



LEADER'S GUIDE 7

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

We now start chapters 4-6 of Ephesians which have to do with how we live the Christian life, God's work through us.

The Unity of the Church, or Walk Worthy of the Calling

As you start this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

DAY 1

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 three times.

1. In verse 1 Paul again refers to himself as a prisoner for the Lord. Review your notes from Study Guide 5 Day 1 to refresh yourself about this.
Prisoners cannot pursue their own will. Paul was completing 2 years of house arrest in Rome. He would not have been there had he not appealed to Caesar. Rome was the most influential city in the western world and a fertile opportunity for evangelism to individuals from all over the Roman Empire. Although a prisoner of Caesar legally, he described himself as a 'prisoner for the Lord' – a willing bondage on his part. Paul was pursuing God's will as an evangelist to non-believers.
2. In verse 1, what does Paul urge the readers of Ephesians to do?
Live a life worthy of the calling they have received.
This is the theme of chapters 4-6 – the lifestyle of the new race of believers. This exhortation is based on what Paul wrote in chapters 1-3. The word "worthy" is axios in the Greek which means of equal weight. One's calling and conduct should be in balance. The word "calling" refers not only to their salvation but also to their union in one body. "Therefore, a Christian's conduct concerns both his personal life and his responsibility to other believers in the church." (Walvoord and Zuck)
See also Philippians 1:27 – refers to living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Colossians 1:10 refers to live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 refers to live lives worthy of God.
The additional verses here describe the type of life or walk expected by us as believers in Christ. These verses challenge us to 'stand firm in one spirit', to 'bear fruit', to 'grow in the knowledge of God', and to be 'encouraging and comforting' to others.
3. Verse 2 says "the calling you have received". Read Ephesians 1:18, romans 8:28; 9:24; 11:29 and 1 Corinthians 1:9. What do these verses say about the believer's calling?
In the order of the references: we are called to hope; called according to God's purpose; He called us; God's call is irrevocable and God has called us into fellowship with him. Summary: God calls us to fellowship with Jesus Christ according to His purpose, it is irrevocable and is hope.
Since God is always faithful, we are challenged to be faithful to the call we have received. The hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness", also reminds us of this truth.

TO DIG DEEPER: Read Ephesians 4-6. Mark each occurrence of the work “walk” or “live”. See also Ephesians 2:10. Write what is said in these verses about the believer’s walk or living or conduct. Ephesians 4:1 – live a life worthy of the calling you received. Ephesians 5:2 – live a life of love. Ephesians 5:8 – live as children of light. Ephesians 5:15 – be very careful how you live – as wise, making the most of every opportunity.

Early Christians were known as “Followers of the Way”.

DAY 2

1. In verse 2 – what four ways show that we are living this life worthy of our calling?

Be completely humble, gentle, patient, bearing with each other in love.

These are the 5 qualities of life that promote unity.

Humble: within Greek culture humility was not seen as a virtue but as cringing subservience and thus despised. They defined it as “the crouching submissiveness of a slave” (F.F. Bruce). Christians understand humility as an absence of pride and self-assertion based on accurate self-knowledge and understanding of the God-given worth of others. Christ is the supreme example.

Gentle: meekness in the RSV – not timid or without convictions but “it is the quality of a strong personality who is nevertheless master of himself and the servant of others”. (J.R. Stott)

Patience – slowness in avenging wrong, not retaliating when hurt by another; never gives up, endures to the end even in adversity.

Bearing one another – tolerance of the faults of others.

2. In verse 3 what are we to make every effort to do? Keep the unity of the Spirit

Through what are we to do this? Through the bond of peace

Read again Ephesians 2:14-22 to refresh your mind about the unity Paul is speaking of.

God has united Jew and Gentile in Christ in the church.

The virtues in verse 2 have this unity in view. These same attitudes build unity in all kinds of relationships.

3. Verses 4-6 give the basis for this unity. Seven elements are listed, prefaced by the word “one”. Write down the 7 elements.

One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all

One body = the church, one Spirit = the Holy Spirit, one hope = regarding future with God, one Lord = Christ, one faith = in Christ, one baptism = water baptism by which believers demonstrate their spiritual unity, one God and Father. Note: the Trinity is an integral part of this unity!

The hymn mentioned in last week’s Study Guide 6, “In Christ there is no East or West”, takes inspiration from the unity of all mankind in Christ which is the theme of Ephesians 2:19, ‘For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit’. Remember, Christ is the ‘chief cornerstone’, Ephesians 2”21, ‘ in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord’. Unity, therefore, is paramount and Paul emphasizes this again in Ephesians 4:4-6. In 1856 at a critical time in our nation’s history, Abraham Lincoln in a debate with Stephen A. Douglas quoted a verse from Mark 3:25, ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ Although Lincoln lost the debate, this quote reflected his stand against slavery and was felt to have been responsible for his election four years later to the presidency of the United States in 1860.

