

Ephesians 4:1-16

Week 7 - Unity In the Body of Christ

Learning Objectives

- It is by Christ and for Christ that we seek unity as His church. This knowledge should lead to an attitude of worship.
- We must recognize unity and disunity, and seek out unity in the ways Paul has called out.
- We need to appreciate the giftings of others in the body and not wrongly lift others up because of how public their role is. If we are in a public role, we must not be proud.

Introduction

The verses here are to address the separate roles and gifts given to followers of Christ that are all important in the ultimate function in the church. Each role and gift are given by Christ, but also made possible to complete because of His grace.

Pray for your time together as a group.

Ephesians 4:1-16 (NIV)

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”

The “ascended” here (verse 7-10) is likely referring to Christ going from Earth to Heaven. Therefore, descending is the inverse, going from Heaven to Earth.

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Leader's Note: The numbers in parentheses are just question numbers to allow your group to more easily refer back to a question. If you don't like them, please feel free to remove or ignore them.

? (1) What do you think it looks like to live a life worthy of the calling you have received (verse 1)?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary; some may read back verses 2 and 3. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

? (2) What is an example you've seen of someone being "completely humble, gentle and patient" in a tough situation with another believer? Or an example of someone not being that way?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

? (3) What does it mean to bear with one another in love?

Possible Answers: Recognizing that others are also fallen image bearers of God and that the ground is level at the foot of the cross should help us see that we are the same as them.

? (4) Verse 3 instructs us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit." In what ways have you seen this practiced well (church, small group, family, friends)? In what ways have you seen it not practiced well?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. This question is to help the group think about signs of unity and disunity.

? (5) Verse 3 also mentions the "bond of peace." What bonds Christians and makes them more unified than any other group of people?

Possible Answers: We have the Holy Spirit! Not only are we pursuing the same teachings, we have Him actively working in our lives toward unity.

? (6) How does Paul's list in verses 5-6 specifically promote unity?

Possible Answers: We should all be striving toward the same goals and worshiping the same God. If we hold to the same core teachings, then there shouldn't be any question of faith priorities.

? (7) In verses 11-12 Paul mentions a few "offices" of the body of Christ. What are some others? Are there roles you've had that, at the time, you didn't think much of, but later came to see it as vital to the body of Christ?

Possible Answers: Answers may vary, preschool teacher, hospitality volunteer, maybe you volunteer at random events, maybe you make a point to talk to the person sitting alone, anything that utilizes your strengths to glorify Christ and love others.

? (8) How does Christ equip us to have unity in the Spirit?

Possible Answers: Diversity. Christ has given grace (gifts) to each one of us (v7) for works of service (v12) to help us attain unity (v13).

Sound doctrine (v14)

Out of Christ himself (v16)

? (9) What do you think unity looks like in our small group or in our church?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

? (10) What are the challenges of appreciating the diversity of the body while maintaining unity? How can we meet those challenges?

Possible Answers: People grow up differently with different experiences and priorities. They may have experienced Christ differently and want to emphasize certain roles or doctrines over others. People also may feel that others' roles are more important (or less important) than their own.

? (11) What does it mean to “become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”?

Possible Answers: doctrinal maturity (v14), we speak the truth in love, we each do our work recognizing that our gifts are from Christ (v16) and therefore should have no reason for pride or boasting.

? (12) What helps us not be “tossed back and forth by the waves” (verse 14)?

Possible Answers: unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God

For Discussion and Accountability

? What are some graces (gifts) you believe Christ has given you to contribute to the unity of the Spirit/church?

[Follow up: perhaps make a point to discuss each person's findings at the next small group. Then hold each other accountable to pursue those opportunities.]

? Are there some areas in your life and life with other believers where you are disunified? How will you work toward unity in those areas?