



## Sermon Discussion Guide Strong Trunk - James Junior September 14, 2026

### Hook - Getting to know one another

- *How is everyone doing this week? Add other questions to get to know one another, especially ones related to the topic in the sermon.*
- What do you think about the new 5 year plan? Was there anything you heard that inspired you? Any questions you have?
- If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?
- Share about a time when your gifts, skills, and experiences came together to put you in the right place at the right time

### Book - Scripture

- *Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand **what the text is saying***
  - Romans 12:4-8
  - Ephesians 4:11-13
- Who is Paul writing to? What might be the purpose behind his message to those who received it?
- What could've been happening in the churches to require this teaching (echoed in Romans, Ephesians, as well as 1 Corinthians 12)?
- If you were to explain these teachings to a child, how would you summarize it? What is the heart of this message in simple words?
  - *Have everyone in the group take 1-2 minutes to write their short, one sentence explanation of the big idea of one of these texts. Then go around the room and share answers.*
- What does the text say about the *why*? Why are the members of the church given different gifts?

### Look - Connections to our world today

- *This section focuses on implications about **what this text means** about what's wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.*



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- What do we learn about God's character in these texts?
- What is the good news that we hear from Romans 12:4-8 and Ephesians 4:11-13?
- What implications do these texts have for today's body of Christ and to a watching world?
- When you picture a flourishing "Kingdom Tree" with a strong trunk, what does it look like in practice?

### Took - Personal Application

- *This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond**. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
- The goal for the Strong Trunk section of the vision statement is this: By 2030, we aim for 50% of those who call Hillcrest home to be regularly serving, whether inside or outside the church, in ways that align with their unique gifts and passions.
  - For those that consider Hillcrest their home church, do you find it to be true that you are regularly serving in ways that align with the unique gifts and passions that God has given you? Why or why not?
- What does this text, this teaching, and this Strong Trunk section of the five year vision plan mean for you personally? How can I participate in God's mission using the unique gifts He's given me?
- Where do you sense God inviting you to use your gifts in a way that feels like, '*I was made for this*'? And how can we dream together about using our gifts as a community?"
- How do you feel encouraged, challenged, or hopeful because of these teachings?

### Time of Prayer

- How do you feel encouraged, challenged, or hopeful because of these teachings?