



**CALVARY**  
TUSCALOOSA

**TEACHING PLAN**  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

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EPHESIANS 4:11-16 SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Ephesians 4:11-16 and Galatians 5:22-23. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for our pastor, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**BIBLICAL EMPHASIS:** God has given the church everything it needs to grow into maturity.

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**TEACHING AIM:** Believers are to grow up into Christ. Galatians 5:22-23 shows the kind of fruit that should be expected out of mature believers.

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION:** 1 John 1:9—Forgiveness for ourselves and of ourselves is the beginning of awareness of what needs to change in our lives.

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## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.*

- 1 On a whiteboard, chalkboard, or large piece of paper, brainstorm together some traits of a spiritually mature person.
- 2 After you have developed a substantial list, discuss the following questions: What themes do you see from the traits on our list? What can we conclude a spiritually mature person *is not*? Does this list make you feel like spiritual maturity is an easy or a challenging goal? Explain.

Over the past several weeks, we have been discussing how the church is not a building where God's people gather to worship Him. Rather, it's a group of people living in certain ways and with certain pursuits to be God's kingdom on earth. Today we will focus on how the church is the people of God growing up to maturity, and how that spiritual maturity is not an option. We all tend to resist change for various reasons, but being a Christian is a commitment to a lifetime of change as we grow in Christlikeness.

## UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

> Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:11-16.

<sup>11</sup> *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,* <sup>12</sup> *to prepare God's people for works of*

### Additional Introduction Option

Open your time with a picture of the Mona Lisa, and ask your group what they notice about it or what they know about it. Ask them how many people were responsible for creating this masterpiece. After some discussion, point out that the painting was possible because of a painter and a model, but also because of the person(s) who created the paint that da Vinci used and the manufacturer of the brushes and canvas.

Discuss: The Mona Lisa is the creation of an incredible artist, completed through da Vinci's gifts and the contributions of others. In what ways is the church dependent upon the work of others to accomplish its work?

*service, so that the body of Christ may be built up<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.<sup>16</sup> 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.*

“If the sixteenth century recovered ‘the priesthood of all believers’ (every Christian enjoying through Christ a direct access to God), perhaps the (twenty-first) century will recover ‘the ministry of all believers’ (every Christian receiving from Christ a privileged ministry to men).” – John Stott

The church at Ephesus was one of Paul’s most beloved churches. He spent a great deal of time establishing the church and then sent Timothy, his most trusted protégé, to care for the church as it struggled to “grow up” into faith. In Ephesians 4, Paul reminded the church that God has called each of its members to grow up into their calling. He also reminded the church that God had given them the necessary leadership to accomplish His purposes. The success of the church is directly tied to the maturity of its members and the unity such maturity creates.

- In verse 11, Paul listed some specific spiritual gifts God gives to His followers. What do the specific gifts in verse 11 have in common?
  
- What is God’s intention in giving these spiritual gifts to His people (vv. 12-13)?

Although each believer has at least one spiritual gift, Paul focused these verses on the gifted leaders Jesus personally equipped so that congregations will grow in spiritual maturity. “Apostles” refers to those Christ has personally commissioned. These were essential for the foundation of the church (2:20). “Prophets” spoke messages inspired by God (3:5). Paul connected

this group with the foundational stage of the church in 2:20. Our New Testament is the written words of the apostles and prophets. There are no more prophets in this sense, although today's preachers, we trust, deliver messages from God.

Notes:

“Evangelists” can make the gospel especially clear and relevant to unbelievers. Every Christian is called to be a witness for Christ, but some are especially capable in this area. In a local congregation, gifted evangelists will encourage other believers in how to reach people for Christ. “Pastors” and “teachers” provide leadership for local congregations. Pastors are literally shepherds, referring to the need for God's flock to be tended (see 1 Pet. 5:2). One way that shepherds tend is by feeding the sheep (teaching the Word). Clear from the verses is that spiritual growth and maturity happen through being taught the Word of God and applying it to our lives.

