



## First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS VS CULTURE: BUILDING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW • GROW UP! •  
EPHESIANS 4:11-16 • 1/7/2024

### MAIN POINT

God uses His Word, His Spirit, and His Church to equip and mature believers to live on mission no matter the culture in which they live.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**In what way do you receive the majority of the information you hear (or read) daily?**

**Take a quick poll in your small group. Who receives information primarily through the newspaper? Television? Internet? Social media?**

**How much time do you believe the average American spends looking at a screen daily?**

According to recent surveys from *Data Reporter* and *Digital Information World*, the daily usage of an American has increased some 50 minutes per day since 2013 to an astounding 7 hours and 4 minutes... EVERY... SINGLE... DAY!!!! Not to be outdone, Generation Z (ages 11-26) spends upwards of 9 hours per day looking at a screen. One survey even showed that 49% of 0-2-year-olds engage in screen time via smartphones daily.

So many questions come to mind when reading these statistics. We could easily look at decreased attention spans, worsening mental health such as anxiety and depression, and even diminished linguistic skills (*National Library of Medicine, 2023*). Still, one more pressing question comes to mind, how much of the world can we put into our minds and hearts but still live a life that brings glory to God?

Over the next two months, we are going to look at the Apostle Paul's admonition as well as a challenge to the church in Ephesus on how to live biblically in an unbiblical world. This letter was relevant some 2,000 years ago and remains relevant to us today, maybe even more now than ever before.

## UNDERSTANDING

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

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:11-13

*"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," (ESV)*

**How important is each of the roles God has given to build His Church? Which roles are still active today?**

**What is the primary role of church leaders? What does it mean to 'equip'?**

**Who does this passage state is the primary worker(s) in the ministry for building up the body of Christ?**

Some debate exists on the present-day roles that God gives to the church as a whole. Most Christians believe the apostles and prophets were given early in church history before the canon of Scripture was completed and assembled into what we have today. Following the completion of the canon, most agree that God now sends evangelists, shepherds/teachers in today's church.

Very little debate remains on the primary role of these leaders. Christian leaders are tasked with *"equipping the saints for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ,"* with the goal of *"unity of faith and of the knowledge of Jesus Christ."* The balance of equipping leaders and working saints is vital to the mission of the church as they work hand in hand furthering the kingdom of God.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:14-16.

*"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." (ESV)*

**What is a characteristic mentioned in verse 14 that defines an immature believer?**

**How influenced do you think Christians are today by worldly doctrines and philosophies?**

Here is a list of the nine of the most common unbiblical statements that many Christians believe (*Church Leaders, 2018*):

1. "God helps those who help themselves" (Compare to Matthew 16:24)
2. "God wants me to be happy" (Compare to 1 Peter 1:15-16)
3. "We're all God's children" (Compare to 1 John 3:10)
4. "Cleanliness is next to godliness" (Compare to 1 Samuel 16:7)
5. "God won't give you more than you can handle" (Compare to 2 Corinthians 1:8)
6. "We all worship the same God" (Compare to Acts 4:12)
7. "Bad things happen to good people" (Compare to Romans 3:10)
8. "When you die, God gains another angel" (Compare to 1 Peter 1:12)
9. "We're all going to the same place when we die" (Compare to Daniel 12:2)

Chances are, you have heard most, if not all, of these statements. There is even a good chance that you have made one of these statements to another person. The problem is that most of these sound fine, or at least close enough to truth, but God is not impressed with how close we can get to truth, He wants us to know and speak... THE TRUTH.

**How does verse 15 state we are to address false doctrines in the church?**

## **What is the ultimate result of a church that speaks the "truth in love"?**

The church should be a place where Christians are constantly helping each other grow to maturity in Christ. Sometimes it means lovingly speaking hard truths into the lives of others while always seeking to bring glory to God. The body grows as every member contributes, and each member grows to maturity as the whole body grows.

A culture of growth is vital to any individual and church body. A culture of growth is also known as discipleship, the very leadership structure Jesus used with his twelve disciples when building up the first body of believers.

Discipleship might happen in many different ways. It might occur in a Bible study or small group time. It might occur around a kitchen table or even a locker room. It happens many times without us even realizing what is happening. Discipleship happens when we allow God to use us, our experiences, and our lives to invest in those He chooses to place alongside us in our lives.

If we are to get serious and grow up, it needs to start with what is coming into our minds and hearts every day. Jesus tells his disciples in *Matthew 6:22-23*, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*"

## **APPLICATION**

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

**What needs to change for you to begin to think and live biblically in the world today?**

**What are some ways that a culture of growth(discipleship) should show itself in a church?**

**What's the difference between cultivating a culture of discipleship and having discipleship programs?**

**How do you contribute to your church's culture of discipleship? What more could you do?**

## **PRAYER**

Praise God for the process of becoming more like Christ inside of a community of faith. Ask Him to help your group discover the distractions they need to eliminate from their lives. Pray that God would reshape your priorities to reflect that of a committed follower of Christ.

## COMMENTARY

### | EPHESIANS 4:11-16

4:11. This verse ties directly back to the last word of verse 7. Verse 11 picks up 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. 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 (see Eph. 2:20). Now that the foundation has been laid, the evangelists and the pastor-teachers are being used by God to build the superstructure.

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. Paul noted two illustrations of what happens when believers work together. The first is drawn from human development. Individual believers grow from infancy to adulthood. The second illustration is from nautical life. Believers who work together will not be like a storm-tossed boat, upset by the waves and blown around by every wind. To be sure, there will always be false teaching to confront. There will be human cunning with cleverness.

There will be techniques of deceit to lead believers astray. But Christians who have worked together to develop a clear understanding of the faith and who know Christ intimately will survive such attacks.

4:15. The cure for immaturity and instability is speaking the truth. Yet this truth is to be expressed in love—with compassion and understanding. Truth without love can be cold and harsh; love without truth can be mushy and weak.

4:16. Paul returned to the illustration of human development with a twist. This time he thought of a single body. It has a Head (Jesus Christ; see 4:15 and 5:23), who directs all the operations (from Him). At the same time, the body (the local congregation) has many parts that need to work together. An individual church member is a supporting ligament or an individual part (see also 1 Cor. 12:14-21). Each part has been fitted and knit together by the Lord with all the other parts. With the proper working of each part, the body will do what it's supposed to do.