

Small Groups- Leader's Guide – Oct. 4, 2020

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

1. In verse 14, St. Paul described immaturity in our thinking and faith to be as fatal as children in a ship in the middle of a stormy ocean. Why is knowing truthfully and understanding rightly a matter of life or death?

*Life is not just about the biological aspect of our human existence. Human life has moral, social, and epistemic qualities. The concepts of truth, uprightness, correctness, factuality--these are essential to living the human life fully as moral, spiritual, and social creatures in accordance with how we were created by God to have moral and social obligation to other people, to ourselves, to creation, and to God. And so, to know wrongly and to understand incorrectly leads to harm in all aspects of our human social-moral existence. Wrong prescriptions and diagnoses lead to illness and death. Lying, gossiping, sneaking, and trash talking lead to relationship breakdown. False doctrines, crafty teachings, and half-truths carry our souls away from each other and from God.*

2. In verse 15, St. Paul describes that we grow up in every way into Him who is our Head, into Christ, by speaking the truth in love. How does speaking the truth in love "grow" us up into Jesus?

*While good calories and nutrients are ingested to grow our physical bodies, truthful and loving words grow our inner character, our emotional health, our psychological maturity, and our social and spiritual fortitude. Words indeed have power and health in them to reinforce not only our psychological and emotional wellbeing, but also our spiritual wellbeing. Words encourage, inspire, build up, uplifts, comforts, soothes, etc. Words are central to building up relationships, especially in our relationship with each other and with God. And so, as we grow up to be healthy spiritual beings, we grow up to be like Jesus Christ, who is the epitome and the archetype of the perfect human, according to the image of the triune God.*

3. According to Jon Thompson, author of Convergence, there are six word gifts: teaching, encouraging, exhorting, leading, shepherding, and evangelising. How have you experienced growth and encouragement in your Christian life through people exercising their word gifts?

*Allow others to share their stories, experiences, and anecdotes.*

4. Do you think you have one or more of the word gifts? Whether or not you feel you have a word gift, how can we as a parish grow up in our loving and gracious truth-telling to one another so as to grow up into the image of Jesus?

*Reflect together how to promote true and loving speech within our church, especially as we practice responsible social media, to be proactive in using gracious speech*

*online, to listen, to understand, not to disparage others, not to misrepresent others and their positions or beliefs, not to make fun of or belittle people, etc.*