

Ephesians

Lesson 6 Ephesians 4

Leader Guide

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Lesson 6

Ephesians 4

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

Christ himself gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. *Ephesians 4:11-13*

Prayers

Read Ephesians 4:1-16, Unity in the Body of Christ

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.”

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.

Discuss

1. In the first three chapters, Paul reminds the Ephesians they are called children of God. In chapter 4, he tells them to act like it. What are some things he reminded them of regarding their calling in the first three chapters?
 - a. Ephesians 1:3-8

^{Eph 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

God chose us with him through eternity before he created the world. God predestined us to be in Christ, adopted us as his children, redeemed us through the blood of Christ, and forgave our sins.

b. Ephesians 1:9-10

^{Eph 1:9} And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

God's will and pleasure are to bring all things under Christ's lordship.

c. Ephesians 1:13-14

^{Eph 1:13} And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

We are sealed in Christ for eternal life by the Holy Spirit.

d. Ephesians 2:13-14, 18-19

^{Eph 2:13} But now in Christ Jesus you [Jews and Gentiles] who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility

^{Eph 2:18} For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household

God's purpose was to make Jews and Gentiles one body in Christ so that all people could be saved.

e. Ephesians 3:10-11

^{Eph 3:10} His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God makes his eternal purposes made known through the church.

f. Ephesians 3:12

Eph 3:12 In him [Christ] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

We have direct access to God through faith in Christ.

2. Living a life worthy of God's calling is a common theme in Paul's letters. Read the following passages and discuss what you think Paul meant by urging the Ephesians to live a life "worthy" of their calling.

Eph 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Heb 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Col 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Jn 15:4 **Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

Jn 15:16 **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.**

Jn 14:15 **"If you love me, you will obey what I command.**

Col 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

In a secular sense, our identity is tied to our actions. We usually reply with what we do if someone asks who we are. Likewise, our spiritual identity in Christ calls us to action. God calls us to be holy. He placed us in Christ so that Christ is our righteousness. We are also called to obey his commands, which are simple but all-encompassing; we are to love God and others and bear fruit in his kingdom. Our actions toward others, worship, praise, and daily activities and should be a testimony that we are his children.

3. Why are the qualities listed in verse 2, humility, patience, and bearing with one another in love, required for unity?

Seeking unity in the church is like seeking peace in an argument within your household – maintaining love in the relationship is more important than "winning" the argument.

Humility – is putting another's needs before your own. Patience is seeking to understand before being understood, and bearing with another in love is having humility, patience, and gentleness for others who do not share our views.

4. What does Paul say is the basis of Christian unity in verses 3-5?

Unity among Christians is based on our identity in Christ. We share one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, which should lead us to bear with one another with patience and love.

5. Paul refers to the grace Christ has apportioned for us in verse 7 might be confusing. What are the gifts Paul is referring to?

You might think that Christ needs to give more grace to some than others, which is certainly true! But Paul is likely referring to the spiritual gifts required in the offices that follow in verse 11; apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.

6. What is Christ's purpose for raising up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers?

Christ's goal is that his body, the church, is built up in unity, faith, knowledge, and spiritual maturity so that all of its members become Christ-like.

7. Do you think Christians can mature in their faith apart from the church?

The five-fold ministry of Church leaders indicates that Christians are meant to mature in fellowship with other Christians. As the writer of Hebrews wrote: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25).

8. What is the work of the body of Christ Paul refers to verse 16?

The church's work is two-fold, to bring the body of believers to maturity in faith and understanding and to continue God's work of redemption by proclaiming salvation through Christ by demonstrating Christ's love for the lost as Christ demonstrated the love of the Father.

Read Ephesians 4:17-32, Instructions for Christian Living

¹⁷So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

9. Paul has urged the Ephesians to mature in their faith and understand their new life in Christ. In verses 17-32 and continuing through the rest of his letter, he illustrates what maturity in Christ looks like compared to their former life. In what ways does Paul say the Gentiles (non-believers) are separated from their understanding of God?

Their thinking is futile and ignorant, given to the indulgence of every kind of impurity and greed.

10. We all know non-Christians who are moral and generous people. Would Paul exclude them from the Gentiles he refers to in verses 17-19?

Concerning spiritual discernment and salvation, their thinking is futile. Because Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), Paul said that everyone needs Christ Jesus to redeem them from sin because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

11. What actions does Paul list in verses 20-31 signify a new life and new attitude in Christ?

Verse 24 **Righteousness and holiness**

Verse 25 **Truthfulness**

Verse 26 **Controlled anger, seeking forgiveness before the day is over**

Verse 28 **honesty and work**

Verse 28 **Generosity and charity**

Verse 29 **Building others up, not tearing people down with unkind or disparaging words.**

Verse 30 **Not grieving the Holy Spirit by sinning**

Verse 31 **Learning self-control, getting rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice.**

Verse 32 **Being kind, compassionate, and forgiving**

12. How have you seen the Holy Spirit shaping your attitude and behavior concerning Paul's list of qualities characterizing a new life in Christ?

The discussion will vary.

Closing from Psalm 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Transform my mind that I would seek only your ways, and that my life would be a pleasing sacrifice to you. AMEN