



SERIES: Pursuing Spiritual Fitness

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Thursday, August 17, 2023

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13

TITLE: Encouragement Is Key

Who was your favorite teacher in elementary school? What about in junior high or high school? Or what about a coach? Or a boss? Who was your favorite? Well, regardless of who you picked, I'm going to safely guess that you picked them because of their investment in you as a person. The best teachers, coaches, or bosses are the people who invested in you and equipped you for success.

Did you know that the Church exists for equipping others for success? It's true. Listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT):

Now, these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

In February, we covered this passage with greater depth, but God gives each individual spiritual gifts to serve the Church. Paul lists some offices of the past and current Church. But what's the point of these gifts? Paul says these gifts and offices are to equip God's people to do His work and build up the Church.

Now, earlier I said God uses the Church to equip us for success. And that's because success is rightly defined as glorifying God, by being faithful in the work of the Church. God's not going to do what those rough teachers did - hand you a test that you never studied for. He's not going to put you up to do something that He's not prepared you for. And like any of my favorite teachers, He provides an open book. He's there for you, to point you in the right direction.

And that's what we are called to do as the body of Christ. We are called to equip and encourage others to grow in their love and knowledge of God. We are called to equip and encourage believers to follow God and obey all He has commanded out of love. Many Christians today look, sound, and behave like non-believers. They are doing their walk alone, but God never intended for it to be that way. We are made for community and reborn into one. So today, let's equip and encourage together.

So here's my challenge/encouragement for you today: examine and encourage. First, do a spiritual health check. How are you doing at doing the work of following God? How are you

doing at your own intentional spiritual fitness? Are you growing or coasting? Be honest. It's okay. Many days I'm coasting backward. Friend, examine yourself and then get going.

But don't just stop there. Encourage someone to keep pursuing spiritual fitness. Encourage someone from your local body, our body here, or someone you know, who needs some loving encouragement to keep going and keep doing the work of the church. As John Piper said, "we are not professionals." We are just sinners saved by grace, so let's keep going and growing together. So now, go and win the day.