

MIGHTY OAK MINISTRIES



They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:3)

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Time to Grow Up

Are you grown up? Are you helping others grow up?

Bringing people to maturity is the hallmark of any form of ministry I'm involved in. I've never been interested in just warming a seat in the church service. I'm not even excited about evangelism in isolation.

"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 men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

Ephesians 4:14-15

Yes, it's important to worship and hear the Word taught. And it's vital to be a soul-winner. But in the American church, we have many Christians who, even after 20 or 30 years in the faith, may grow older but never seem to grow up. People who attend church,

but don't get involved. People who are won to salvation in Christ, but don't mature.

What Maturity Looks Like

In Ephesians 4:11-15, the apostle Paul reminds us that the gifts and offices are given to the

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Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members

On April 2, Standard Publishing began shipping my new book, *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal with Challenging Group Members* to bookstores. Have you seen it yet?

Feedback has been wonderful. People love the cover, the layout, and the content.

You can order online at Mighty Oak Ministries.

You can also order the other three books in the series. Want to read a sample? Go [here](#).

If your local bookstore doesn't have it, please encourage them to stock it. Sometimes all they need is a request or two.



(From page 1, column 1)

church “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we *all* reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (emphasis added). Note that, contrary to how many Christians live, this maturing process is *not* optional. Becoming mature is the purpose of every Christian and equipping people for maturity is the purpose of every leader.

Why is this important? Paul continues, “Then (so that) 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 men in their deceitful scheming.”

Today, as in Paul’s day, we live in a world that is full of false teaching, dishonesty, and deceitful schemes. Tolerance is the watchword. Anything goes. Orthodoxy is scorned with, “Whatever you believe is fine. Just don’t impose your beliefs on me.”

In such a society, it’s easy to be thrown off course. It’s easy to lose track of what is an essential of the faith and what isn’t. Unfortunately, relying on the Sunday morning service alone won’t bring the average church-goer to the level of maturity required to counter the culture of this world.

Small Groups and Maturity

That’s where the ministry of small groups becomes important. In a small group, we not only have the opportunity to hear, but also to study and interact with God’s Word. We have the opportunity

to make ourselves accountable to one another for the truths we learn. And we have the opportunity to integrate those truths into the everyday structures of our lives—into our families, our jobs, and our neighborhoods—in very practical and personal ways. We grow in unity with one another, and in the process, we mature. We grow up. We become adult Christians, capable of discerning truth from error.

Capable of defending our beliefs in public or in private. Capable of standing firm in the heat of trials and even persecution. In a small group more than almost any other place, you can experience the conclusion that Paul advocates: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things *grow up* into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

This is always my overriding goal as a leader. I hope it’s yours as well.

A Personal Example

Although I had been raised in a church, I was 28 years old before I heard the gospel. By then I had adopted far too many of the ways of the world. I managed to pull off a professional look on the outside, but inside I was a mess. My insecurities were reflected in skirts

that were too short, necklines that were too deep, language that was too coarse, and attitudes that were too harsh. My life was meaningless, despite a national reputation in my field. Suicidal thoughts were my constant companions. God, in his (Continued on page 3)

“All of us are to attain to this *teleios* man of Christlikeness. It does not appear as if Paul [in Ephesians 4:11-16] is giving... Christians... the option of remaining spiritual children.... Whatever Christian maturity is, all Christians are obligated to reach it as quickly as possible and all Christian leaders are obligated to help those sheep under their influence to reach that point.”

Jay Grimstead,
Let’s Have a Reformation

If you didn’t receive the FREE PDF download “Making Time for Prayer” when you signed up for the newsletter, you can get it [here](#).

grace, immediately plunked me into a Christian singles group in San Francisco that used a small group approach. Every meeting incorporated the important elements that lead to growth and maturity.

After meeting me, several leaders shook their heads and whispered to one other, “We have a lot of work to do!” But rather than abandoning me to large group settings or ostracizing me because I didn’t fit in, they lovingly enfolded me in Bible study, discipleship, and service. They grew me up before I knew what was happening. Because of their excellent equipping, I matured quickly and was then able to do the same for others. That group was a perfect example of the role of the Body of Christ in bringing believers to maturity.

Be sure to visit the *Why Didn't You Warn Me?* blog at <http://whydidntyouwarnme.com/blog/>

Excerpted from *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members*, by Pat J. Sikora, Standard Publishing 2007

Train your Leaders

Are your small group leaders are ready for a mid-year shot in the arm? Could they benefit from additional training or encouragement? I’m available for an hour, a day, or a weekend. You can see a sample of topics [here](#). Or [contact me](#) and we can tailor something for your group.



five members of our Critique Group were there, so we were able to encourage one another. Shown here from left are myself, Katie Vorreiter, Kathie Williams, and Cathy Armstrong--true colleagues.

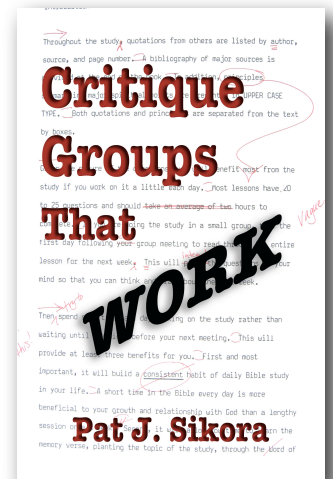
Mt. Hermon Writers Conference

I attended the Mt. Hermon Writers Conference in April. It was great fun having advance copies of my book and being able to sign them at the autograph party. Four of the

a writer seeking publication or simply wanting to improve your writing, this is a wonderful resource. It’s available from [Mighty Oak Ministries](#).

Critique Groups That Work

Speaking of critique groups, have you seen our new publication, *Critique Groups that Work?* If you are



Pat J. Sikora has been encouraging Christians for over 30 years. Her most recent book, *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members*, gives small group leaders strategies for effectively serving the most challenging people in their groups. She ministers through Mighty Oak Ministries at www.mightyoakministries.com and *Why Didn't You Warn Me* at www.whydidntyouwarnme.com.

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