



EPHESIANS 4:1-16

UNITY IN CHRIST

What can make it hard to get on with others at church?

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Read Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 4 represents the beginning of the second part of the letter. Ephesians 1-3 is striking for the fact that the apostle Paul hasn't given a single command or instruction. It's been all about who Christ is and His ruling authority, how he saves people by his grace, how they've been given rich blessings, how Christ raised people out of death to live the new resurrection life, and Paul's prayers for the Ephesian Christians! So finally, in Ephesians 4, Paul turns to talking about what it means to actually live out the Christian life.

1. In verse 1, Paul urges his readers to live a life worthy of the calling they have received. What is this calling? (see 1:18, 4:4)

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2. Christians are urged to live a life worthy of the calling they have received. How is this different to 'live a life worthy to receive God's call'? What happens in our church teaching and in our own lives when we get these things in the wrong order?

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3. In these verses, how would you summarise what the main point is?

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4. What happens when humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with one another, is not present in our interactions as a church?

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Notice that Paul says, 'make every effort to keep the unity of the *Spirit* through the bond of *peace*'. Mention of the Holy Spirit and peace has come up already in this letter. The Holy Spirit is in every Christian person. He is the 'down payment' of our ultimate redemption (1:13-14) and He is at work in Christians so they might know Jesus better (1v17). And peace with God and with each other is what Christ has achieved for us (2:13-18). As 4:3 now says, Christians are urged to keep or preserve that unity that already exists by virtue of what the Holy Spirit has done in our lives to bring us into one new body together - Jews & Gentiles, those of different ethnicities, backgrounds, education, demographics, and even personalities!

5. The basis of this unity we're to keep is given in verses 4-6 with a series of 'ones'. List them out here:

v4 one body; one _____; one _____;

v5 one _____; one _____; one _____;

v6 one _____ and Father of all.

Spend time talking about any of these 'ones' if you would like to as a group. It's worth noting that 'one faith' is probably not the sense of active belief but a short hand way of saying a set of convictions or commonly held beliefs. We might sometimes speak in this way ourselves ie. 'I hold to the Christian *faith*'. The apostle Paul seems to use 'faith' in this sense again in verse 13.

6. Why is this 'oneness' an essential foundation for relational unity in the church?

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7. Are any of the statements below a particular struggle for you? Talk honestly as a group and use this as a basis for prayer at the end of the study.

- You're quick to get angry.

- You have a tendency to be proud, arrogant or boastful.

- You have a tendency to be bullish, rough, bossy or impose yourself on others.

- You struggle to be tolerant with the shortcomings of others.

CHRIST CENTRED AS WE SERVE

When you look at the list of gifts in Ephesians 4:11, they all have a word/speaking element to their ministry – apostles (those sent out by Jesus -and we now have their New Testament writings which are our authoritative word for life and faith), prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers. And we see in verse 12 that it's not the case that their task is to do all the ministry, but to equip others of the church to do ministry.

What ministry can we have to speak the truth in love:

on Sundays

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throughout the week

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At Christ Central we have our Growth Groups but we also have our OA Groups or 'One Another Groups'. Our OA groups are groups of three that meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis to read through the bible together, discuss living as followers of Jesus and pray for each other. Our OA groups are a powerful way in which we can be intentional in a few people's lives so that we might be built up together and grow in maturity in Jesus. If you'd like to be in a group, contact Matt Fong, matt@christcentral.org.au



Read Ephesians 4:7-16

8. Verses 7-16, coming straight after verses 1-6 seem to have a strong thematic link. Certainly we see the word 'unity' again in v13. How would you summarise what the main point of this passage is?

Verse 8 is a difficult verse for several reasons. If you have time, you could discuss what you think 'he took many captives' means? You could also discuss what 'he also descended to the lower, earthly regions' means.

9. Paul mentions several specific gifts in verse 11. (note how apostles and prophets have already been mentioned in 2:19-20). Why do you think he mentions these gifts?

10. What is the purpose of these particular gifts?

11. In v12-16, Paul uses some illustrations to depict a mature church. What do these illustrations mean?

12. It seems that to promote the growth and maturity of the body into our head who is Christ, we all have a role to play. What will speaking the truth in love practically look like in different ways?

Spend some time praying together in light of this passage

Here's a reminder of the 'ACTS' approach to prayer. It stands for:



adoration

We bring our praise to God for who He is and what He's graciously done for us.



confession

We don't confess sin as if it's our ritual towards absolution, but in the light of the cross where God's judgement and mercy meet, it's right to acknowledge our on-going sin that is graciously dealt with by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf).



thanksgiving

We offer thanks for what God's done in our own life and in the lives of others in our church family.



supplication

This is a fancy word for the prayer of asking for specific things. God is our Father and He wants us to bring our concerns to Him. And as we've seen in Ephesians 1, it's right to ask that our brothers and sisters in Christ would know Him better.

Upcoming Event



Grow Women's Conference

For hundreds of years, God's people had been waiting for this moment. Luke tells us it's here. AT LAST the king arrives. But he's not what people expect. He loves the outcast. He's scathing of religious showmanship. He heals the broken hearted. And some want him dead. This king calls us to follow him. Nothing matters more than our response.

At GROW 2017 you will hear Clare Deeves explain why a weary world can rejoice in Luke's Gospel.

For more information please contact Rachel Kotterer crkotterer@gmail.com