

The Importance of Education

By Matt Sanders

Pre-Session Assignments

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

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Ephesians 4:11–12 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Since there are no new apostles, how can we learn from the apostles today?

Assignment Two

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; then read the comments related to Ephesians 4:13 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are five ways the body of Christ is described here?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Ephesians 4:15–16 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How can love come from knowledge?

Scripture to Memorize

... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up the body of Christ; 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. Ephesians 4:12–13

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand how important it is to love God with their minds.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

When Peter goes to the pet store, he always comes home with a kitten because, well, kittens are so cute. When Peter gets home to the seventeen other kittens and cats he has brought home, he remembers why he tries to avoid pet stores.

Mary says she loves dogs. She is always studying about dogs on the Internet, visiting sites for certain breeds, and watching YouTube videos about dogs. Mary joined a local dog club and even travels to dog shows. She has books on dogs, a picture of a dog as a screen saver and even a bumper sticker on her car that reads, "Doggone it, I love dogs." Ask her about any breed, and she will tell you more than you want to hear. Mary does not have a dog. She's never even petted a dog.

Who really loves their animals? Peter or Mary?

Read Ephesians 4:11–16 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Paul, one of the most educated of the first-century church leaders, wrote these Bible verses two thousand years ago. He wrote to the church at Ephesus, where he had stayed three years - the longest he stayed anywhere during his ministry. Paul was under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before the emperor. That trial could result in his execution.

Paul wrote to these people he loved so much. He instructed them in ways to build on their solid foundation and become the church God desired them to be. He spent three chapters writing about the great mystery of God—that through faith in Christ, the Jews and Gentiles could be united. In chapter 4, he began to teach them how to live out this mystery in the community of faith.

Verses 11. And He gave. Paul told the Ephesians that their leaders are gifts from God who have the job of preparing them to minister.

Verse 12. to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Notice here that the leaders prepare, and the church members do the ministry. From the list, you should get a good idea of what "equipping" means. What would apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers do to prepare people for ministry? Much of it involves teaching. Being equipped means learning, but this is not just information or facts. This is knowledge put into action. **for building up the body of Christ.** Do you also see how important teaching and training are? God plans to use our leaders to teach us and prepare us to minister to and through the church.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: Since there are no new apostles, how can we learn from the apostles today?

Discussion Questions

Equipping should take place within the church. What does your church offer to help equip you, and what are you participating in? If your church is not offering teaching at your level of understanding, what can you do about it?

On Your Own

Being equipped for ministry is not optional for disciples, and it is not something just for adults. If you are not already involved in equipping ministries at your church, start praying that you will become involved. Ask God to help you remember that every sermon and every Bible study from your leaders are gifts from God to equip you for service. Take notes, ask questions, discuss with others and study more. Do all you can to take advantage of these gifts.

Studying the Passage

Verse 13. unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul then gave the objective of building up the body. Both of these require learning. This is not just unity for unity's sake. Rather, this is unity that comes from faith in what we believe and what that belief has done to us.

Verse 14. no longer . . . tossed to and fro. Paul then told the Ephesians what maturity looks like: not getting sucked into whatever somebody who claims to be a Christians says. Instead, mature disciples have biblical knowledge that has been tested in experience and thus allows them to recognize false teaching.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share answers to the following question: What are five ways the body of Christ is described here?

Discussion Questions

Do you feel you are part of the entire church, part of a smaller ministry, or not part of anything? What part are you playing or can you play in your church right now to be a part of the body as Paul described it? What kind of training do you need to prepare to do this job or to do it better?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a prayer to Jesus. Ask Him to show you your gifts and what you can do to be a part of the entire church, not just one portion of it. Pray that He will give you the strength and opportunity to connect more with others in the church.

Verse 15. speaking the truth in love. Paul then described what this steady maturity looks like: God's love. The learning helps disciples connect with Christ, our Leader, and it unites us like the tendons and ligaments in our bodies that hold our joints together. When the knowledge truly takes hold and works the way it should, the church continues to grow in love. Knowledge that does not lead to greater love in the church is not true knowledge. Knowledge has a source, "speaking the truth in love," and a direction, "for the building up of itself in love" (v. 16), both of which are love.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: How can love come from knowledge?

Discussion Question

How can you avoid dead knowledge—having knowledge without God’s love, or uninformed love—having some form of love without knowledge? Who in your church models “smart/knowledgeable love”—the combination of learning and knowing more about God that results in a greater love for God and other people?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a prayer that Christ will help you avoid the problems of dead knowledge and uninformed love. Pray also that He will bring positive examples of smart love into your life.

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

Give the group this update: “In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . .”

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Christ places much importance on our learning and being equipped to help the rest of the church be all He intended it to be. This is not just about *my* brain or *my* Christian life. Learning is part of *His* plan for *His* kingdom. Through the church, Christ shows the greatest evidence of His power to change lives and unite people from diverse backgrounds in His great love.

The world knows who God is, in large measure, through the way we love one another (John 17:21–23), but our love should not be uninformed love. Our knowledge should not be dead. We need to learn more about who God is so we love better and, in so doing, show the world more of who He is. Paul said it well when he wrote that what really matters is “faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6).

Jesus has assigned church leaders the task of equipping church members for ministry. Disciples have callings on their lives and spiritual gifts and abilities. You are not the church of tomorrow, but of today. It is time to step forward and let your leaders know you desire to be equipped for kingdom service.

God has also given some disciples Christian families. Where this is the case, family members can support one another in learning and training. They can take a class or do a study together. They can discuss what they have heard in a sermon or study. They can go together to ask the pastor or teacher for more information. The family is also one of the main places where knowledge can be put into action. Homes can be a safe place to try (and sometimes fail) to put hands and feet to what is being learned.

Follow up Question

What can you do to move more toward biblical, intelligent love?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers 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.