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**INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPPING MINISTRIES**  
**ITEM Conference on Ministry and Preaching**  
Dr. Steve Van Horn

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**BUILDING UP THE CHURCH**

Ministry Lecture #2

**Introduction:**

**I. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

- A. Besides being instructed, the followers of Christ were to meet together in order to become a mature group of Christians.
- B. Spiritual growth also involved having fellowship with each other, having communion together, praying together, and praising God together.
- C. Paul instructed them to seek what is good for one another (1 Thes 5:11-15).
- D. All Christians are to be involved in the helping one another grow in their faith.
  - 1. Timothy as a young pastor was to give his attention to reading the Scriptures publically, to encouraging and teaching the saints (1 Tim 4:13).
  - 2. Titus was told to appoint elders and speak things that are a part of good doctrine (Titus 1:5, 9).
  - 3. Elders were to shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28) and contend for the faith (Jude 3).
  - 4. All believers were to live a life that was worthy of being called a follower of Christ (Eph 4:1).
  - 5. All believers were to move on to maturity (Heb 6:1).

**II. SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPLES**

- A. When the church gathers together it is for the purpose of helping one another become mature in Christ so the church becomes mature.
- B. Paul wrote that we are to proclaim, warn, and teach to that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col 1:28)

**III. FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MATURE CHURCH (1 Thes 1:2-3; 2 Thes 1:3-4; Col 1:3-5; Eph 1:15-18; 1 Tim 1:5; 1 Pet 1:20-22)**

- A. Love is the greatest of the three (1 Cor 13:13).
1. Paul repeats this point often (Col 3:12-14; 1 Thes 11:12; Phil 1:9-10; Eph 4:14-16)
  2. Peter puts love on the highest level (1 Pet 4:8)
  3. John says followers of Christ are to love one another (1 John 3:11, 23)
- B. Corinthian church was instructed to love each other (1 Cor 13:1-6).
1. The Corinthian church did not lack any spiritual gift including prophecy, wisdom, teaching, faith, and all of the rest (1 Cor 1:2, 7)
  2. The Corinthian church was immature and worldly (1 Cor 3:1, 3).
  3. Spiritual gifts were useless without true Christian love (1 Cor 13:1).
  4. Love defined
    - a. A loving person is patient (1 Cor 13:4).
    - b. A loving person is kind and is not jealous (1 Cor 13:4).
    - b. A loving person does not brag and is not arrogant (1 Cor 13:4).
    - d. A loving person does not act improperly (1 Cor 13:5).
    - e. A loving person is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not take into account a wrong suffered (13:5).
    - f. A loving person does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with truth (1 Cor 13:6).
    - g. The loving person bears all things, believes the best about all things, hopes all things (is positive about the future), and endures all things (1 Cor 13:7).
- C. Faith and hope are the other two virtues that are used to measure the maturity level of a church. Here are some verses that mention both.
1. 1 Thes 1:3 (faith, hope, love), 5:8 (faith, love, hope); Col 1:4, 5 (faith, hope, love); Eph 1: 15 (faith, love), 18 (hope); 1Pet 1:21 (faith, hope); 2 Thes 1:3 (faith); 1 Tim 1:1 (hope), 5 (faith); Philemon 5 (faith); Heb 10:22 (faith), 23 (hope); 1 Tim 4:10 (hope); 1 Tim 6:17 (hope); Titus 1:2 (hope), 2:13 (hope); 1 Pet 1:3 (hope)

2. Faith and hope are closely related in these verses.
  - a. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1).
  - b. Hope is related to our salvation and eternal life in the presence of Jesus.

**Summary:** Faith, hope and love are the virtues Paul uses to measure the maturity of a church. When the members of a church comes together it for the purpose of becoming a mature group of people. Maturity is achieved by the process of “edification” or “building up one another.”