The unity which Paul is urging is based upon the three-fold work of the triune God. God the Holy Spirit creates the one body. God the Son brings hope, faith and baptism to this body. God the Father fills the body. (from Ephesians by Coleman and Peace).

Day 3

1. Read verse 7. Also read Ephesians 3:7-8. Paul's gift of grace was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. According to 4:7, who else has been given grace? How?

Each Christian has been given grace. It is apportioned by Christ.

Paul is focusing here on the grace by which these redeemed Christians serve Christ and His Church. Each believer is to function in the Church by God's enablement, proportionate to the spiritual ability bestowed on him/her.

2. Read verses 11 and 12. What are the gifts of grace stated in verse 11?

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

What is their two-fold purpose according to verse 12?

To prepare God's people for works of service and to build up the body of Christ.

The gifts of grace are known as 'charismata' and are enumerated in verses 11 and 12 as well as Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12. The body of Christ, i.e. the Church, requires many skills, many gifts in its members. This list is not exhaustive and includes many talents which are critical in our service to the Lord. The example in scripture is that of a building. Diverse skills are required such as architect, carpenter, plumber, electrician, roofer, etc. The purpose of all gifts is to glorify the Lord. Unity does not mean conformity – there is a diversity of gifts within the church.

The emphasis in this list is on teaching gifts.

TO DIG DEEPER: For each of the gifts of grace listed in verse 11, look up the following verses and write what they say about the role of that gift.

APOSTLE: Ephesians 2:20, Acts 1:21-22, Mark 6:30, Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1 and Hebrews 3:1

A foundation gift, one who witnessed the resurrection, one who teaches and serves, a calling, by the will of God, an apostle of Christ Jesus, Jesus is called an apostle and high priest. See also 1 Corinthians 12:28 – God appointed first of all apostles . . . – they were chosen by Christ during his earthly ministry; some, like Paul, were added later.

Apostle originally meant "ambassador" for the king. It was broadened to mean anyone who brings good news to an area. Paul probably had in mind the small group of men who had seen the resurrected Christ and been commissioned by him to launch his church. In this sense there are no longer apostles. There are people of whom it can be said they have apostolic ministries – episcopal jurisdiction, pioneer missionary work, church planting, etc. (from J. R. Stott)

PROPHET: Acts 11:27-28, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 1 Corinthians 14:3-4, Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 2 Peter 3:2.

One came from Jerusalem and predicted a severe famine over the entire Roman world (happened during Claudius's reign) use gift of prophesying in proportion to faith (power given by God to fulfill the gift), to speak to the people to strengthen, encourage and comfort, edifies the church; some are given it – not everyone, a foundation gift, the Spirit reveals to them, includes words spoken in the past by holy prophets.

Prophet originally meant "spokesman" for God in the Old Testament. It is broadened to mean someone who speaks out for God on issues. Prophets offer words of instruction, exhortation, and admonition which were immediate and unpremeditated. Their source was direct revelation from God. Their prophecies were often directed to specific situations, but at times relate to the future.

EVANGELIST: Philip was one, preach the gospel, gift given by Christ, work (Timothy charged to do)

Evangelist originally meant wandering storytellers. It was broadened to mean someone who can make clear the gospel message to outsiders. In the early church they were men and women who moved from place to place telling the gospel to those who

had not heard it and/or believed it. We are all called to be witnesses of the gospel, but this is a special gift to be able to make the gospel clear and convincing to many people – today like Billy Graham.

PASTORS AND TEACHERS: at church in Antioch – different role than prophets, teach yourself when you teach others, God appoints them, a word of instruction, false teachers do not know what they are talking about, those who teach will be judged more strictly, be shepherds of your flock, serve as overseer.

Pastor/teacher in the original Greek, the gift is combined. It literally means shepherd – to care for the needs of others and to preserve and protect the Christian tradition. The prime task of the clergy (which these gifts represent) is to prepare the lay persons to do ministry. In Ephesians 3:12 Paul taught the ‘priesthood of all believers’. Here he teaches the ministry of all believers. One author sees this as God’s gift of gifted believers given to the church

DAY 4

1. Verses 8, 9 and 10 refer to a concept quoted from Psalm 68:18 which Paul applies here to Christ. It is the picture of a triumphant warrior who is elevated when he returns with hosts of prisoners, receiving gifts from the conquered people and distributing gifts to his followers. How do you see this applying to Christ? See also Hebrews 2:14-15, 2 Timothy 1:10 and 1 John 3:8. There will be further discussion of these verses in the Leader’s Guide.

Christ the conqueror over sin, death and the devil, gives gifts to His followers – not just to enjoy, but to serve Him in the spread of the gospel.

Hebrews 2:14-15 – Jesus came as a human to destroy Satan’s power and free those held in slavery by their fear of death.

