

## BE A BRINGER

“40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus....”  
John 1:40-42a

A bringer makes one touch each week by investing and inviting someone to Christ and church.

Name three people you will pray for their salvation this week:

## PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE WEEK

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you;....” I Samuel 12:23a

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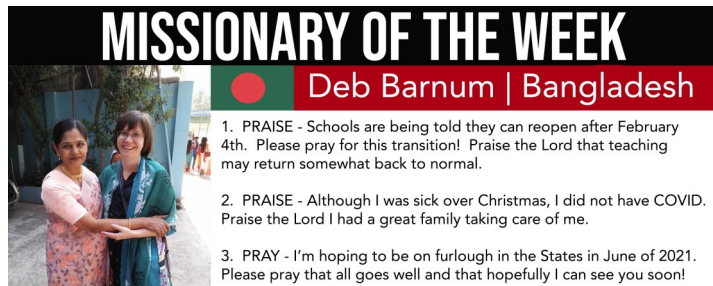
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**MISSIONARY OF THE WEEK**  
Deb Barnum | Bangladesh

1. PRAISE - Schools are being told they can reopen after February 4th. Please pray for this transition! Praise the Lord that teaching may return somewhat back to normal.
2. PRAISE - Although I was sick over Christmas, I did not have COVID. Praise the Lord I had a great family taking care of me.
3. PRAY - I'm hoping to be on furlough in the States in June of 2021. Please pray that all goes well and that hopefully I can see you soon!



# FORWARD BY FAITH growth guide

Handout: 01/31/21

Study: 02/07/21

## Faith That Grows

Often, when we think about spiritual growth—what it means to grow our faith—I think we are drawn to an almost exclusive individual or academic focus. You know, to grow my faith means I am learning more about God, I am getting to know God better so that I can love God more. It means I am reading my Bible so that I can learn scripture. Often, I think, we reduce discipleship ministries to intellectual academics, or individual pursuits. Spiritual growth is about cramming in more Bible study groups, and more personal devotions, and more prayer time.

I’m not knocking these as bad things. But, personal spiritual disciplines like devotions and prayer and Bible study groups are all means to an end, not an end in themselves. In this passage of Ephesians Paul is all about spiritual growth and coming to Christian maturity, and he is not saying a single thing here about prayer, or devotions, or teachings. No, Paul seems to be focusing his vision for spiritual maturity on one thing: RELATIONSHIPS.

Visionary growth in the church is a growth that focuses in the direction of relationships that are joined together and united in Christ. That may sound easy enough. But apparently Paul was having some difficulty getting his church in Ephesus to fully understand this. And generally Paul has pretty nice things to say about the Ephesians. So, it may be worthwhile for us to pause and consider how this might just be a message aimed squarely at us too. Let’s not be too hasty in assuming that we’ve got this relationship thing nailed.

The church in Ephesus started because Paul brought together a group of Jewish people living in that city who all believed the message about Jesus being the promised Messiah. Paul is also champion of the gospel message that, in Jesus, all people of the entire world are invited to receive the grace of God. This was a stretch for other Jewish people. These are people who have always been taught that Yahweh was the God of the Israelites, and only the Israelites. Bringing Gentiles into the church is Paul’s mission. At first, he is getting resistance. Eventually, resistance turns into reluctant acceptance. But we see evidence of the tension that exists.

So, Paul writes this letter to the church in Ephesus with a particular focus. He is trying to encourage the various segments of this church to work towards unity together in Christ. He is saying that just finding a way to get along is only the start. Growth and Christian maturity, then, goes beyond our tribal divisions in order to find something no one else in the world has ever seen: **UNITY IN CHRIST.**

Source: “Vision/Grow” by Tom VanderPloeg

## KEY VERSE

Ephesians 4:15 (NKJV)

*“but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”*

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## WEEKLY READINGS

**Monday: Ephesians 4:13-16; II Thessalonians 1:3; II Peter 3:18**

### Introduction

1. List people who have helped your faith to grow. How have they helped you?
2. How would you describe a growing faith based upon today's readings?

**Tuesday: Ephesians 4:13a; Colossians 2:1-2; John 17:20-23**

### Vision One: Unity Of Faith

3. How does your faith impact your vision for unity?
4. What does unity in our church look like? What challenges do we face? How can we stay unified?

**Wednesday: Ephesians 4:13b; Hebrews 5:12-14; Colossians 2:4-8**

### Vision Two: Maturity Like Christ

5. Would you say you are mature in your faith? How do you measure your maturity?
6. What are some ways that you would like to grow to be more like Jesus?

**Thursday: Ephesians 4:14; I Timothy 4:6; II John 1:9**

### Vision Three: Stability Of Doctrine

7. What is doctrine and why is it important?
8. What is your role in maintaining good doctrine in our church?
9. How do you measure whether what you hear is true or not?

**Friday: Ephesians 4:15-16; I Peter 4:10-11; Malachi 3:10**

### Vision Four: Activity By Everyone

10. Why does a healthy church need everyone to be active in their faith?
11. What gifts has God given you? How can you use them to strengthen and grow the body of Christ?
12. What are some barriers to being active in your faith? How can you overcome these?