

FOR LOVERS ONLY

CLUES TO WHAT GOD IS UP TO

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:14-16

- I. How we grow / We grow by working through four distinct developmental stages.
 - * Bonding to others. Saying yes to love.
 - * Separating from others. Saying no to evil.
 - * Sorting out good and bad. Buying a gray scale.
 - * Becoming an adult. Release from parent/child relationships.
- II. Bonding to others / Saying yes to love.
 - A. From womb to tomb, we need connection with God and others for comfort, safety, a sense of belonging, nurturing, and meaning.
 - B. Healing comes from understanding our attachment style, and its wounding.

III. Separating from others / Saying no to evil.

- A. Our second developmental need is to separate from others in order to take ownership of our lives.
- B. We must learn what is “us” and what is “them”. We must learn to distinguish between what God has and has not given us responsibility for.
- C. In this developmental stage, we need to learn the skill of setting limits, or boundaries, around our personal spiritual property.
- D. People who are injured during this developmental stage--those who have inadequate personal boundaries--often can say no only with great difficulty. They have trouble staying focused, getting organized, and controlling their lives.

IV. Sorting out good and bad / Buying a gray scale.

- A. After learning how to say yes to love (bonding) and no to evil (establishing boundaries), our third developmental need is to resolve the problem of good and bad.
- B. It is in this stage that we learn that we and the world aren't black-and-white. We learn that we are imperfect people living with imperfect people in an imperfect world.
- C. From holding impossible ideals for ourselves and others, we move to grieving our losses, forgiving others, and receiving forgiveness ourselves.
- D. When we accept our sinfulness as something that draws us to Jesus, we are becoming wise.

- E. Those who are injured in this third stage often struggle with perfectionism over optimism, denial, and shame. They feel that life isn't fair.
 - F. The fruits of this kind of injury can include bulimia or sexual addiction in which the bad part of a person's character becomes sexualized causing him or her to act out sexually. This can be called the good-bad split which causes you to condemn yourself anytime you experience failure or loss. This only makes you withdraw further from others
- V. Becoming an adult / Release from parent/child relationships.
- A. In this final stage a person moves from emotional childhood to emotional adulthood.
 - B. God desires that we be mature and take authority over what he has given to us: our gifts, values, careers, marriages, friendships, and callings.
 - C. No longer can we depend on the approval of parents; as emotional adults we value their input but make our own way in the world.
 - D. People injured during this fourth developmental stage who do not grow up either have problems submitting to authority or they are over compliant and rule-bound. They either question authority at every turn, or they never do. They either break the rules, or they follow them to the letter.
 - E. The fruits of such injuries include scrapes with the law as well as obsessive compulsive disorders in which a person has a persistent preoccupation with an unreasonable idea

(I'm going to die right now.) or has an irresistible impulse to perform an irrational act (like frequent handwashing).

VI. Healing steps / 10 Bible steps toward wholeness.

A. Take responsibility for what is inside.

B. Uncover the darkness.

C. Grieve.

D. Forgive.

E. Reconcile.

F. Learn.

G. Confront

H. Express feelings.

I. Confess.

J. Support.

* Real character change comes from practicing the truth, not just hearing it.

** Actually doing leads one to become humble and loving, responsible and forgiving, cleansed and transformed--and actively involves bringing others into the same kind of healing.