

SERMON GUIDE

Ecclesia: Church Discipline, Gifts, and Discipleship

Ephesians 4:11-16



SERMON NOTES

There is no true building up apart from the church. God's purpose and plan is to see His people, His church, built up. And this happens through the means God has provided for it in church discipline, spiritual gifts, and discipleship.

Exposition

Ephesians 4:11-16 – ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain 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 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus. He has instructed them in Christian theology (proper doctrine) in the first few chapters. And like most of Paul's letters, the back half is reserved for practical living. And in Chapter 4, he is particularly instructing the Christians in how the church is supposed to operate and what God is doing through the church.

1. Jesus Equips the Church with Leaders and Gifts (V11-12)

Jesus gives specific roles (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) to the church as a gift to equip believers. These roles focus primarily on instruction, guidance, and edification.

And what does he say Christ gives these roles for? To equip the saints for ministry and the building up of the body. Two things are crucial here. It is not just the leaders assigned the role of doing the work of ministry. It is the saints of the church. The body. The leaders equip the body for this. The leaders work to help build up the body. Leaders help maintain doctrinal integrity and address sin within the body

2. The Goal is Unity and Maturity in Christ (V13)

The purpose of discipline, gifts, and discipleship is to foster unity in faith and a deep knowledge of Christ. Maturity is measured by Christlikeness, not individual achievements. Corrective measures in the church aim to protect unity and foster spiritual growth. We talked about this last week with Matthew 18. Church discipline is ultimately done for the same reason a parent disciplines a child. We want the child's behavior to be conformed. When you have a talk with your kid, the aim is to spur on the right behavior. Church discipline, which usually looks like sitting down with someone and lovingly talking with them about the things in their life. The goal isn't punitive or threat of punitive action, but to care enough about them and hopefully be used by the Spirit of God to bring a conviction in their life that stirs the right outcome.

Alex Perry and I have a running joke about these kinds of conversations. Alex has been a member of this church for probably 18 years. We call it the "I love you, but..." conversation. "I love you, but let's talk about this thing going on." I've had these conversations. Years ago, when I was a much younger man, and the church was young and tiny, we didn't have much money, and we sometimes spent money on silver bullets. We spent money on things hoping to get some kind of big return on it. We got to a place where our money was really really tight. One of our elders sat down with me to talk about it. I spent my time talking about the person who directly managed the finances and how they hadn't done a good job. And he looked at me with patience, but firmness and said, "No, Erik, it's your fault. You're responsible. You have to take responsibility for what happens. You can't pass the blame." I've never forgotten that conversation. It was formative for me as a young leader. That was a discipline conversation. Nothing punitive, but corrective. I matured as a leader from that.

Each person in the church's spiritual gifts are given by God for the purpose of equipping others to grow in their faith. To help the body to mature in the faith. We looked at the 1 Corinthians 12 passage last week where Paul highlighted how each member is joined together and not all have the same role. Each member plays a unique role and offers unique gifts to the body. This is all by God's design.

3. It's Dangerous to Remain Spiritually Immature (V14)

Immaturity leaves believers vulnerable to false teaching, which leads to sin and promotes false gospels. Discipline in the body ensures that false teachings and sinful patterns are addressed. We confront false teaching and protect the body.

I remember many years ago having to address false teaching from a guy who had been attending TJC for several months, had started the membership process, was in a Life Group, and seemed to be moving into the life of the church. But issues arose concerning theological beliefs and convictions he promoted in his Life Group best understood as antinomianism. This error holds that, because Christians are under grace and not under the law, they are no longer obligated to obey moral law or worry about ongoing confession, repentance, or sanctification. This view misinterprets the doctrine of grace by rejecting the ongoing role of obedience and repentance in the Christian life. While Scripture teaches that believers are justified by faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28), it also affirms that grace leads to a transformed life characterized by repentance, confession, and sanctification (Romans 6:1-2, 1 John 1:9). His Life Group Leader and I tried to gently walk through Scripture, but his mind was made up. The influence for this thinking had been multiple television ministries and from churches they've attended along the way. We told him he had to stop espousing this stuff in Life Groups. And that he could not become a member of our church while confessing that belief. This led to him finding another place.

This not only is an example of discipline, but it is an example that if believers are not equipped and trained to know the truth, they can be blown around by every wind of teaching. The church is to be built up so we are not swayed by deceit and error.

4. We Speak the Truth in Love (V15)

Love and truth work together to build up the body and foster Christlikeness. This includes correcting and encouraging one another within the context of the community. Addressing sin and error must be done in love, aiming at restoration (Galatians 6:1). This is what we attempted to do with the gentlemen who were antinomian. This is what the elder that corrected me did. The exercise of spiritual gifts should be motivated by love. Growth in the body is relational, grounded in love and truth.

Years ago a family wanted to meet with me. They were a sweet family of a matriarch and her two older brothers (all 70s) and their children (50s). This large family loved our church but had a concern about something I said in my sermon. I was speaking about sin and how sinful we are and made the remark that I had sinned enough that morning before arriving at church to deserve eternity in Hell. They were very concerned about what I had done. I explained that I hadn't done anything demonstrative, but that it was a figure of speech. I'm sure I had sinned with a thought or careless word and that sin is so

grotesque to God that those were worthy of Hell. This brought out the fact that they held a "perfection theology." They believed we could become perfect or sinless on this side of Heaven. This is a Wesleyan theology. We talked and talked, went through Scriptures together, but eventually, some months later, they left the church because we didn't align on these things. The conversations were never contentious. The truth was always spoken in love and aimed to understand. This is how believers must relate to one another, even in spite of differences.