- What are some of the dangers Paul mentioned that are associated with spiritual immaturity? How, according to the passage, can we avoid these dangers?
- How can being a faithful member of our group help bring about the unity this passage emphasizes and protect us from the chaos mentioned in verse 14?

Last week, we mentioned how reaching the lost does not stop with salvation but continues on into discipleship, as the Great Commission commands. Paul knew that a person could not grow in Christ unless he or she has people around him or her who can equip and encourage in the growth process. This is part of God's plan—He made the church to be the body of Christ, and to be the means by which a person can be devoted to Christ. We are built up into maturity

as we learn and serve together, which includes using the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of the church.

- How can “speaking the truth in love” (v. 15) help Christians grow up into Christ?
  
- Why could love be considered the defining mark of maturity?

In another of Paul’s letters, he gave more insight into the role of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. First Corinthians 12 is the most exhaustive passage of Scripture that deals with spiritual gifts. In that chapter, Paul outlined a much more diverse list of gifts than in Ephesians and expanded upon the need for members of the body to rely upon one another.

Interestingly, he closed chapter 12 pointing to the “more excellent way” of 1 Corinthians 13. The better way is the way of love. Without love, our exercise of spiritual gifts is just a clanging gong—annoying at best and destructive at worst. We must earnestly seek to see Christ’s church built up, not for our own satisfaction, but because of the love we have for Christ and His church. A growing love is the result of a maturing heart.

It’s also important to note that we need the help of others in pursuing spiritual maturity because we all tend to resist change, and being a Christian is a commitment to a lifetime of change. This change (also known as “sanctification”) is described in many ways throughout Scripture, such as growing from infancy to adulthood (Eph. 4:14; 1 Peter 2:2), or taking off the old clothes of unrighteousness and putting on the new clothes of righteousness (Col. 3:1-17). Perhaps the best metric for spiritual maturity, though, is the

“Not everybody can be famous. But everybody can be great, because greatness is determined by service. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato or Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. This list gives us a clear picture of spiritual maturity and reminds us that apart from the Spirit's work in us, this growth is impossible.

> Have a volunteer read Galatians 5:22-23.

<sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* <sup>23</sup> *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- What stands out to you about the fruit of the Spirit? What can we conclude about spiritual growth or maturity from this list of Spirit traits?
- What makes this way of life so challenging?
- Which element is the most difficult for you to reflect? Which comes more easily?

Verses 22-23 list what is commonly referred to as the “fruit of the Spirit,” or the evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in Christians' lives. Paul listed nine traits that together make up the fruit of the Spirit. These are the combined traits of someone whose life is submitted to the Spirit rather than the sinful nature. Embodying the fruit of the Spirit is the result of God's work in our lives. When we demonstrate peace, goodness, or gentleness, portions of His character are being reflected through us.

- Read Galatians 5:19-21. The fruit of the Spirit stands in direct contrast to the traits mentioned here. How does the fruit of the Spirit compare to the works of the flesh mentioned in verses 19-21?

#### **Galatians 5:19-21**

<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- What did Paul say will happen to those who gratify the flesh? What warning does this have for us in regard to spiritual maturity?

### Notes:

Only God can judge the heart of a person. However, Paul was pretty clear that those who belong to Jesus should look like Jesus. The clear implication is that we should assume those who do not act like Jesus do not belong to Him, which was the case for us all at some point and is a good warning for us as we continue to grow.

The people of God growing up into maturity is not an option, but it is also not possible until we accept Jesus' forgiveness for our sins ("acts of the flesh," vv. 19-21) and forgive ourselves. This is the beginning of awareness of what needs to change in our lives to move us toward the fruit of the Spirit. Thankfully, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We grow up into Christ together as we bend to His grace-filled work in our lives.

## APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- 1 Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? How are you making use of them to build up your church?
- 2 Our character is often most clearly displayed in stressful situations. When placed in stress, is the fruit of the Spirit revealed, or do you respond in the flesh? How can this impact your witness in the world?