1 Timothy 1:10 – Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality through the gospel.

1 John 3:8 – Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work – what is sinful.

Verse 9 and 10 are parenthetical. The main issue of the passage is the giving of gifts. Before Christ could ascend he had to descend. What is meant by “to the lower, earthly regions”, literally “into the lower parts of earth”? It can be taken three ways: 1) Christ descended to the earth referring to His incarnation; 2) Christ descended into the parts lower than the earth – into Hades between His death and resurrection or 3) Christ descended into the lower parts which belong to the earth, referring to His death and burial in the grave in which His death is viewed as victory over sin and redeemed those who would be given as “gifts” to the church. Our Apostle’s Creed states that we believe he descended into hell. In both Jewish and Greek traditions this is divided into two areas. The Greek “Hades” and Hebrew “Sheol” describe an intermediary area where individuals are temporarily held. In Roman Catholic tradition this is comparable to “Purgatory”. The English word “Hell” is derived from the Hebrew word “hinnom”, and represents the second and lower portion of the underworld – the abode of eternal separation from God for those who had not put their faith and trust in God prior to their death. . Hades is translated as the “place of the departed” or the place of the dead. In the New Testament Hades/Sheol is viewed as a temporary holding place where souls who have put their faith and trust in God prior to their death and the coming of Christ are awaiting the resurrection. See Luke 16:19-31. Some scholars say that the phrase “led away captive” or “led captivity captive” refers to Christ visited Sheol or Hades and led those who were captive to the grave to heaven with Him. Other scholars say that this refers to Christ descending to earth and all he accomplished in His redeeming work led captive those who hold us captive – our spiritual enemies, sin, death and the devil. These definitions aside, the important message in verses 8-10 is that Christ by virtue of

his resurrection has brought the gift of salvation through grace and has given gifts to the church, His followers.

2. From verse 13 name 3 goals for the body of Christ.

Reach unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, more like Christ.

3. Verse 14 describes some characteristics of “infants” or “children” – meaning Christians who have not matured in their faith. Write down those characteristics as stated. What do the word pictures convey to you?

Tossed back and forth, blown about by every teaching and by cunning and crafty men who scheme to deceive.

Conveys the picture of a small boat being tossed around on waves, or someone in the middle of a circle being pushed around by everyone surrounding them in confusion.

The immature Christian is tossed around like a rudderless boat in a storm.

Immature Christians are easily duped by evil teachers who do not have Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul knew this analogy well, having been in a horrendous storm enroute to Rome.

DAY 5

1. In verse 15 how does the body of Christ grow into maturity? By speaking the truth in love

How is growing into maturity expressed in this verse? We will grow up in all things.

Maturity hinges on “speaking the truth in love”, which is evident that a believer is manifesting the work of God’s Holy Spirit in his or her life. Many verses in the Old and New Testament support the demonstration of love as a sign of maturity. Love is the very first ‘fruit of the Spirit’ described by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. Truth without love becomes harsh. Love without truth becomes weak. The idea is to maintain truth in love in both speech and life.

2. According to verses 15 and 16, from whom is the whole body joined and held together?

Christ

What role do the ligaments have? They support – join and hold together

The body grows in what? In love.

As what? As each part does it’s work.

In verse 16 Christ is the supporting ligament holding the church together in one body. The comparison is quite appropriate; there are over 900 ligaments in the human body. They, along with tendons and muscles, hold the joints together and permit movement and maintain balance, thus permitting us to walk a straight path. Each believer is to function in Christ’s body by God’s enabling grace in accord with the measure of the gift Christ has bestowed on him or her. Then the church grows properly.

3. The phrase “speaking the truth in love” is stated in verse 15. The verb means both speaking and doing.

Read John 14:6 and 16:13. What is truth? Jesus is truth, what the Spirit reveals to us.

How does this thought fit in with what we have studied in Ephesians so far?

Christ has unified Jews and Gentiles who believe in Him into one body, the church. They are both blessed with the same spiritual blessings and are to grow in maturity in their relationship with Christ and in unity with each other. This is done by speaking the truth in love with each other.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, He is the guiding star, the compass that brings us into a fullness of the knowledge of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit we are ‘tossed back and forth by the waves’. Sailors in Paul’s time used the stars to navigate at night. In our lifetimes there will be many dark nights when the Spirit of Truth, God’s Holy Spirit will be our guide.

DAY 6

APPLICATION: God has chosen us – individually and as a church – to be Christ’s representatives on earth.

Read Ephesians 4:1-3. How am I doing in walking or living the life I have been called to in Christ? In what area do I need to grow? In what area(s) does our church need to grow? Am I doing my part in supporting the body in love?

The Body of Christ, i.e. the church, has many needs. Each member of the church has been given gifts which enable him or her to glorify God in a unique and special way. In your prayer life, ask God’s Holy Spirit, The Spirit of Truth, to help you know what your unique gift is. You may be surprised. Remember, God is very creative!

NOTE: The prophet Isaiah was given a similar challenge. Isaiah chapter 6 describes his response and commissioning by God. Read chapters 1-6. Isaiah is quoted over 50 times by authors of the New Testament.