

Ephesians 4 :1-16

Unity and Maturity in Christ's Church

Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman Empire in what now modern day Turkey. It was a city famous for magic and sorcery. Paul visited Ephesus in about 52 AD and wrote this letter in about 60AD. A key defining verse is 4:1 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” The Book of Ephesians might be similar to Romans. It was not so much written to address issues in a particular church but was written to a community of Christians to explain themes and doctrines of the faith. Ephesus was important to Paul. He lived and worked in Ephesus for 2-3 years — a long time for him.

Like other letters, it is important to remember that Paul wrote this letter while he was in chains in prison. It is an important discussion about the place, role and purposes of God's people (the new life) and God's church. Paul repeatedly talks about the new identity we have as believers in Christ and what that means for a new way of life. It repeatedly makes clear that all things God has brought everything under Christ's rule. There is a new kingdom under Christ as Christ reconciles the world to himself. There are things that must be given up to live kingdom lives and to prepare ourselves for spiritual battle (chapter 6) by putting on the full armor of God.

Chapter 1

- Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ
- Thanksgiving and Prayer

Chapter 2

- Made Alive in Christ
- Jew and Gentile Reconciled through Christ

Chapter 3

- God's Marvelous Plan for the Gentiles
- A Prayer for the Ephesians

Chapter 4 - Unity and Maturity in the Body Of Christ

- Verses 1-2 on our calling
- Verse 3-6 on pursuing unity
- Verses 7-9 on the supremacy of Christ
- Verses 11-14 on gifts, purpose & church
- Verses 15-16 on the body of Christ

Chapter 5 - Instructions for Christian Living

Chapter 6

- Armor of God
- Final Greeting

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Chapter 4 is a great chapter for bringing together both responsibilities of individuals in the Christian community and the importance of the whole body of Christ. This is why it is often entitled Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ. Paul discusses several key themes:

- The importance of pursuing our individual callings and purpose;
- The importance of unity and purpose in the body of Christ (the church); and
- The importance of righteous Christian living.

The emphasis is on unity in verses 1-16. Paul is giving instruction to this community of faith on about how we are supposed to work with one another to decrease division to make sure we live in unity. The unity is for and in Christ. He also talks to the community in Ephesus about the gifts and purposes of the members of the community and notes that they are a gift from God. In verse 17-32, he emphasizes the importance of individual accountability and Christian living.

Verse 1. Fill in these blanks:

As a P_____ for the Lord, then, I U_____ you to live a life W_____ of the
C_____ you have R_____.

1. As Paul prepares to deliver a message of unity of the body and a commitment to Christian living, why do we think he reminds us of his being a “prisoner for the Lord?”
2. At the end of the first sentence, Paul speaks of our “calling.” Before reflection on nature of our calling, how do we get our calling? Do we earn it?
3. Reflect on/discuss what it means that we have a calling that we receive from God. What does it mean to us to know that God has given us a calling?

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4. Some of the gifts and calling from God are seen in verses 7-13 but particularly verse 11. They are also found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and Romans 12:3-8. Go to those verse and look at the difference descriptions of the spiritual gifts. We will discuss them in more detail in the future.

5. Lastly, knowing that we have a calling from God, what does it mean for us to live a life that is “worthy of the calling” as Paul has urged us? What does it mean to live worthy?

Verse 2. Fill in the blanks:

Be C _____ H _____ and G _____; be P _____, B _____ with one another in L _____.

1. What are the three things that Paul says that Christians are supposed to be? How are we called to live?

2. What level of commitment should we have to these principles of humility, gentleness, and patience?

3. How challenging is it for us to be COMPLETELY humble, gentle, and patient with one another?

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4. How do we think about this when we consider God's humility, gentleness and patience with us?
5. What does it mean for us to bear with one another in love?

Read verse 3 and fill in the following blanks.

Make E_____ E_____ to keep the U_____ of the S_____ through the
B_____ of P_____.

1. What is the unity of the spirit and why is it important? Look at Ephesians 2:13-16 and 4:13 and discuss.
2. What makes it difficult or challenging for the church (Christians) to live in the unity of the spirit?

Read Verse 4

1. What do verses 4:1 and 2 tell us about the proper attitude that brings unity?
2. What type of effort do we provide to keep unity?

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Read verses 4,5 and 6 and fill in the blanks.

There is O_____ B_____ and O_____ S_____, just as you were called
to O_____ H_____ when you were called; O_____ L_____,
O_____ F_____, O_____ B_____; O_____ G_____ and
F_____ of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1. Read verse 4, 5 and 6. There is a single word that is repeated at least 7 times. What is that word and why do we think it is repeated so frequently?

2. Inside the church (not outside) what are the things that sometimes get in the way of our unity?

3. What happens to the body when it is not unified?

4. Read, reflect and discuss 1 Corinthians 12:12-21 on a unified body.