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- 3 Paul warned believers to avoid being tossed about by every wind and wave (Eph. 4:14). One of the greatest defenses against this is to regularly and systematically read through the Bible. What Bible reading plans have you found most helpful in your own quiet times? How might you become more disciplined in Bible reading?

Notes:

## PRAY

Ask God to help us grow up into the adult Christians He has called us to be. Pray for the Spirit to show us the gifts with which we can serve the church and reach the world. Ask for a renewed love for Jesus and for the world around us. Pray that the aroma of Christ would permeate our world as we display fruit for all to see and experience.

## MEMORIZE

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 4:16

## EPHESIANS 4:11-16

4:11. This verse ties directly back to the last word of verse 7. Verse 11 picks up again the subject started in verse 7 to tell us the relationship between the call to unity and the spiritual gifts Christ has given us. Spiritual gifts are at the heart of Christ's strategy for building his church. The gifts are ministers (or ministries) for the church. While this issue is strongly debated, particularly by Pentecostal and charismatic theologians, evangelical doctrine has traditionally held that of those four gifts two of them are still in existence and two have passed away. These gifts will be looked at more closely in the "Deeper Discoveries" section. For now, it is adequate to make the observation that the apostles and prophets seem no longer to be part of God's work in the church. The church was laid on the foundation of the ministry of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). Now that that foundation has been laid, the evangelists and the pastor-teachers are being used by God to build the superstructure.

Notes:

4:12. It is not the task of these gifted people to do all the work of the ministry. Their task is to prepare God's people for works of service. When believers are equipped and people accept the adventure of ministering to others, then the whole body is built up, matured, strengthened, and flourishes.

4:13. Diverse gifts create and build up one body in unity. This unity is in faith and knowledge of Christ. Christ does not try to build up superstars in his kingdom with superior faith or superior knowledge. He tries to build up a church unified in its faith and knowledge, each member being built up to maturity. All are to reach the fullness of Christ. The church's goal is that each member and thus the entire church will show to the world all the attributes and qualities of Christ. Then the church will truly be the one body of Christ.

4:14-16. The result of these spiritually gifted people's equipping the saints is that believers are not to be like children, easily persuaded and confused, jumping from one opinion or belief to the next, like waves on the sea being driven by gusting winds of false teaching. Rather, the believers are to speaking the truth in love. Speaking the truth in love is a mark of maturity, which will enable us to grow up spiritually. Immature people often fall into one of two opposite errors. They speak the truth, but without love, or they love without speaking the truth. When we do the first, we often brutalize others, pounding them with truth but doing it in an unloving way. When we do the second, we don't tell others the truth, thinking that by shielding them from the truth we are sparing them from pain. We are not, however. All we are doing is delaying their maturation. To share the truth with our fellow believers is a mark of maturity, but to do it with love, with understanding, with compassion. From Christ the whole body is gifted, and as each one uses his gift for the benefit of others, the whole body matures. We must recognize that we belong to one another, we need one another, no matter how insignificant we think our contribution is. There are no little people in the kingdom of God, as Francis Shaeffer used to say, and there are no little jobs. Just as a physical body needs red corpuscles and livers more than it needs a handsome face or beautiful hair, so we all belong; we are all necessary. We all can contribute, and when we do, we all grow to maturity in Christ.

Notes:

## GALATIANS 5:22-23

In contrast to the "acts of the flesh" presented above, those who are obedient to the Holy Spirit produce beautiful, nourishing spiritual fruit. Notice the fruit in this passage is called the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of self-effort. This fruit the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a faithful

Christian. In other passages of Scripture, we are commanded to fulfill the individual characteristics. The answer to this seeming paradox, I believe, is that only the Holy Spirit can produce the fruit; but he will not do so unless we are striving to the best of our ability for them in faithful obedience. These fruits of the Spirit are in harmony with and not opposed to the law. However, they are not produced by the law but rather by the Spirit working through the believer's faith.

Notes: