about the heart going from a heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

And what beautiful imagery that is, right? Now, I hope none of you have a heart of stone. If you do, you got to pray to the Lord to change that, right? Let's swap that out, right?

With a heart of flesh, a beating heart. Or for some of you who enjoy the classic, the Grinch, right? The guy's heart is three sizes too small, right?

And it grows and the guy's like, oh my gosh, my heart's getting so big, right? His capacity to love, right? That is an example we can see in movies. But at any rate, changing how we think, changing our capacity to love, but also we think of our hands and our ability to love people and how to serve others as well.

And so at Ontario Community Church, we use what is known as the OIA method, observation, interpretation, and application. We observe the text. We read the text.

[38 : 00] We interpret, meaning what are the underlying lessons. And the third being the application, is what we do about this. That is why we focus so much on the Word and what it means to be Christ-like.

I pray that for all of you, you are challenged and that you all learn at least one thing coming to church here, to be challenged and to grow in your faith.

And so that's something that is so important for all of us. And in any sense, as we learn Scripture, as the Word is preached, as it is taught, it's about becoming more mature and to being transformed. Not about division. Not about waging war. Not about focusing and nitpicking people, right? How many of you had someone nitpick you? We are to steer away from that and focus on how is God working on us currently?

I get it. I've met people who, they have all kinds of theology out there for sure. But are they being transformed by the Lord? That's what I'm more focused on than if you got wacky theology.

[39 : 14] It's important to have good theology, mind you. We also have to see, where are they progressing? Are they progressing towards the Lord and that relationship with Him, being transformed by Him?

That is the question. And so the third thing then is to grow by leading through service in the church and in the community. It's something that's very near and dear to my heart that we are all called to serve in the church in some capacity, right?

We give of our time, our talent, and our treasure. And quite frankly, when we're talking about, when my wife came up and told you guys about over 50 people for our STEAM Nights is a remarkable, and we praise God for that.

I mean, every single time we have a STEAM Night, it's a different group of people. And that's something that's remarkable. And in doing these kind of things or the partnerships that we have with Building Healthy Families and all these different things that we do, it is the ministry of presence.

It's being there with the people. Just as, I don't know, Christ was there with the people, dining with sinners. I mean, that was controversial back then.

[40 : 27] I mean, you can also think even now, what is this guy doing? What is this Christian doing, dining with sinners? It's the ministry of presence. It's being there with the people, being an example, being an ambassador for Christ, being that beacon of hope.

Do you know how many, on a very personal note, do you know how many people I have met who have had life happen? They've had some sort of hurt that has happened.

And just by being there, you have conversations with them. You hear their story. A lot of times it's insane in a bad way.

But when they begin to ask questions and get to know you, you get to know them, you can share in who Christ is to you. And maybe they don't even respond. That's okay.

We're still called to scatter the seed, right? Just as a farmer, right? When we talk of parabolic language, scattering the seed so that crops may grow, right? In the same way, that is what we are called to do.

[41 : 28] And we do that through service, right? So I put on here, service in the church and in the community. Ask yourself the question, how are you or are you serving in the church?

Are you serving in the community? How you answer that is different from the person next to you. It's important for us to know that, and I mention this all the time in Ephesians.

How many of you know this verse? For it is by grace that you are saved, right? Some of you guys are going to start saying it, right? Not by works so that no one may boast, right?

Right? But what about that following verse? Right? That we are created in, that we are made for good works.

because when you have those first two verses, it's like it's set and done, right? It's by grace that I'm saved so that no one may boast. It's a done deal. Yes.

[42 : 25] Keep going. Keep going and realize and recognize that God is the master craftsman that made you and saved you so that you can grow, so that you can do good in his name.

We can't miss that part. I don't know about you, that's a pretty important part. Now granted, those other two verses are, I'm not denying that they are important, but we've got to keep going in that. It's important for us to recognize that.

Saved by grace through faith so that we can do. We're not saved by what we do. We are saved by what has been done in Christ. And because of what has been done in Christ, we are to do.

It's kind of, it's flipped on its head and it can get confusing, but it's one of those things that little nuance can make a great difference, right? And some people, they're raised to believe it's all about what you can do, right?

It's not so when it comes to Christianity, when it comes to Christ. You're saved by what is done just like when Christ said on the cross, it is what? Finished. Proud of you guys, right?

[43 : 31] It is finished, right? He said that. Going from the old covenant to the new covenant, God providing a better way for us. It is done. And because it is done, we are called to do.

We also think of John 15, chapter 15, verse 8, to bear much fruit for God for others to see. That those others benefit from the fruit.

Not only do we glorify God by bearing fruit, but others benefit from it. Such a one, it testifies to God working in our life. And when we think of leadership, we have to think about this idea of service,

about bearing fruit, and as our theme for the year is peacemaking.