5. The Outcome is a Built Up Body (V16)

Christ is the head, and every member plays a vital role in the church's health and growth. Discipline, gifts, and discipleship ensure that "each part" works properly, promoting growth and love. Correcting and guiding ensures the body functions harmoniously. Each believer's unique role strengthens the whole body. Training and mentoring equip members to contribute effectively. The church grows in love and effectiveness when every member is committed to Christ and one another. It doesn't happen by accident. It happens as we commit ourselves to one another.

These elements of church discipline, spiritual gifts, and discipleship are the threads from which Christ builds His church. God's purpose of sanctification unfolds through these elements. Church discipline refines and corrects individuals. Spiritual gifts equip us to serve. Discipleship grows the body of Christ in knowledge and action.

Discipline – This is about growing in holiness. God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12). The process of church discipline is a restorative act of love. It's transformative. It's not about punishment. It's a correction for growth in holiness. When a church does church discipline the goal is restoration, not exclusion. This is ultimately about accountability and love within the body.

We had to remove a man from eldership and the membership years ago. He had gotten divorced while an elder (it was a bad/ugly situation where he was not primarily at fault). We were working through what to do, but we put him on a period of not functioning as an elder and providing care/support to him. A few months later we got word from someone in his Life Group that he had gotten married. We didn't even know he was dating again. The whole thing was super wacky. We knew this made him not above reproach before the body and when we confronted him about it he demonstrated no remorse but proceeded to lecture us. He refused to meet with us and address it. We eventually took it to the

membership body and told them what had happened and how we had handled everything. He was removed from the body (Matt. 18).

Because this man was an elder, we had to bring this to the body and address it. He was responsible to the people. For the record, we do not call out in public everyone who sins.

Spiritual Gifts – The Holy Spirit distributes gifts for the common good of the body (1 Corinthians 12). We use those gifts to serve one another (Romans 12). The gifts are about serving one another, not self-promotion. No spiritual gift is too small or insignificant, but a part of God's plan for His body.

Discipleship – We are to grow in the knowledge of Christ and obedience. We are to obey everything the Lord commanded us (Matthew 28) and accomplish the works He prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). This is about being a mature body that reflects Christlikeness to the world, both as individuals and as a whole.

These three things in particular are used by God to build us up. They are the ways by which we are sanctified.

Justification (God declares us innocent), Sanctification (God makes us practically holy), Glorification (we attain perfection). The work of justification is immediate upon faith. The work of glorification is immediate upon Christ's return or our deaths. Sanctification is gradual and ongoing. We don't just become sanctified with time and luck. It's about these particular things being exercised in the local church.

Application

1. Embrace God's Discipline. Reflect on areas where God might be refining you and respond with humility and repentance.

2. Use Your Gifts for the Body. Take a spiritual gifts assessment or ask leaders how you can serve in the church.

3. Engage in Discipleship. Join a Life Group, seek a mentor, get in the Men's or Women's ministry, come to MDWK, or begin discipling someone else.

The things we've discussed today are not burdens, but blessings. God is actively working in and through His people, the local church. It is a joy and privilege to be a part of God's plan and redemptive work in His church. He is actively making us into a people who are spotless and blameless before Him. Holy. A holy people prepared for the coming of the King.

Christ, through the work of the Spirit, and the power of His Word, brings this work in us to completion as we embrace discipline, use our gifts, and engage in discipleship.



THE TJC WEEKEND RECAP PODCAST



LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Read Ephesians 4:11-16 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
 - Philippians 1:6
 - 1 Timothy 5:20
 - Titus 1:9-11
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
 - What did this teach you about God?
 - What did this teach you about man?
 - What did this teach you about salvation?

- **DISCUSS**

- What offices did Jesus give to the church according to Ephesians 4:11, and what is their primary purpose?
- How does the sermon describe the relationship between church leaders and the congregation in ministry?
- What is the goal of church discipline, and how should it be carried out?
- Why is spiritual maturity crucial for the church, and what dangers arise from remaining immature?
- What does it mean to "speak the truth in love," and why is this important for building up the church?
- How do spiritual gifts contribute to the building up of the church?
- What does the sermon teach about the process of sanctification, and how is it related to the church?
- Why is unity in faith and knowledge of Christ a central theme in this passage?
- What can you learn from the examples of discipline and correction shared in the sermon?

- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

- **MEMORIZE**

- **Proverbs 4:23** – *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*



- **BUILD UP:** How will you be built up this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **Life Groups** are a time and place to connect and learn to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him. Life Groups are the primary means of disciple-making at TJC. Our groups focus on connecting, learning, following, and abiding. Groups meet weekly on various days/times across Wilson County. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** How do you plan to be sent out to engage the world around you? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.

- **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
 - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
 - **Pray for our staff:** Ally Johnson (Creativity and Communication Director)
 - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on May 25, 2025
 - Kenya Summer Trip departing on May 25, 2025
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>