

"Growing Up"

"Birth is quick and easy (at least it seems that way to fathers – mothers have a different slant on it); growth is endless and complex."

-Eugene Peterson, Practice Resurrection pg. 3

We get so excited over the birth of a new baby. The mother and father spend time announcing the arrival of the child by making phone calls, sending emails, and filling out cards. Everyone gets excited about new birth.

But raising that child is a different story. It's hard work; a process that demands more time and energy than delivering a child takes. "Growth is marked by fatigue, anxiety, panicked late-night calls to the doctor, confused decisions regarding discipline, worried conferences with teachers, puzzling over adolescent behavior and misbehavior" (Peterson, pg. 3). No one ever calls to celebrate their progress in disciplining and correcting their child.

Yet, there is a bittersweet joy in the hearts of parents as they see their child grow up into adulthood. Their goal is to raise a loving, caring, responsible, honorable citizen who will work alongside of others well to benefit the world. When this is achieved great joy and satisfaction fills the hearts of parents much like the joy they felt on the day the child was born.

Paul is calling us to "grow up" in the book of Ephesians. He realizes that we have been born into a new family, the family of God in and through Christ (Ephesians 1-3). Now it's time to start growing up into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4-6).

Growing up takes time and patience. We are not yet fully mature as a church or even a life group. But we are called to grow up, "until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the fullness of Christ," Ephesians 4: 13.

Read: Ephesians 4:11-16

Think of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers more like, Doctors, Nutritionists, Coaches, and Consultants. They are not the one's who are making all the growing up happen, but men and women who come alongside you to help. Paul is saying these people equip the Church for ministry.

- Do you see yourself as a minister?
- How do you see the Pastors and Teachers of Northview helping you grow up?

Remember that Paul is talking to a diverse group of people when writing to the Ephesians. Some were Jews and some Gentiles.

- What do you think he means by saying, "until we all attain the unity of faith?"
- Describe what "unity of faith" might mean in your Life Group or your neighborhood.
- What do you think it means to be built up in the "knowledge of the Son of God?"
- Where do we obtain this knowledge?
- Do you find it hard to grow in this way as a Church or Life Group?

Raising a Child is no easy task. Growing up in Christ is hard work too. **Read: Ephesians 4:14-16.**

- What might "speaking the truth in love" look like?
- If this is the basis by which we grow and mature into the head, into Christ, why are we so hesitant in speaking to each other in this way?
- Growing up is hard, but its what we are called to do as children of God. What are some practical things you can do as Life Group to keep your growth and progress in check?
- If a child stops growing we call the doctor. Anticipate seasons of non-growth...how can we get through them together?