In other words, we grow so that we can live in love like Christ. And we grow so that we can serve God and serve others. This is part of servant leadership.

And so in all of this, let's go to that next slide, right? I had in the beginning an image of a man who's journeying, but he has no guide.

[44 : 42] Right? And I pray that for all of us, we're not like that guy who's just hiking and he has no idea where he's going. Please don't feel like that. But instead, may you come to know Christ who is the great shepherd and this imagery of sheep.

Do the sheep know where Christ has taken him? Maybe. Maybe not. But in any case, they're putting their trust in the shepherd to lead and to guide them to where Christ wants them to be. And I think of that image, such a beautiful image, right? That in belonging to Christ, we are safe from harm. We are safe to grow. Right? Belonging to Christ, we can journey with him as Christ, as the Savior, the Lord, the guide who will lead us.

And we think about that, like what a wonderful kind of image because now, I understand sheep are dumb and I'm not going to call any of you guys dumb, but it goes to show that for us in our limited capacity, how much more God knows than we do.

Right? If we are like sheep, think of how much more the shepherd knows and how much more the shepherd has power. Right?

[45 : 58] The rod and the staff, how it is used to comfort leading people to green pastures. And so in this, come to know the Lord.

Belong to him and begin on that journey following with Christ. You'd be amazed by the journey, the journey that lies ahead. There will be times where you will go through rocky, you know, tons of rocks, tumbling rocks even.

There will be times where it's just smooth, right? And it's completely fine. And through the journey, there will be times where there are storms. There will be times where there are ravenous wolves, right?

Doesn't Scripture talk about that as well? And that Christ protects us from that. And how even in the moments where we run off or we feel like running off, the Lord will leave all of his sheep for us?

That's remarkable. That's beautiful language and imagery. And so in this, this is important for us. I want to say these words that growth is necessary for us to become peacemakers, for us to live and love like Christ, and for us to transform community and to transform culture.

[47 : 13] For in Christ, there is nothing to fear. How often do we see in Scripture where it says, be not afraid, do not be afraid, fear not, depending on your translation that you are accustomed to, but to trust in him and to follow in his footsteps.

May you place your trust in Jesus Christ and be saved by his amazing grace. May you grow with this ongoing grace, grace that heals and grace that changes lives.

And may you be moved to respond and to act, extending the good news of Christ's grace to others. In other words, may you share in the good news of the gospel to others by sharing in your testimony, by sharing in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1-4, whatever it may be.

May you extend that good news to others. May you respond to God's call to receive, to be molded, and to be moved by his amazing grace.

Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for us gathering today, going through how we grow and how important it is as we've gone through Ephesians that you, God, provide people to help equip the saints, that you provide people to help grow the body of Christ and to also grow your church.

[48 : 41] I pray that everyone who is here present this morning and everyone who is tuning in online, that they may respond to your call to salvation, to be molded, to grow, to be transformed, and to be moved, to live and love like your Son, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

You are the God of transformation. You are the God that has provided salvation in your Son. And we thank you for that.

You are doing a new thing here in this place. May we respond, may we listen with intentionality, and you lead us as a community, but also individually on where you want us to go.

We love you. We praise you. We glorify you. We honor you, and we thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who is the cornerstone of our faith. Be with us as we close in this final song.

May we worship you. May we lift up a shout of praise. May we make that joyful noise, celebrating and being thankful for who you are.

[49 : 52] It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray, and we all say together, Amen, church. Amen. Amen. Thank you for listening to today's message from Ontario Community Church.

As we reflect on what we have heard, my prayer is that you would continue to be shaped by Christ, rooted in his truth, formed by his love, and guided by his peace.

Here at Ontario Community Church, we believe that faith, it is personal, it is a relationship with Christ, and it is never meant to be lived alone. We are a people being formed together, learning how to belong, how to grow, and how to live as peacemakers in the world.

If today's message encouraged you or stirred something within you, I would like to invite you to take the next step, whether that's prayer, reflection, or connecting with the community of faith.

You can visit our website at ontariocommunitychurch.org or find our sermon archive at sermons.ontariocommunitychurch.org. There, you can find sermon notes, slides, Bible studies, and additional resources.

[51 : 03] You can also connect with us online on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Rumble, or wherever you listen to your podcasts. May the peace of Christ rule in your heart.

May you know where your hope is anchored, and may you continue to walk in the way, the truth, and the life found in Jesus Christ. God bless you, and thank you for listening.

God bless you, God bless you, God bless you,

Oh goodness, you have me a home for me.

Oh, God, in your goodness, you have me a home for me.

[53 : 36] Oh, God, in your goodness, you have me a home for me.

Oh, God, in your goodness, you have me a home for me.