

The Church and Disciplemaking

By Mike Morris

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Ephesians 4:11–16 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are some outcomes of the equipping of the saints (i.e., the discipling of Christians)?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to 2 Timothy 3:16–17 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Why do you think Scripture is so important for equipping the saints?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Hebrews 10:24–25 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to list some ways members of a church can encourage one another.

Scripture to Memorize

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be able to explain the church's role in disciplemaking.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Debbie attends her church only on Sunday mornings, and she does not receive any in-depth Bible teaching. She believes the purpose of her church is to emotionally encourage her on Sunday mornings so she will be able to deal with stress and live the Christian life. She occasionally tries to study the Bible during her devotion times at home, but she doesn't really understand many key doctrines in the Bible. What would be your advice to Debbie?

Read Ephesians 4:11–16 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 11–12. to equip the saints. Some Christians think church leaders (disciplers) are the only ones required to do church work. The job of disciplers, however, is the equipping of the saints (the training of disciples). **for the work of ministry.** Church members should not expect to be entertained when they enter church buildings. Rather, they should expect to be equipped in order to serve.

Verse 12. the building up of the body of Christ. This equipping process is necessary to build up the church. The greatness of a church should not be measured by the size of its buildings or the number of its members. False teachers can build large buildings and attract crowds. The greatness of a church should be measured by the spiritual fruit and maturity of its members. Mature disciples share the gospel and, under most circumstances, great churches eventually grow in both quality and quantity.

Verses 13. unity of the faith and of the knowledge. Disciples are to move toward knowledge of Christ and spiritual maturity. Unfortunately, some converts remain in the spiritual baby stage and cause conflict in churches (see 1 Corinthians 3:1–3).

Verses 14. no longer to be children. Converts still in the baby stage are easily fooled and carried about by every wind of doctrine. They need to again be taught the “elementary principles” (Hebrews 5:12), and they are “not accustomed to the word of righteousness” (Hebrews 5:13).

Verse 15. grow up in every way into Him. Disciples are to grow up in Christ.

Verse 16. Each part is properly working. When individual church members grow properly, the church grows properly.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are some outcomes of “the equipping of the saints” (i.e., the discipling of Christians)?

Discussion Question

What are some ways your church can provide additional discipleship for its members?

On Your Own

In the space below, write some things that are hurting your discipleship or even stunting your spiritual growth. When everyone is finished, the group can compare answers and encourage one another.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 16. All Scripture is breathed out by God. The Greek word translated here literally means “God breathed.” The inspiration of the Bible is different from the inspiration of other literature. All Scripture is God breathed; this means every word of the Bible is true. The Bible is inerrant; the writers made no errors as they wrote each word of Scripture.

“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21) during the time they were inspired. Peter identified Paul’s letters as Scripture, but he said that in Paul’s letters “are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist” (2 Peter 3:16). Paul added that “accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15) is essential.

profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction. Baby Christians need help from more mature Christians to understand some passages in the Bible. Scripture is also useful for reproof and correction because sometimes church discipline is needed when church members cross biblical boundaries (see Matthew 18:15–7). The Bible is our supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be judged. Disciples should examine the Scriptures to find out whether something is true (Acts 17:11). The objective truth of the Bible should always take priority over subjective feelings.

Verse 17. complete, equipped for every good work. After disciples are thoroughly taught, they will be ready to serve. New converts have not yet been equipped and therefore should not serve as pastors (1 Timothy 3:6; Titus 1:9). Disciples are “saved to serve.” They are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10).

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share why Scripture is important for “the equipping of the saints.”

Discussion Question

What are some dangers of new converts serving as pastors?

On Your Own

In the space below, list some problems that occur when disciples depend on their feelings rather than Scripture to solve problems. When everyone is finished, the group can compare answers and make changes where needed.

Read Hebrews 10:24–25 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 24–25. stir up one another to love and good works. Disciples are not to be spiritual “lone rangers.” God wants them to function as part of a team—a church. Disciples sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17). They should encourage one another as they assemble together. This encouragement could include repenting of sin and living up to high standards. Disciples should see one another as instruments of accountability that God can use to help them fulfill their responsibilities as disciples. Many Bible scholars agree that a church can be described as “an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

Assignment Three Feedback

The persons who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now list some ways members of a church can encourage one other.

Discussion Question

Read Galatians 6:1–10. Discuss the responsibilities of church members listed here. Some church members may not understand these responsibilities. What would you say to a person who believes that choosing a church is like choosing a favorite restaurant?

On Your Own

Read Acts 2:41–47. In the space below, list some important characteristics of the church in Jerusalem. When everyone is finished, the group can compare answers and make changes where needed.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

Ephesians 4:11–16 makes clear that the job of church leaders (the pastor, staff, and other disciplers) is the equipping of the saints (the training of disciples) for the work of service. Church leaders should not be the only disciples doing the Lord's work. Their job is to train all church members. This training is necessary for the building up of the body of Christ, the church. All disciples are to move toward unity of the faith, knowledge of Jesus and spiritual maturity.

Spiritual children in the baby stage are easily fooled and carried about by every wind of doctrine. They also cause conflict in churches. Many church members have experienced stunted spiritual growth. This is one reason many churches have serious problems.

All Scripture is God breathed. This means that every word of the Bible is true (2 Timothy 2:16–17). The Bible is profitable for teaching. It is also useful for reproof and correction. The Bible describes procedures for church discipline (Matthew 18:15–17). The Bible is our objective standard of truth, and it takes priority over subjective feelings.

Disciples sharpen one another. Disciples should see one another as instruments of accountability God can use to help them fulfill their responsibilities as church members. Churches are groups of baptized believers associated by covenant. Many churches have written covenants that describe the responsibilities of church members.

Church membership is meaningful and should be taken seriously. Christians should not join a church just to show their approval of that church. Rather, they should join a church to indicate their commitment to work with other members of that church to accomplish the Lord's work.

Follow up Question

What is the role of the church in discipling?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.