

Stay Connected

*11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **building up of the body of Christ**, 13 till we all come 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 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 **from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies**, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16*

I've had a front row seat to the maturing process written about in Eph 4.

I (German Wright) met J.W. about thirteen years ago as I was conducting a Bible study at Campbell Prerelease Center. He had a great voice and would sing during the Bible study sessions. After the Bible study J.W. would stick around to talk with me and Minister Brown, another gentleman from our church. At the end of one of the studies he told me that when he was in a recovery program in North Carolina, he asked the director of the program, "How will I know when I have found the right person that would be my pastor?" The director told him, "You will know the person God wants you to connect with because when they speak the word of God it will be like an I. V. from heaven. Once you find that connection, stay connected."

When J.W. was released from prison he became a member of our local church, Daily Living Ministries. He said, "I have found my I. V. from heaven!" And for 10 years he stayed connected. He joined the choir; he was an active part of the Men's Fellowship and went through a GRIP discipleship season with me. His attempt to live a godly life was a challenge, as it is with most of us. However, he was committed to staying connected. He would show up at church even as he struggled with sin. He would always tell me the truth even when it was difficult to share it. Through his highs and lows, he would continue to come to church to get his spiritual nutrition to renew his walk with the Lord.

There was a shift in J.W. about four years ago. There was a new depth to his surrender to Christ that impacted his spiritual growth and development. J.W. would speak often about his spiritual growth and development. He would say to me, "I want to get it right; I want to be a more responsible man and take ownership of my actions and their consequences." I came to understand that J.W. had received his supply (Eph 4:16) and that through the knowledge of God he was becoming a mature man. A man no longer being tossed around by the winds of dishonesty, deceit, and craftiness of a sinful lifestyle.

He began to share with the new guys at the church that the key to spiritual growth was to stay plugged in. He would say, "No matter what you are going through stay connected to the I. V. God has given us." He also shared with his sister, brothers, and father the gospel of repentance and the forgiveness of sin that was changing him into a new man. They were not only hearing the gospel, but they were also seeing the gospel transform him into a true disciple of Christ.

J. W. went home to be with the Lord two days after Christmas. He was a true example of Eph 4 - staying connected to a local body of Christ followers to receive the supply needed to mature in Christ. As a pastor, I urge you to follow J.W.'s pattern. Wherever you are attending church, plug into the I.V. and stay connected!