

Discussion Starter #1: What are some negative personality qualities a person may possess that can cause tension in a relationship?

Key Passage: *“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”⁸ Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’⁹ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,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,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.¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” (Ephesians 4:7-19)*

In this passage, Paul emphasizes that we Christians are a part of one body – the body of Christ. Just as a physical body has different parts, even so the body of Christ has different parts. The unity of the church does not rule out the diversity within the body. All of us are a part of the body of Christ, but each of us, individually is given a gift from Christ. Notice these truths in verse 7-13:

- 1) Spiritual gifts come by God’s grace: *“But grace was given...”* (v.7a).
- 2) Each of us has a spiritual gift: *“...to each one of us...”* (v.7b).
- 3) All of the gifts are important: *“...according to the measure of Christ’s gift”* (v.7c).
- 4) Christ made these spiritual gifts possible after His death on the cross and after He had ascended to the Father to be welcomed as the victor over sin and death (v.8-10).
- 5) These gifts equip us for special service for God (v.11).
- 6) These spiritual gifts bring blessings to the church (v.12-13).

For more information on spiritual gifts, and for assistance in discovering what your spiritual gift may be, please go to www.gogracefellowship.org, click on Next Steps, click on Grace Track Online, and watch the video of “Step 3: Holy Spirit / Spiritual Gifts.”

Discuss: In what ways can Christians faithfully using their spiritual gifts bless the church?

After explaining about spiritual gifts in v.7-13, Paul then contrasts immature Christians with mature Christians in v.14-16:

- **The Immature Christian** (v.14) – Paul says the immature Christian (whom he refers to as spiritual “*children*”) is easily “*tossed to and fro by the waves*” of every new doctrinal idea that comes along.

Discuss: What are some examples of new ideas that are not biblical, yet immature Christians seem easily swayed by?

- **The Mature Christian** (v.15-16) – In contrast, the mature Christian keeps a balance between love and truth (v.15), lives under the lordship of Christ (v.16a) and cooperates with fellow Christians in the church (v.16b).

Discuss: Which of the marks of a mature Christian do you think is most difficult to maintain? Why?

Then, in v.17-19, Paul emphasizes how Christians are supposed to be different from those who do not know Christ by putting two things out of their lives:

1) **Wrong Thinking** (v.17-18)

In v.17, Paul uses the word “*futility*” to describe the mind of an unbeliever. This means that the thinking of a person outside of Christ is empty and aimless. This is because the old self fills the mind with worthless thoughts, desires, and ambitions which will lead to nowhere. Thus, they are “*darkened in their understanding*” (v.18a) – that is, they are dull and cloudy in their thinking about Christ. They live in a world excluded from truth because of the “*ignorance that is in them*” (v.18b). And all of this stems from their “*hardness of heart*” (v.18c) toward Christ and the gospel. Paul is reminding Christians that we are to put off this kind of wrong thinking.

Discuss: What is the connection between empty thinking (v.17) and a hard heart (v.18)?

2) **Wrong Feeling** (v.19)

In v.19, Paul further explains that the unbeliever’s problem extends beyond their thinking and also includes their feeling. Their hardness of heart (v.18) leads to their becoming “*callous*” (v.19a)—that is, past feeling. Because they feel no conviction over their wrong thinking and have become unfeeling about their sin, they give themselves over to “*sensuality*” (v.19a), which is unrestrained living. They completely surrender themselves to living however they want, with no regard for God or righteousness, “*greedy to practice every kind of impurity*” (v.19c). Again, Paul is telling Christians, “Do not act like this! Put off wrong thinking and wrong feeling!”

Discuss: How can wrong thinking lead to wrong feeling, and then to wrong actions?

Discuss: How would you advise a new believer to “grow up” in Christ (v.15)?